Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Helping you choose books for children

0-5 5-7 7-9 9-12 12+

opening extract from

Girls in Tears

written by

Jacqueline Wilson

illustrated by

Nick Sharratt

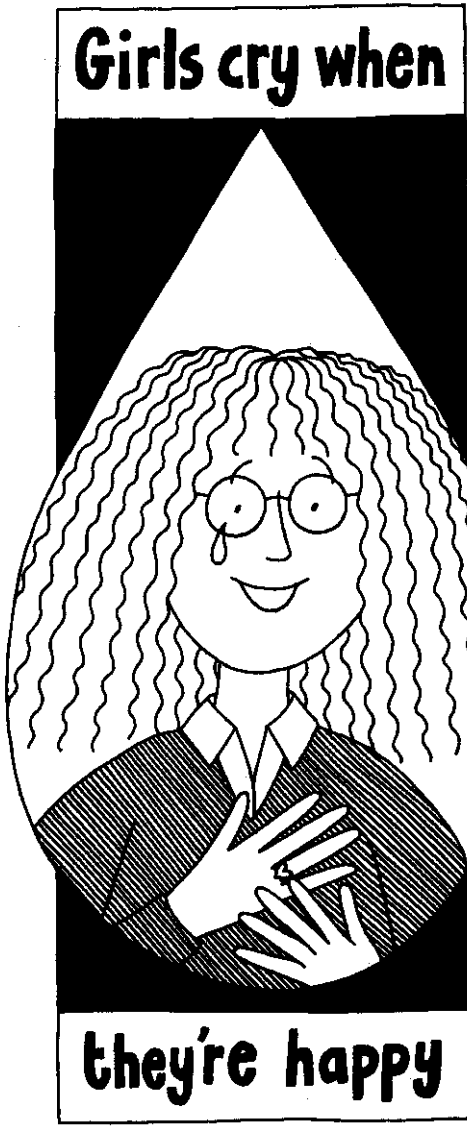
published by

Corgi Books

All text is copyright of the author and illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Chapter One



One
Girls cry when they're happy

You'll never ever guess what! I'm so happy happy happy. I want to laugh, sing, shout, even have a little cry. I can't *wait* to tell Magda and Nadine.

I go down to breakfast and sip coffee and nibble dry toast, my hand carefully displayed beside my plate.

I wait for someone to notice. I smile blithely at my dad and my stepmum Anna over breakfast. I even smile at my little brother Eggs, though he has a cold and deeply unattractive green slime dribbling out of his nostrils.

'Why are you grinning at me like that, Ellie?' Eggs asks me thickly, chomping very strawberry-jammy toast. We've run out of butter, so Anna's let him have double jam instead. 'Stop looking at me.'

'I don't want to look at you, little Runny Nose. You are not a pretty sight.'

'I don't want to be pretty,' says Eggs, sniffing so snortily that we all protest.

'For goodness' sake, son, you're putting me right off my breakfast,' Dad says, swatting at Eggs with his *Guardian*.

'Get a tissue, Eggs,' says Anna, sketching manically on a pad.

OK, maybe it's too much to expect Dad and Eggs to notice but I was sure Anna would spot it straight away.

'There *aren't* any tissues,' Eggs says triumphantly, breathing in and out to make his nose bubble.

'Oh God, no, that's right. I didn't get to Waitrose yesterday,' says Anna. 'OK, Eggs, use loo-roll instead.'

'I haven't got any,' says Eggs, looking round as if he expects Andrex puppies to trot right into our kitchen trailing toilet paper like the adverts. 'What's that you're drawing, Mum? Is it a rabbit? Let's look.'

He pulls at Anna's paper. Anna hangs on. The paper tears in two.

'Oh, for God's sake, Eggs, I've been working on that wretched bunnies-in-bed design since six this morning!' Anna shouts. 'Now go to the loo and get some paper and blow your nose this instant. I am *sick* of you, do you hear me?'

Eggs sniffs, startled. He gets down from the table and backs away worriedly. He's still holding half the piece of paper. He drops it guiltily and rushes to the door, his mouth wobbling. We hear him crying in the hall.

'He's crying, Anna,' says Dad.

'I know,' says Anna, starting to sketch on a new piece of paper.

'What's the matter with you? Why be so snappy with him? He only wanted to look,' says Dad, folding up his newspaper. He stands, looking martyred. 'I'm going to comfort poor little Eggs.'

'Yes, you do that,' says Anna, through gritted teeth. 'He is actually your son too, though when he woke five times in the night with his stuffed-up nose I seem to remember *you* remained happily snoring.'

'No wonder his nose is stuffed up if the poor little kid can't blow it. Why on earth have we run out of everything like tissues and butter? I would have thought they were basic domestic necessities.'

'Yes, they are,' says Anna, still drawing – but her hand is trembling. 'And they generally appear as if by magic in this house because *one* of us slogs off to the supermarket every week.'

I can't stand this. My happy bubble is on the brink of bursting. My magic hand clenches. What's the matter with Dad and Anna and Eggs? Why won't they lighten up? Why can't Dad offer to do the weekly shop? Why can't Anna watch her tongue? Why can't Eggs blow his sniffly little nose? Why does it all have to turn into a stupid scene with Dad shouting, Anna near tears, Eggs already howling?

I'm the teenager. I'm the one who should be shouting and shrieking all over the place. Yet look at me! I'm little Ellie Ever-so Effervescent because – oh because because because!

I stretch out my hand, fingers extended, in a

totally obvious gesture. Anna looks up. She looks at me. She looks at my hand. But her blue eyes are blank. She can only see her boring bedtime bunnies.

I grab my rucksack and say goodbye to Anna and Dad. They hardly notice me. I find Eggs drooping in the downstairs toilet, and give him a quick hug. Big mistake. He leaves a little slime trail on my school blazer where he has snuffled his nose. Then he looks up at me.

'Why are you being nice to me, Ellie?' he asks suspiciously.

It's a waste of time acting Miss Sweetness and Light in my family. I might just as well be mean and moody. 'OK, when I come back home I'll be very very *nasty*,' I hiss at Eggs, baring my teeth and making strangling movements with my hands.

He giggles nervously, not quite sure whether I'm joking. I reach out to ruffle his hair but he ducks. I smile at him and rush off, not wanting to listen to the row in the kitchen a second longer.

Dad and Anna have started to act almost as if they hate each other. It's getting a bit scary. It's weird to think that when Dad first married Anna I couldn't stand her. I'd have given anything to break them up. I thought Anna was all that's awful. I was just a little kid. I wasn't ready to be fair. I hated her simply because I felt she was trying to take my mum's place.

Mum died when I was little. I still think about her every day. Not all the time – just in little wistful moments. I like to talk to her inside my head and she talks back to me. I know it's just me, of course. But it's still a comfort.