Helping your children choose books they will love

I reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

Opening extract from

Wild Song

Written by

Jane Eagland

Published by

Barrington Stoke

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Wild Song

by

Jane Eagland

For Sheila

First published in 2012 in Great Britain by
Barrington Stoke Ltd
18 Walker Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7LP

www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

Copyright © 2012 Jane Eagland

The moral right of the author has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

ISBN: 978-1-78112-044-6

Printed in China by Leo

Contents

1	The Storm	1
2	Gift from the Sea	8
3	I'm Real	15
4	His Story, Her Story	22
5	The Number Machine	29
6	Forget-me-not	36
7	A Terrible Day	43
8	Spying	50
9	An Enemy	57
10	A Friend	64

Chapter 1
The Storm

Anna stood as close to the cliff top as she dared, gazing out to sea.

The angry wind whipped loose strands of her hair into her eyes. Below her the water crashed and foamed against the rocks and fountains of spray flew up into the air. Seabirds screamed overhead, white against the grey sky.

Anna shivered, more from fear than the cold.

Behind her, across the water, lay the mainland of Scotland. But she was out here, on this small rocky island. Again and again the sea threw itself against the land as if it were trying to swallow it up. It terrified her. But she couldn't tear herself away.

These wild days stirred her up. They made her feel wild herself. They made her feel there was something she wanted but she didn't know what it was.

She watched the dark wall of rain race towards her.

From behind her there came the sound of the castle bell. She knew it was calling for her. It was time to see her father.

But still she stayed, until the last minute. Until the first cold drops of rain fell on her face.



At the castle Biddy was waiting in the warm kitchen. She whisked off Anna's cloak and hung it near the fire to dry.

"What were you thinking?" she scolded. "You'll catch a chill."

Anna took off her boots and put on her velvet slippers.

"Only my cloak got wet," she said. "Look, my dress is quite dry." She spread her skirt wide as proof.

Biddy snorted and fetched a towel to dry Anna's long hair.

Sometimes Biddy's fussing got on Anna's nerves. But she was fond of her old nurse. Biddy told her stories even though she wasn't supposed to.

Now Biddy said, "Didn't you hear Jasper ringing the bell?"

Anna didn't answer. Biddy wouldn't understand about the wildness.

Just then Jasper himself came through the kitchen. The smell of cow dung came with him.

Anna wasn't keen on Biddy's husband, even if she tried not to show it.

For one thing there was something wrong with his eyes. You never knew if he was looking at you or not. It was creepy.

She was glad she didn't have to see him very often. He did the heavy work on the island, and looked after the crops and the animals.

Now he nodded at Anna and his wife and went into the room where he and Biddy slept. Unlike Biddy, he never had much to say for himself.

At last Biddy was happy. She tucked a shawl round Anna's shoulders and gave her a little push. "Go on now. Your father's waiting."



Anna left the kitchen and crossed the shadowy Great Hall. The rain beat against its tall windows and the wind moaned in the chimney, like a trapped creature. Anna didn't notice. She was used to the sounds the castle made in bad weather.

She climbed the spiral staircase, up and up. At last she reached the room at the very top of the tower. Behind its closed door, her father, Lord Grey, spent most of his time.

She paused to smooth her hair, then knocked.

Max, her father's assistant opened the door. His real name was Mr Maxwell but her father called him Max so she did too.

He greeted her, grave as always. "Ah, there you are, Miss Anna."

Anna smiled a shy smile as she went in.

It was funny. She'd known Max all her life. But in the last few months she'd started to think about him more. He was a fair bit older than her, probably in his thirties, she guessed. But he was tall and now she saw he was quite good-looking. And when he looked right at her with those light blue eyes of his, she felt strange. A bit shivery, but in a nice way.

She saw him almost every day for lessons, but sometimes she wished they had time to talk properly. She wondered if he felt the same. If he cared for her at all.

She thought he might. Over the last few years someone had been leaving books for her in her room. In secret. Books her father mustn't know about, because he wouldn't want her to read them. It had to be Max, didn't it? No one else would do that.

She waited for her father to notice her. But he was turning over papers on his desk and muttering to himself. He had some crumbs in his beard and his hair stuck up in tufts.

"Father?"

He gave her a puzzled look.

Anna felt a prickle of alarm. These days her father often looked at her like that.

As if he didn't know who she was.

"Father?" she said again.

Her father's face cleared. "Anna, my dear. Max tells me you've finished all the problems I set. Good, good. What did you think of them?"

Anna was silent for a moment. She felt put on the spot, but she couldn't lie. "Um ... I found them rather hard."

Her father didn't look at all upset. Instead he beamed at her. "Yes, but you managed them. That's the important thing. So now you're ready to move on."

Anna's heart sank.

Her father lived for Maths. Sometimes she thought numbers and problems meant more to him than she did.

But for Anna, Maths was like a big, black cloud hanging over her. She was tired of doing problems all the time. And sooner or later her father would find out the truth. That she was never going to be as good at Maths as he wanted her to be. She was never going to be able to share in his great work. Now there was another problem. It was all the fault of the secret books. They made her want something. Something she had made up her mind to ask for even if it upset her father.