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opening extract from

the bed and breakfast star

written by

jacqueline wilson

illustrated by

nick sharratt

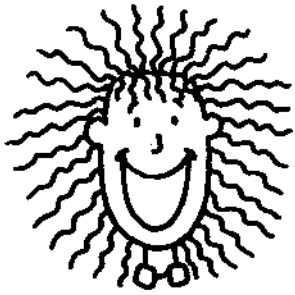
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The Bed and Breakfast Star

Jacqueline Wilson
Illustrated by Nick Sharratt



CORGI YEARLING BOOKS

For Frances Stokes
(Froggy to her friends)

THE BED AND BREAKFAST STAR
A CORGI YEARLING BOOK : 0 440 86324 4

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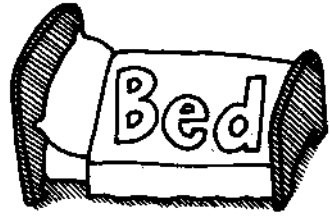
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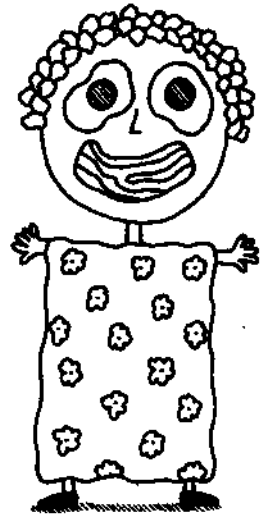
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Do you know what everyone calls me now? *Bed and Breakfast.* That's what all the kids yell after me in the playground. Even the teachers do it. Well, they don't say it to my face. But I've heard them. 'Oh yes, that Elsa. She's one of the bed-and-breakfast children.' Honestly. It sounds like I've got a duvet for a dress, cornflake curls, two fried-egg eyes and a streaky-bacon smile.



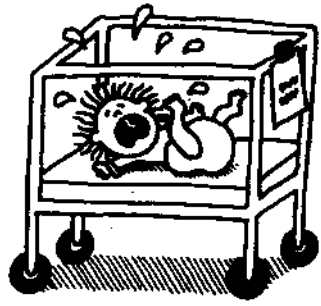
I don't look a bit like that. Well, I hope I don't! I'm Elsa.

Do you like my name? I hope you do like it or Elsa'll get upset. Do you get the joke? I made it up myself. I'm always cracking jokes. People don't often laugh though.



I bet you don't know anyone else called Elsa. There was just this lion called Elsa, ages ago. There was a book written about her, and they made a film. They sometimes show it on the television so maybe you've seen it. My mum called me after Elsa the lion. I was a very tiny baby, smaller than all the others in the hospital, but I was born with lots of hair. Really. Most babies are almost bald but I had this long tufty hair and Mum used to brush it so that it stood out all round my head like a lion's mane. I didn't just look like a lion. I sounded like one

too. I might have had very tiny little lungs but I had the loudest voice. I bawled day and night and wore all the nurses out, let alone my mum. She says she should have left me yelling in my hospital cot and slipped off out of it without me. She was joking. Mum's jokes aren't always funny though – not like mine.

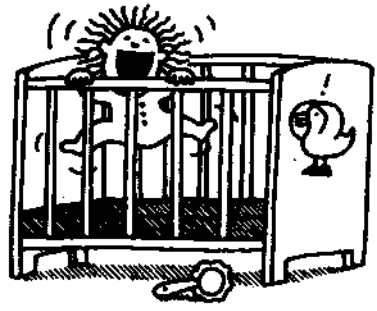


That was my very first BED.

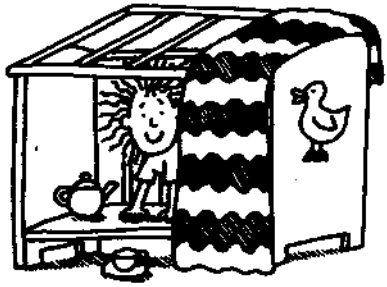
It's not very comfy-looking, is it? No wonder I bawled.

Here's my second BED.

I used to pretend I was a real lion in a cage. I didn't half roar.



We've still got my old duck cot. We've lost lots of our other things but we've always carted that around with us. I used to turn it into a play-house



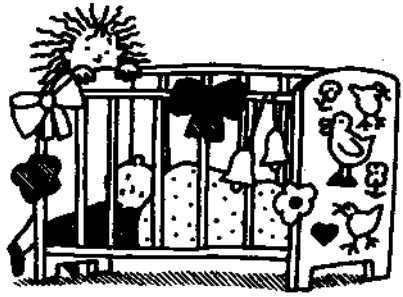
or a car



and once it was even my castle.



But then my sister Pippa was born and I lost a house and a car and a castle and she gained a bed. I gave it a good spring-clean for her and tried to make it as pretty as possible, but I don't think she really appreciated it.



Pippa did a lot more sleeping and a lot less yelling than me. She's not a baby now. She's nearly five. Half my age. She's not half my size though. She's not a little titch like me. She'll catch me up soon if I don't watch out.

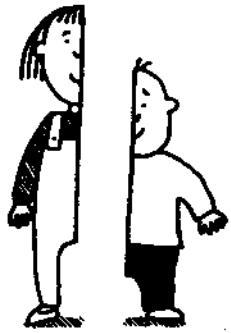
I've also got a brother, Hank. Hank the Hunk. He had the duck cot too.

He only fitted it for five minutes. I'm tiny and Pippa is tall but Hank is enormous. He's



not just long, he's very wide too. He's still not much more than a baby but if you pick him up you practically need a crane and if you put him on your lap you get severely squashed. If you stand in his way when he comes crawling by, then you're likely to get steam-rollered.

Pippa and Hank aren't my proper sister and brother. They're halves. That sounds silly, doesn't it. As if they should look like this.



We've all got the same mum. Our mum. But I've got a different dad.

My dad never really lived with Mum and me. He did come and see me sometimes, when I was little. He took me to the zoo to see the real lions. I can remember it vividly though Mum

says I was only about two then. I liked seeing those lions. My dad held me up to see them. They roared at me, and I roared back. I think I maybe went on roaring a bit too long and loud. My dad didn't come back after that.

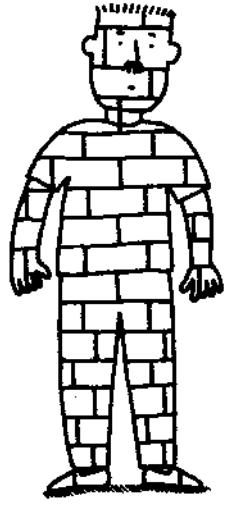
Mum said we didn't care. We were better off without him. Just Mum and me. That was fine. But then Mum met Mack. Mack the Smack. That's not a joke. He really does smack. Especially me.

You're not supposed to smack children. In lots of countries smacking is against the law and if you hit a child you get sent to prison. I wish I lived in one of those countries. Mack smacks a lot. He doesn't smack Pippa properly, he just gives her little taps. And he doesn't smack Hank because even Mack doesn't hit babies. But he doesn't half whack me. Well, he doesn't *always* smack. But he lifts his hand as if he's going to. Or he hisses out of the side of his mouth: 'Are you asking for a good smacking, Elsa?'

What sort of question is that, eh? As if I'd prance up to him and say, 'Hey, Uncle Mack, can I have a socking great smack, please?'

Mum sometimes sticks up for me. But sometimes she says I'm asking for it too. She says I give Mack a lot of cheek. I don't. I just try out a

few jokes on him, that's all. And he doesn't ever get them. Because he's thick. Thick thick thick as a brick.

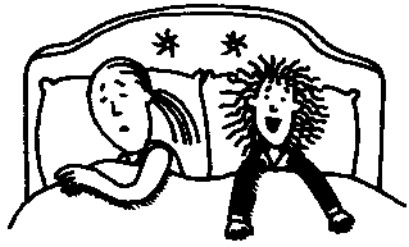


I don't know why my mum had to marry him. And guess who got to be the bridesmaid at their wedding! Mum wanted me to wear a proper long frilly bridesmaid's frock but it looked ever so silly on me. My hair still sticks out all over the place like a lion's mane and my legs are so skinny my socks always wrinkle and somehow they always get dirty marks all over them and my shoes go all scuffed at the

toes right from when they're new. The bridesmaids' frocks in the shop were all pale pink and pale blue and pale peach and pale lilac. Mum sighed and said I'd get my frock filthy before she'd had time to get up and down the aisle.

So we forgot about the frock and Mum dressed me up in this little black velvet jacket and tartan kilt because Mack is Scottish. I even had a sprig of lucky Scottish heather pinned to my jacket. I felt like I needed a bit of luck.

Mack moved in with Mum and me after the wedding. After I grew out of the duck cot I used to share the big bed with Mum and that was fun because there was always someone to chat to and cuddle.



That was my third BED.

But then Mack got to share the big bed with Mum and I had a little campbed in the living-room. BED number four. And I kept falling out of it every time I turned over at first. But I didn't mind that campbed. I played camping.



But it was really too cramped to play camp. We only had a little flat and Mack took up so much *space*.

