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*By Jacqueline Wilson*

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## **Lola Rose** By Jacqueline Wilson Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Review

“Has a rare gift for writing lightly and amusingly about emotional issues.” -- *Bookseller*

*From the Hardcover edition.*

### About the Author

JACQUELINE WILSON is an extremely well-known and hugely popular author who served as Children's Laureate from 2005-7. She has been awarded a number of prestigious awards, including the British Children's Book of the Year and the Guardian Children's Fiction Award (for *The Illustrated Mum*), the Smarties Prize and the Children's Book Award (for *Double Act*, for which she was also highly commended for the Carnegie Medal). In 2002 Jacqueline was given an OBE for services to literacy in schools and in 2008 she was appointed a Dame. She was the author most borrowed from British libraries in the last decade.

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### One

Have you ever wondered what you'd do if you won the lottery?

My mum won. She did, really. OK, she didn't win the jackpot. We don't live in a great big mansion. I wouldn't want to even if Mum had won mega-millions. I'd hate to live in a big house with heaps of rooms. You'd never be able to keep track of everyone. Someone could be creeping along the corridor ready to get you and you'd never know.

I'd like a really small house. A caravan would be even better. It could be ultra-luxurious, with purple velvet fitted sofas and matching purple curtains and purple satin sheets on the bunk beds. We could even have a huge purple glass plate piled high with big purple bars of Cadbury's milk chocolate for us to nibble on any time we fancy. But it would have this never-fail alarm system if anyone approached. Then I'd strap Kenny and me to the sofa and Mum would jump in the purple Ferrari permanently hooked to the caravan and *whizz* us off to safety at hundreds of miles an hour.

Mum didn't win the lottery on the television. She won with a scratch card. I'm not talking ten pounds though. *Ten thousand!*

She looked at the card in the street and she gave this great whoop. She picked my little brother Kenny up and whirled him round and round until he squealed. She couldn't pick me up too because my mum's quite little and I'm big for my age, but she gave me a huge hug and kissed me on both cheeks and then on the tip of my nose too, which made me giggle.

'Right, let's get back inside the shop,' she said. 'We're going to spend spend spend! Only don't tell old Sid behind the counter. He's such a gossip he'll tell everyone on the whole estate and then the next time we're down the pub we'll be buying drinks all round for people we haven't met before.'

'Right, Mum,' I said. I gave Kenny a little nudge. 'Are you taking this in, chum? Keep that little lip zipped.'

Kenny giggled and acted out zipping his lip. Then we went back in the shop.

'Come for another scratch card, Nikki?' said old Sid, shaking his head. 'You mums and your lottery cards!'

'Yeah, right, tragic, isn't it?' said Mum. 'And no one round here ever wins, do they?'

She caught my eye and grinned. Kenny grinned too. He opened his mouth.

'Zip!' I hissed, and hustled him over to the ice-cream cabinet.

'I've decided to pack in buying scratch cards altogether,' said Mum. 'So I'm going to spend my lottery money on treats for the kids. OK, Jayni, Kenny, what are you having?'

I chose a white Magnum and a tube of Rolos and a packet of marshmallows and a giant bar of Cadbury's fruit and nut and a bottle of Coke and a *Girltalk* and a *Doll Collector* and a *Puppies* and *Kittens* because they all have good pictures for my scrapbook.

Kenny chose a small red ice lolly and a *Thomas the Tank Engine* comic.

'You can have more than that, Kenny. Anything. Sweets, chocolate, more comics, whatever you want.'

'I don't want whatever. I want my lolly and my comic, like always,' said Kenny.

'But you can choose *more*, Kenny.'

'I can't choose,' said Kenny, starting to sound upset.

'Oh, leave him be, Jayni,' said Mum.

She had no problem choosing a *Hello!* and an *OK!* and a *Cosmo* and a big fat *Vogue* and a bottle of diet Coke and a large pack of posh ciggies.

'I thought you were buying treats for the kids,' said Sid.

'Yeah, well, I'm a kid at heart too,' said Mum, paying him.

She used up nearly all the money in her purse but she'd get the £10,000 soon and then we'd be laughing.

'I should be so lucky, lucky, lucky, lucky,' Mum sang, to the old Kylie song. She did a little dance, shaking her hips and sticking her chest out, twirling Sid's carrier bag full of goodies. She took Kenny's hand and mine and made us dance too, even though it was hard for us to hang onto our ice creams. Kenny nearly stuck his lolly up his nose every time he tried to take a lick.

A lorry driver hooted when he saw Mum dancing. He yelled something and Mum laughed and waggled her bum at him.

I just love it when Mum laughs. She tosses her soft blonde hair and opens her mouth and shows all her lovely white teeth. They're little and even and pearly white even though she smokes lots of fags. She doesn't have any fillings. I've got five already.

Mum turns heads even when she's not dancing around. She did a bit of modelling when she was younger. She's got her own scrapbook with pages cut out of newspapers and magazines. We're not supposed to look, Kenny and me, because Mum isn't wearing a lot and some of the poses are quite sexy.

I've tried locking the bathroom door and stripping down to my knickers and trying out some of those poses myself. I look *ridiculous*. I'm as tall as my mum but I haven't got a proper figure. It doesn't go in and out in the right places. My hair's wrong too, even though I've grown it past my shoulders at long last. It's boring old mouse and Mum says I can't have it highlighted her colour blonde until I'm a teenager. It costs a fortune to have it done properly.

Up until the day Mum won the lottery we were always strapped for cash. Mum had to stop modelling when she got married because Dad didn't like it.

'I'm not having other guys ogling my wife,' he said. 'You're giving it up, Nikki, understand?'

Mum understood. You don't argue with my dad.

I wondered if Mum was going to tell Dad about the lottery money. I knew we should keep our mouths zipped with him too. But Mum was so so so stupid when it came to dealing with Dad. She'd do anything for him, give him anything, do exactly what he said. It was partly because she was scared of him. But it was also because she was still crazy about him. He's so good-looking, my dad, lean and tall, with deep blue eyes and a great tangle of black, wavy hair. Everyone thinks he looks incredible, it's not just us. Lots of the women on our estate were nuts about him. Even some of the girls at school acted like he was a rock star.

He was once. Well, he used to sing in this band, the Mad Beggars. They didn't make any actual albums but they sold their own tapes at all their gigs. They played in pubs and clubs all over the city.

Mum went along one night with her mates and stood at the front, right underneath my dad on the stage.

'And I fell in love, *whoomph*, just like that,' Mum said, snapping her fingers.

Dad was the one who snapped his fingers. She went off with him that night. She's been with him ever since.

Dad's band broke up after a year or so. Dad had a fight with the lead guitarist. It looked like Dad and Mum might break up too because Dad didn't really want to be tied down with a steady girlfriend. But Mum told him I was on the way.

'You brought us together again, Jayni,' she said.

That's why my name's spelt in such a weird way. They called me after both of them. My dad's called Jay and Mum's Nikki.

I might have brought them together but I cried a lot as a kid and it got on my dad's nerves so he cleared off once or twice. Then Mum cried a lot too. She loved him so much even though he'd started hitting her by this time. She hit back at first but then he hit harder.

He hit other people too. He ended up doing time in prison for GBH. We went to see him once a month, Mum and me. I remember he was very sweet to us then. He made a big fuss of me, telling me I was his pretty little princess, though I was this plain, podgy kid with no front teeth at that stage. That's the really scary thing

about my dad. He can make you feel so special - but he can also smash your face in.

I knew it was wicked but I wished he could stay in prison for ever. He was safe behind bars and we were safe at home. But he got out eventually, even though he had to serve his full term because he kept getting into fights.

For a week or so it was like Mum and Dad were on their second honeymoon. Dad made a big fuss of me too. He bought Mum a huge bouquet of red roses and he bought me a big bunch of purple freesias. He bought Mum a bottle of pink champagne with a pink ribbon round it and he bought me a bottle of Ribena with a purple ribbon. He bought Mum a huge box of white cream chocolates and he bought me a giant bar of Cadbury's, so big I could hardly hold it in my two hands. But it all started to go wrong when I was only halfway through the chocolate.

Dad thought Mum was flaunting herself when they went out to this club and he hit her when they got home. He started to hit her if a man so much as looked at her. He was convinced she'd had all these boyfriends when he was in prison.

He'd ask me about it, over and over. He shouted with his face up really close so his spit sprayed all over me. I told him that Mum only had eyes for him but he wouldn't believe me. He went on hitting Mum even though she was now pregnant with Kenny.

Mum called him Kenneth, after her dad. This was a bit weird of her, because we never ever went to visit my grandad or grandma or Mum's older sister, Auntie Barbara. Grandad told Mum he never wanted to see her again when she went off with Dad. He said she was throwing herself away. He insisted my dad was Trouble with a capital T.

I suppose my grandad was right. But he was wrong the way he treated Mum. And us. He didn't want to see Kenny even though he was named after him. He didn't even say much to Mum and Kenny and me when we went to see Grandma in hospital when she was dying of cancer.

It was worse at the funeral. Mum tried to hug Grandad afterwards but he pushed her away. He said it was all her fault Grandma got ill. It was the shame of having her daughter living with a vicious criminal.

We haven't seen him since. It was a waste of time lumbering Kenny with such a duff name. It will be much worse when he's old enough to watch *South Park*.

Dad was OK for a bit after Kenny was born. We've got a photo taken on a day at the seaside and Dad's got baby Kenny on his shoulders, a little skinny knee either side of his cheeks. Kenny looks scared stiff but he's clinging grimly to Dad's long hair. Mum is laughing up at him, holding a beach ball. She's wearing a bikini top and a tiny skirt, showing off her pierced belly button. Her tummy is as flat as a pancake even after having Kenny and me.

I'm standing by her side. I'm wearing a bikini top and a tiny skirt too. This is a BIG mistake. My tummy isn't like a pancake. I look as if I've *swallowed* a beach ball.

Dad loved having a son. As soon as Kenny could toddle he was kicking a ball to him and taking him down the pub. Kenny struggled so hard to kick the ball back he usually fell over, and he drank so many Cokes and lemonades down at the pub trying to drink pint for pint with Dad that he often wet himself on the way home.

Dad was surprisingly gentle with him. He didn't even get cross when Kenny cried. He refused to acknowledge that our Kenny was the wimpiest little kid on the whole estate.

'He's a holy terror, my lad Kenny,' Dad would boast, holding Kenny high above his head until he squealed. 'Growing up into a regular little bruiser, scrapping all over the place. He'll be banned from his nursery school if we don't watch out.'

Kenny did get into fights at nursery, but it was with the little girls. He wanted to squeeze into the playhouse with them. They weren't having any so they hit him with the plastic teapot and gave him a black eye.

Dad even boasted to the teachers when Kenny started in reception that they'd have their work cut out coping with his little lad.

I'm the one who had her work cut out coping with Kenny. I'd sneak over to the babies' playground to find Kenny trailing around by himself, head drooping. The other little kids would push him over just for the fun of it, leaving him snivelling, rubbing his eyes with his grazed hands, blood trickling down into his socks. He'd scream if the teachers or dinner ladies went near him. I was the one who had to pick him up and mop him.

I do all the mopping up. I remember when Mum really was playing around with this guy she met up the park. He was running, training because he was in some reserve football team. He looked a *bit* like David Beckham.

I caught him with Mum when I came home early from school because I'd been sick. Mum made out he'd just popped in for a coffee, but they looked all hot and rumped.

I was sick again because I was so scared. I didn't see how she could take such a crazy risk. I knew Dad was up north for a couple of weeks on some dodgy-sounding business trip but he had lots of mates spying for him and telling him if his missus was playing around.

'Are you *crazy*, Mum?' I said.

'I can't help it, Jayni. He made me feel like a girl again,' said Mum, her cheeks bright pink. 'It's not been right between me and your dad, not for a long time.'

'But Dad'll kill you if he finds out,' I said.

'He *won't* find out. Well. Not yet.'

'You can't tell him!'

My stomach churned. Mum could be so stupid. I knew that look in her eyes. She was telling herself a little fairy tale. The footballer would clasp her to his six-pack chest and tell her he'd been picked to play for Manchester United and would she be his bride in the million-pound mansion that he'd just bought. Plus he'd take Kenny and me too. Mum drifted into Dreamworld and went shopping with Victoria Beckham every day while Kenny and I asked Brooklyn and Romeo round to play with all our new toys . . .

'Mum!' I wanted to shake her. I knew her footballer. He had a different girl every week. He'd never stick with Mum. And he wouldn't want Kenny and me tagging along. Anyway, even if it all came true, even the Man U part, Mum couldn't possibly live happily ever after. Dad would smash his way through the big picture

window and tear the footballer's head off his shoulders and then he'd beat her until the fluffy white carpets turned red.

I hated saying this to Mum but I had to make her see sense. Then Dad heard some rumour anyway and came straight back home. You could tell by the way he banged the front door that this was it. Big trouble.

He didn't start straight away. He asked Mum questions, his voice very quiet, very soft. 'Come on, Nikki, don't look so scared. I just want you to tell me I've got it all wrong. If I have, then fine, I'll drop it straight away. I'm a reasonable guy, aren't I?' Then, suddenly yelling, '*Aren't I?*'

Mum panicked. She gabbled that he'd got it all wrong, she'd never so much as looked at another man, though of course she couldn't help being lonely while Dad was away, but even so she'd never dream of talking to any other guy, let alone ask them in for a coffee . . .' Any minute now she'd be letting it all out, telling him everything.

I wished I were as little as Kenny. He always hid under his bed, clamping his hands over his ears so he couldn't hear. I had to listen, even though I couldn't bear it.

Dad took much longer than usual. He said he was teaching her a lesson she'd never forget.

When he'd finished he stormed off out again. I ran to Mum. I wondered if I should call an ambulance. She couldn't speak because her mouth was all bloody and swollen but she shook her head when she saw me pick up the phone. She'd been up to the hospital several times in the past. She never told on Dad, she always said she'd tripped or walked into a lamppost, but Dad got even madder if he found out.

I mopped her up as best I could, holding a cold flannel to her poor face. I cried all over her. I felt so bad that I hadn't been able to protect her.

She couldn't go out for a week because of the bruises. Not just on her face. I saw her in the bath. Her breasts and stomach were black.

I looked at my mum then and knew I hated my dad.

## **Users Review**

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