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**ROSE RIVERS** lives in a beautiful house with her artist father, her difficult, fragile mother and her many siblings. She has everything money can buy – beautiful dresses, horse-riding lessons, books – but she's not satisfied. Why can't she be sent away to a good school like her twin brother? Why can't she learn to become a famous artist like her father or his friend Paris Walker? Why is life so unfair for people who were not born rich?

When a young girl, Clover Moon, joins the household as a nursemaid to Rose's troubled sister Beth, Rose finds a true friend for the first time and she starts to learn more about the world outside. Will Rose finally achieve her dreams? And will she be able to help Clover find her own dream?

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**JACQUELINE WILSON** wrote her first novel when she was nine years old, and she has been writing ever since. She is now one of Britain's bestselling and most beloved children's authors. She has written over 100 books and is the creator of characters such as Tracy Beaker and Hetty Feather. More than forty million copies of her books have been sold.

As well as winning many awards for her books, including the Children's Book of the Year, Jacqueline is a former Children's Laureate, and in 2008 she was appointed a Dame.

Jacqueline is also a great reader, and has amassed over 20,000 books, along with her famous collection of silver rings.

Find out more about Jacqueline and her books at www.jacquelinewilson.co.uk

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# Jacqueline Wilson

Illustrated by Nick Sharratt




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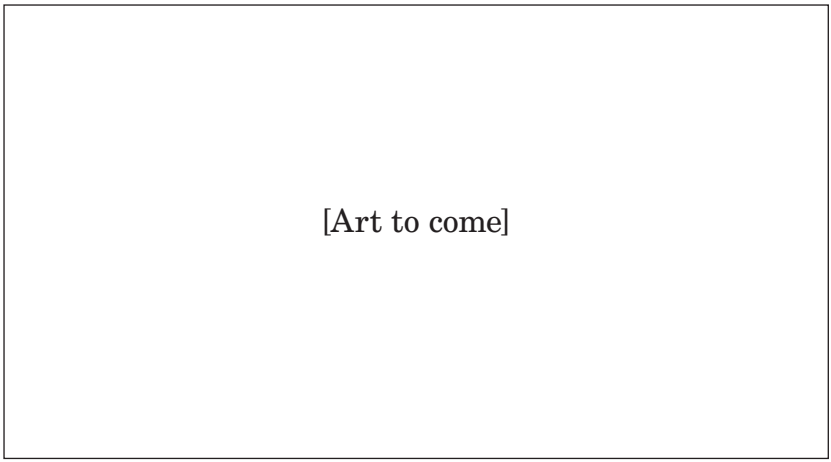
*To Cate and Nash of Much Ado*

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# 1

'I **HAVE A LITTLE** present for you, Rose,' said Papa.

He handed me a rectangular package tied with string that looked promisingly like a book. I love reading more than anything else, especially the books in Papa's studio. He doesn't know that I borrow them. I don't bother with the ones in the cabinet in the drawing room – they are Mama's silly romantic tosh.

I opened my package eagerly, though I feared it would be a Mrs Molesworth or a Miss Yonge, the sort of authors considered suitable for a girl of thirteen.



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But it wasn't a novel at all, for children or adults. It was a sketchbook, every page blank.

'I thought this would be a good time for you to start sketching seriously, sweetheart. I know you've been feeling rather mopey since Rupert left for school,' said Papa.

I didn't know what to say. He was trying so hard to cheer me up. And it's not as if I don't like drawing. I've spent half my childhood drawing witches and dragons and mermaids and tigers and goblins. Goblins are fun because I give them the faces of people I particularly detest. When my brother Algie crayoned all over the pages of my book of Tennyson's poetry, I created an entire community of grotesque goblins with his features.

I also like drawing girls. Not pretty girls with long brushed hair and demure dresses. Wild girls who have cut off their curls and tucked up their skirts or borrowed boy's breeches. They climb trees and leap streams and teeter on the very edge of cliffs. Sometimes I draw them being chastised. They are sent away in disgrace. They don't care!

Mama always tuts when she sees my drawings. She doesn't approve of them at all. Papa laughs and thinks them funny, but he says that I should start drawing seriously now. He is hoping that I have true artistic ability. It's not just because he is an indulgent father (though he is!). He'd like at least one of his children to have inherited his talent. Rupert is the eldest but has never had the patience for art – or, indeed, any natural



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skill. I am his twin and only fifteen minutes younger, so now Papa is pinning his hopes on me.

'I love your drawings, Rose. They're very lively and amusing, but I think it's time for you to learn to sketch properly. You should draw from life,' he said now, unusually serious.

'Not *still* life, Papa?' I groaned.

Our governess, Miss Rayner, sometimes arranges odds and ends that she feels are 'artistic' for us to paint with our shared box of Winsor & Newton watercolours. Last time she gathered a blue and white striped milk jug from the kitchen, a garish china couple won at a fairground, a bowl of fruit and a posy of violets in a pink pot. I tried reasonably hard, but the milk jug tilted alarmingly, the china couple looked drunk, the bowl of fruit wouldn't stay circular and the posy wilted before I could finish it.

'I know you find still-life compositions boring, Rose, but they teach you observation and perspective and shading. They will bring your sketches to life, so that they seem realistic representations.'

'I don't care for real life, Papa. I prefer living in my imagination,' I said.

He laughed at this. He doesn't mind if we argue with him, so long as we do it politely. He actively encourages us to discuss and dispute.

'I do sympathize, Rose,' he chuckled. 'But sometimes we have to do things we don't care for. I spent my first year at art school copying plaster casts. It was deadly boring but it taught me a great deal.'



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'Then send *me* to art school, Papa!' I said.

He laughed again. 'Perhaps, when you are eighteen or so, I might send you to Paris to be properly trained, though I know Mama will object!'

'Mama always objects,' I said. 'In fact, one *could* say that Mama is objectionable!'

'That's enough, Rose,' Papa said firmly. He lets me argue with him, but he will never allow me to criticize Mama.

'How can I wait five whole years anyway?' I said instead. 'Couldn't I go to a boarding school where they have a good art teacher?'

I'd read about girls' boarding schools. I longed to go to one. I imagined charismatic teachers and intelligent girls having lively discussions in classrooms. I saw myself strolling through rose gardens, arm in arm with bookish girls, sipping cocoa together in our nightgowns, confiding secrets.

I knew I was wishing for the moon. This was another tired old argument, and one that involved further criticism of Mama. She had no qualms about sending my brother Rupert away to school, but she refused to even consider *my* education. I have to make do with Miss Rayner in the nursery schoolroom.

Sometimes I find it very hard indeed to like Mama. However, I love Papa and I will try to learn to sketch properly for his sake.

'May I sketch *you*, Papa?' I asked.

'Certainly! And I will sketch *you* simultaneously, Rose!' he said, very pleased.



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It was companionable sitting in Papa's studio. We had a delightful conversation about artists too. They seem to live the most interesting and unconventional lives. I would very much like to be an artist – but I don't really like doing art. I tried so hard to do a good sketch of Papa, but it was a complete failure. He went lopsided like the milk jug, and I made him look incredibly fierce when he's the most amiable man I've ever met. Not that I've met many men. I sometimes think a nun in a convent has a better social life than me. If only I could go to school. Rupert is so LUCKY!

When I'd finished sketching, Papa wanted to see my portrait, but I wouldn't let him. I didn't want him to see what a failure I was. He is always hopeful that one of us will show artistic talent. He does his best to be encouraging. He praises Algie's scribbles even when they're in inappropriate places like the whitewashed nursery cupboards or the hall skirting board.

Papa's praise obviously means a great deal, because he is the painter Edward Rivers, well known in artistic circles. He is a follower of the great Pre-Raphaelite painters, and when he was a young man he was considered equal to them in talent. He was also wild and bohemian. He even had a pet wombat, just like his hero, Rossetti.

How I wish he had a wombat now! Our pets are nowhere near as exotic. We have Mistletoe, a large white cat who sleeps all day on his rocking chair by the kitchen range, and Alphonse, Mama's tiny Mexican dog, who snaps a great deal, and shivers when Mr Hodgson takes him for his daily walk.



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Alphonse will be tucked up with Mama on the chaise longue in the drawing room, their beady eyes staring into space. How strange that it is called the *drawing* room when no one ever draws there, not even Papa. Now that I'm in my teens and considered a young lady I'm allowed to sit in the drawing room. Not that I want to! It's not at all comfortable, though the chairs and sofas are cushioned and well sprung. Even Papa seems out of his element there, though he sits dutifully beside Mama for half an hour every day, resolutely keeping her company.

Mama suffers from ill health. She's been poorly ever since my youngest sister, Phoebe, was born, and is forever resting. Phoebe is a delightful baby sister, the roundest, rosiest little dumpling. She has such a sunny nature, all chuckles and smiles. By contrast Mama looks pale and unappetizing nowadays, like Cook's vanilla shape. She has grown much fatter since Phoebe, and has had to order a dozen new gowns, though I'm sure she could simply have had her old ones altered. Mama cares terribly about clothes. It irritates her enormously that I don't give a fig about my appearance.

'You dress like a hoyden, Rose! How can you wander around barefoot, like a ragamuffin off the streets? Have you even brushed your hair this morning? Stop frowning at me like that! Your forehead creases in such an ugly fashion. It's because you always have your head in a book! You will end up having to wear spectacles like a frumpy old spinster.'



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I rather fancy wearing spectacles. I think they might make me look scholarly. I cannot see why being a spinster is so scorned anyway. Miss Rayner is a spinster and she seems perfectly content, humming hymns and sucking fruit drops and tapping her foot merrily when the little ones pipe on their penny whistles. She doesn't appear to mind that she only has three frocks and they're all patched and darned, even her best black silk. She seems a happy soul.

Mama is the lady of the house and has a distinguished artist husband and seven children and a beautiful home in London – and a wardrobe full of new gowns – and yet she's as miserable as sin.

She makes everyone else miserable too, even Papa, though he tries to ignore her complaints.

'For pity's sake, Edward, I wish you'd stop doing these sordid urban sketches. Who on earth wants to see pallid drawings of street children? I wish you'd never agreed to do the illustrations for Sarah Smith's wretched little books. I know she does charity work for destitute girls, but I really don't see why you have to be involved. Why don't you do proper oil paintings again?'

'I don't feel inclined,' Papa said stiffly.

'Because you've lost your famous muse,' said Mama, with an edge to her voice. Papa used to do portraits of the Honourable Louisa Mayhorne. His most famous is the one where she's wearing a low-cut evening dress with one black strap slipping off her pearly shoulder. It caused a scandal, but everyone agreed that it was a wonderful



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painting. Perhaps Louisa didn't care for the attention, because she doesn't pose for Papa any more. I wish she did. She always winked at me and called me Chickie, and once gave me a little box of rose creams.

'Why won't you take on respectable commissions for portraits? If you're tired of London Society, perhaps you should try in Scotland. You know very well that my father would be delighted to introduce you to the members of the Caledonian Club,' Mama needled him.

'I'm afraid I'm not inspired by whiskery old gentlemen with bulging waistcoats and tartan trews,' Papa said.

'I dare say those waistcoats are bulging with purses of gold coins,' Mama responded tartly. 'It would be a great help if you cared to contribute to the household finances.'

Poor Papa. That is the trouble. He really *is* poor. He makes very little money from his art, especially nowadays. We live in the Lion House, one of the grandest houses in Kensington, but it's actually Mama's, not his. Well, Mama didn't contribute the money herself. She's never done a stroke of work in her life, but my grandparents are very rich. They disapproved of my father but, when it became plain that Mama was determined to marry him, they couldn't bear the thought of their only child living in some ramshackle artist's garret. They gritted their teeth and provided the couple with a house.

Then Rupert and I were born, and the grandparents were delighted, in spite of everything. They were especially pleased to have a grandson to inherit their business.



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We travel up to their huge country house near Dundee every New Year's Eve. They call it Hogmanay and it is a very grand occasion, with dinner and dancing and drinking – a great deal of drinking. When twelve o'clock strikes, Grandpapa sets off fireworks in the garden. We wake up and watch from our bedroom windows, though Sebastian puts his hands over his ears and poor Beth cowers in her bed.

Last year Rupert was allowed to stay up and help Grandpapa light the fireworks. I am exactly the same age bar fifteen minutes, but I'm not allowed anywhere near a match. Grandpapa quotes the poem about Pauline from that silly nursery book *Struwwelpeter*. He relishes reciting: 'Her apron burns, her arms, her hair; she burns all over everywhere.' Grandmama frowns and wags her finger in warning. She is even stricter than Mama.

Grandmama always looks as if she is sucking a lemon. She smells of citrus too, because she douses herself liberally in lemon verbena. Rupert and I have a theory about this. Grandpapa likes to behave like landed gentry but he's actually made his money from trade. He owns the biggest jute mill in Dundee. We were once taken there as a special treat. The mill was quite extraordinary. It was the noisiest place in the entire world, with the machines setting up such a clatter that everyone has to gesture – proper conversation quite impossible. But it wasn't the noise that was most memorable. It was the *smell*.

Jute is a plant grown in India. We have many plants in our back garden, and some of them smell, but sweetly,



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especially the honeysuckle and jasmine. I don't know what jute smells like in its native state (neither does Miss Rayner, because she's not very well informed, even though she's a governess), but when jute's being manufactured for sacks and carpet backing, it smells utterly disgusting. It's a sour, rancid, cloying smell, so astonishingly strong that, a full day after our visit to the mill, Rupert and I still reeked of it.

I thought of the workforce toiling away for twelve hours a day in this nauseating stench. Some are girls my age. It makes me feel ashamed. Our grandmother once worked in this very mill. Not as a mill girl, but in the accounts office, filling little brown envelopes with wages for Friday payday.

*She* didn't tell us this, of course. While Grandpapa was sorting out some problem with a mill hand, the foreman took Rupert and me for a cup of tea and a slice of Keiller's Dundee cake. He asked after our grandmama and told us that he'd known her when she was 'a wee lassie working here'. We boggled at the thought, but neither of us quite dared question Grandmama about this later. Rupert suggested that she wears such strong perfume now because she's determined to smell sweet.

Oh, I *do* miss Rupert. He is by far my favourite brother. We are not at all alike even though we are twins (Rupert is very good looking and I am not), but when we were little Papa called us Tweedledee and Tweedledum. We went everywhere together and frequently spoke in



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unison. We weren't interested in our sister Beth when she was born. We couldn't be bothered with any other playmate. We were an entity unto ourselves.

Everything started changing this past year. Rupert has suddenly grown much taller than me and has become rather a dandy, growing his hair a little longer than is usual, and very particular about his clothes. He's so proud of his brocade waistcoat, and is desperate for a pocket watch and chain to wear with it. He's had a pair of boots specially made to wear at school – fine leather with jet buttons.

Papa suggested that the cobbler should add special steel caps to the toes. 'That way they'll be all the better for kicking,' he said. 'They will be Rupert's secret weapon when it comes to fighting.'

'There won't be any fights!' said Mama. 'This is a school for young gentlemen!'

'Which means that fights are a certainty,' said Papa.

He spoke with authority because he'd been sent to Kilbourne himself when he was a boy. He didn't want Rupert to follow in his footsteps, even in his steel-capped boots.

'Public schools are dire and degrading, worse than any prison,' he said. He knows about prisons too, because when he was young he was rather wild, and after an evening of drinking and tomfoolery he'd once spent the night in a prison cell. That is meant to be a deadly secret, but I'm actually rather proud to have a father who was once a criminal.



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Mama hadn't minded Papa's wild ways when, as a youth, he travelled up to Scotland to paint the mountains and lochs, paying his way by doing portraits of aristocratic lairds or rich industrialists. He painted Grandpapa, and then he painted Mama, who was his only child, a young girl of seventeen. And during those sittings they fell passionately in love.

That portrait of Mama is in the drawing room now. It is a shock comparing that soft rosy girl with shining eyes and dimples in her cheeks to the wan and irritable invalid on the chaise longue.

She wouldn't listen to Papa, and insisted that her sons had to be properly educated, which meant sending them to Kilbourne. Grandpapa insisted too, though he didn't go to public school himself. Grandpapa generally has the final say, because he is the provider. Papa calls him the Great Provider. He doesn't say it in a very Christian way.

The day before Rupert left for school Grandpapa sent him his own gold watch. I loved that watch. When Grandpapa was in a good mood he let me play with the chain and listen to the steady tick. I had always hoped he might one day give it to me.

I expect I will inherit Grandmama's pearls and her jet locket and her collection of Cairngorm brooches. I'm afraid I think they're all hideous. Perhaps she will leave them to Beth or Clarrie or little Phoebe instead. I'd much prefer the gold watch.

I hoped it might be thought too precious for Rupert to take to school. I planned to sneak into his room and



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dangle the watch by my ear, listening to its *tick, tick, tick*. But Rupert begged to take the watch with him.

'Don't be ridiculous, Rupe,' said Papa. 'It's an enormously expensive timepiece with any number of jewels, according to your grandfather. It will get broken in the hurly-burly of Kilbourne.'

'But Rupert loves it so, don't you, darling,' said Mama. 'He must take the watch! My father gave it to him because he *wanted* him to take it to school. I'm sure the other boys will be impressed.'

'The other boys will think Rupe a show-off,' said Papa. 'Why will no one in this family listen to me when I'm the only member with previous experience of public school?'

'Now who's being a show-off?' said Mama, her cheeks going pink.

Papa looked stung. When it comes to boasting about his background he's the precise opposite of a show-off. Grandmama and Grandpapa had looked down on him at first, but they'd had no inkling that he came from an aristocratic family. I think his cousins might even be lords and ladies. His parents have a huge country house as big as a palace. When I was little, I imagined it like the pictures in my books of fairy tales: high on a hill, all gothic towers, with attics full of servant girls spinning straw into gold, and underground tunnels chock-a-block with goblins mining for jewels. For all I know it really might be like that. I've never been there, never met a single one of Papa's relatives. He fell out with them long ago because of his dissolute conduct with his art-school friends.



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Anyway, last week Rupert went off to school with his trunk and tuck box – and the gold watch on a chain in his brocade waistcoat pocket. Once again Papa tried to persuade him that this wasn't a good idea, but Rupert still wouldn't listen.

'What's the point of having a splendid watch if I can't wear it, Pa?' he said.

'Look, Rupe, I just want you to fit in at school.'

'I don't see why you're getting in such a fuss about it. I've never had any problems fitting in with any of the chaps round here.'

It was true. All the boys in the streets around us want to be Rupert's friends. The girls too, actually. When we play cricket in Kensington Gardens, everyone wants to be on Rupert's team. He is always the captain. I have always been so proud that he is my brother.

I miss him so. I've written to him every single day, but he hasn't written back to me once. He has simply sent a short note to Mama and Papa, with a tiny afterthought to me: *P.S. Say hello to Rose and the others.*

You see, not even my own message! I have to share it with my brothers and sisters. I felt like bursting into tears.

'Don't pull that face, dear,' said Mama. 'You can't expect Rupert to write you great long letters. He'll be terrifically busy with his lessons and his sporting activities and his new friends.'

Papa took me to one side. 'I'm sure Mama is right,' he said quietly. 'But I remember writing letters home when I was at Kilbourne. We were crammed into the common



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room and there was no privacy whatsoever. We were all required to send a brief letter home to the parents, but any boy writing to his sister would have been mocked and ridiculed. Boys can be very harsh with each other, especially when they're feeling lost and unhappy.'

'Do you think *Rupert* will be feeling lost and unhappy?' I asked.

'Of course he will. He'll be missing home desperately. And I know he'll be missing you especially, Rose, because you matter so much to him,' said Papa.

'Oh!' I said. 'Do you really think so?'

So I wrote Rupert an even longer letter telling him how much I missed him. In fact, on the back of it I attempted a comical picture of our entire family assembled in the garden. It was quite a struggle fitting everyone in – I put Mama reclining on a garden chair with Alphonse on her lap at one end, and Papa at the other end, sketching. I assembled us children in age order, leaving a little gap beside me where Rupert belongs. I drew me waving, Beth clutching her favourite doll, Sebastian holding up his pet mouse, Algie sticking out his tongue, Clarrie making a daisy chain, and Nurse cradling baby Phoebe. I drew the servants standing in a row behind: Mr Hodgson the butler, Mrs Harrison the cook, Edie the parlourmaid, Maggie the housemaid, Jack the boot boy, and little Mary-Jane, the general skivvy. I even put Mistletoe the cat up a tree.

Halfway through my hand started aching terribly, but I carried on as a labour of love. Then I begged an



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envelope from Papa – a large one so my picture wouldn't get creased. I addressed it to Rupert at Kilbourne and wrote in capitals on the back *STRICTLY PRIVATE AND PERSONAL* so that no boys would look at the contents and mock or ridicule him.

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