

Praise for Mel Darbon's Rosie Loves Jack

A World Book Night title

An Empathy Lab "Read for Empathy" title

Nominated for the IBBY Collection of Books for
Young People with Disabilities

"A story about the power of love and the importance of remembering that those with disabilities should not be defined by them." *Mail on Sunday*

"An enthralling story of resolve and grit...a moving and uplifting novel." *The Guardian*

"Passionate and inclusive, it's a compelling quest for love and independence." *The Observer*

"Dazzling and dizzying... A book that you will undoubtedly love." Brian Conaghan

"Brave, unique and optimistic, it's like nothing I've read before." Liz Flanagan

"The vulnerability and love in this book squeezes your heart so hard." S.M. Wilson

What
the
World
Doesn't
See

**MEL
DARBON**



USBORNE

CHAPTER 1

Maudie

Mum said one word when I asked her why she was sitting in the shed: “Sorry”. Her voice was soft and shaky. I couldn’t get my head around her being out there, in the dark, on a half empty bag of compost, clutching the oily rag my dad used when he fixed the lawnmower.

One minute she’d seemed fine, eating dinner with us, and the next she’d bolted out the back door leaving me and Jake, open-mouthed, staring at her empty chair and half-eaten plate of lasagne. We always have lasagne on Saturdays – it was Dad’s favourite. He and Jake liked to eat it on their laps watching the football.

While we eat we usually discuss what we’re going to do on Sunday, but tonight Mum was too distracted. I thought she was just tired, as Jake had got up twice the night before. Plus, I was too busy texting under the table to my best friend

Liv to really register what was going on. Normally Mum would have taken my phone away. I was actually glancing up to see if she was checking on me when she dropped her fork onto her plate with a clatter and ran into the garden.

Mum didn't say another word after "Sorry", which was freaky, and she didn't seem to want to come out of the shed. So I'd had to leave her there while I went to help settle Jake for the evening, otherwise he would have got anxious. I tried calling Eve, Mum's sister, to see if she could come and talk to Mum, but she was on night duty at the hospital. By the time I got back out to the shed, Mum's hands were ice cold and she was shivering.

Eventually I persuaded her to come inside and got her into bed. And then I didn't really know what to do so I tried to get some sleep as well, but my brain wouldn't stop buzzing. I couldn't block out Mum's white face as she said sorry, her eyes focused past my left shoulder.

That word is on repeat inside my head now. Sorry, sorry, sorry. I want it to stop.

I've spent hours thinking back over the last few weeks to see if there was anything that might have shown me this would happen. Sure, Mum's been a bit tense and snappy, but she always gets like that when she has a deadline for work, especially a wedding dress.

This is different though.

Thinking about it, Mum didn't watch a film with me, Liv and Jake on Friday, which she always does. She spent the

evening looking through old family photo albums instead. And when my Aunty Eve invited her out for a drink last week, on one of her rare nights off, Mum didn't want to go.

I even had to help her put her pyjamas on last night, which was off-the-wall weird. She was wearing Dad's favourite, chunky Fair Isle jumper that comes down to her knees. At least she lifted her arms above her head, which Jake usually refuses to do because he thinks it's funny.

I don't get it – Mum's always in control.

I'm really scared. What if she still can't cope today?

CHAPTER 2

Jake

Mum gave me salad. With my pasta. I hate salad. I got upset. Maudie ate it for me. She's a good sister. She helped me get to bed. Mum always does that.

I didn't want blue pyjamas. I wear red Arsenal pyjamas on Saturdays. Maudie knows that. She said they were in the ironing pile. My pyjamas got tangled. It made my head muddle up. Maudie helped me. Then she read me a story. I have two books at bedtime. Maudie said, "Not tonight, Jake." I don't know why.

It's very dark in my room. The dark puts monsters in my head. Oh dear. I can hear Mum crying.

"Mum? Mum! Jake will make it better."

Mum's not answering me. I can hear my sister knocking. Maudie's talking to Mum. The crying has stopped. Mum's not talking back. I can see my door opening.

"Hello, girl!"

“Hey, Jake, did you call me?”

“He wanted his mum.”

“We need to let Mum rest, Jake.”

“Mum was crying. Jake heard her. Is his mum okay?”

“Yes, I think she’s asleep now. Can I sit on your bed?”

“BE CAREFUL! Don’t drop his bag. Keep it safe!”

“I know – here it is.”

“Mum didn’t say goodnight. She kisses Jake’s head at bedtime. It makes the monsters go away. Why didn’t Jake’s mum do that?”

Maudie holds my hand. I don’t like it. It prickles my skin up. Maudie has a sad face. Her mouth is upside down. I can hold her hand. I can do it.

“Do you remember when we went on that long, long walk by the lakes, with Dad?”

“Yes he does. Maudie got stung by a wasp-bee. Ow!”

“I did! How could I forget *that*?”

“Maudie got a big nose.”

“Yeah – huge. Dad couldn’t stop laughing. I was so angry at him. Do you remember we walked so far you sat on a rock and refused to budge, because you were so tired?”

“Jake’s legs stopped working.”

“They did, and it’s a bit like that for Mum tonight. She’s exhausted because she’s been working so hard, I think her whole body has stopped working. Do you get what I mean?”

“Mum’s legs won’t work. Like Jake’s.”

“Exactly! All Mum needs is a good night’s sleep, then she’ll

be fine tomorrow. Let's get some sleep ourselves. I'll kiss the monsters away for you. There, night night."

"Bugs bite."

My head is worried. I don't know if Mum's legs will work in the morning.

CHAPTER 3

Maudie

I check my phone to delay going downstairs. There's nothing from Aunty Eve but about six texts from Liv, wondering where I got to last night and if I'm okay. We usually spend most evenings chatting for hours and Liv had promised she'd call after she'd been for her driving lesson last night.

I quickly tap in a reply to her.

Sorry. Shit night. Mum went to pieces. Need to speak later xx

A reply pings straight back.

Hugs 

That's why I love Liv, she just gets it.

I groan when I see the time, it's gone ten and I must get

up. We often go bowling on a Sunday, which Jake loves – we all do. Mum seemed okay when we went last Sunday, didn't she? We had such a laugh. I'm sure we will again today. I cross my fingers, like I did when I was little.

I go downstairs to find, not Mum, but Eve sitting at the kitchen table, trying to stop Jake fitting a whole sausage into his mouth. He shoves her hand away, startling her.

“Hey, Jake, try cutting that up, then you won't choke.” I smile at him.

He drops it onto the plate. “He doesn't know where his mum is.”

Eve jumps straight in. “She's having a lie-in, Jake. She's really tired.” She looks flustered as she waves a hand to me in greeting.

I raise my eyebrows in question at Eve, but she's now rummaging in the cutlery drawer. My heart thuds erratically in my chest. I never managed to get hold of my aunt last night, which means Mum must have called Eve herself. She must be shattered coming here straight after work. Why didn't Eve wake me up? I feel a bit sick. I should ask her straight out what Mum said to her and why she's here, but I can't. I have a feeling I might not like the answer.

Jake pushes his plate away from him. “Jake has full English on Sunday.”

“Oh dear, sorry. I'd forgotten that, Jake.” Eve looks strained.

“It's fine, Eve. You're only missing the mushrooms, Jake.”

“Jake likes mushrooms.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll make sure we have them next Sunday.” I turn to Eve. “It’s my fault, Mum and I cook breakfast together on Sundays now. I should have got up earlier.”

“Maudie’s fault.” Jake looks at me intently.

I hover near Eve, who’s focused on cutting up Jake’s food, until I finally pluck up the courage to ask her, “Why are you here?”

Eve picks up Jake’s fork and stabs it into a piece of sausage, offering it to him.

Jake turns his head away. “He’s not a baby, he doesn’t need feeding.”

Eve grimaces. “Argh! I know that Jake, I’m just not thinking straight. I thought it might help.” She smiles apologetically at Jake and gives him the fork. “I had a very difficult baby delivery last night that ended in an emergency operation. I need a gallon of coffee to get my brain going this morning.”

She really must be tired; Jake loves her, but on an unpredictability scale of one to ten he’s an eleven, and he’d have lobbed that sausage at her if she’d tried to get it in his mouth.

Eve hasn’t answered my question and her face looks grey and drawn, which gives me a horrible feeling in the pit of my stomach.

“Where’s Mum? Have you seen her this morning?” I look around the tiny kitchen, as though she’s going to magically

appear from under the sink or something.

Jake prods me with his fork. “She’s having a lie-in. Eve said that.”

I look at Eve, who has turned bright red and refuses to hold my eye. The knot in my stomach gets tighter. Can’t Mum get out of bed? Is she still feeling like she did last night and can’t get up?

Jake opens his bag and pulls out the ripped front page of a *London Bus* magazine and holds it up to show me. Half my brain is still distracted with worries about Mum, but I take a deep breath and try to sound enthusiastic.

“That’s such a great open-top bus, Jake. One of your favourites.”

He hands the ripped cover to me but changes his mind as I’m about to take it and snatches it away again. “It’s all broken.”

“That’s because you rip them up, Jake.”

He shakes his head. “Jake made a leaflet. He told you that last week.”

“You did. Sorry.”

“Maudie wasn’t listening.”

He raises a disapproving eyebrow at me, just like Mum does, then arranges his leaflet on the bottom of his bag, making sure it’s flat, before hooking the handles over his knee. He lines all the coasters evenly along the middle of the table.

“I’d forgotten how specific everything has to be. I really

am being useless this morning.” Eve keeps her eyes on the table.

I sit down next to her and rest my hand gently on her arm. Eve looks up at me and gives me a wobbly smile. I’m shocked at how rough she looks. She has huge dark circles under her eyes and an angry spot is coming up on her chin.

“Eve? Did Mum call you?”

She takes my hand in hers. “Maudie.” She lowers her voice. “I... Well, there’s no good way of saying this...”

I glance over at my brother, who’s now murmuring under his breath and picking at his nails, which are ripped down to the skin, bleeding at the edges. Not surprisingly, Jake’s anxious too, and our feelings are only going to make that worse.

I pass him the sports section of the newspaper to help distract him. “There are some good photos here of Arsenal players.”

“Jake loves football.” He spreads the pages out on the table.

“Eve, please tell me what’s going on, or I’ll go and ask Mum myself.”

She pinches the bit between her eyebrows and swallows hard before blurting out, “You can’t, Maudie. Your mum has gone.”

“GONE?”

Eve nods.

“That girl’s too loud. It hurts his ears. Where’s his mum gone?” Jake anxiously looks around the kitchen.

“Not sure, Jake, but there’s nothing to worry about,” I reassure him. “I expect she’s gone for a walk or something.”

He seems happy with this for now. I lower my voice. “But Mum can’t have gone. I put her to bed.”

“Your mum rang me at five this morning, asking me to come over urgently. I got here as fast as I could. It took me a little bit longer, as I detoured home first from the hospital to change out of my stained uniform. By the time I got here she’d left,” Eve whispers. “What the hell am I going to do? I’ve got Ed’s parents round for Sunday lunch.” She drops her head in her hands. “God – what am I saying? Who cares about bloody lunch when your mum’s... Sorry, I didn’t mean that.”

“What did she say? Will she be back later? She hasn’t gone for long, has she?”

“I honestly don’t know. I don’t think so, but she didn’t say.” Eve sniffs and wipes her nose on a piece of kitchen roll. “I feel so bad. She’s a single mum, full-time carer and seamstress. And she still misses your dad so much. I don’t know how she manages, because she’s always working.”

Guilt silences me. Mum’s always running around after me and Jake, and the hum of her sewing machine often lulls me to sleep at night. She never stops. “She’s just having a day off, yes?”

“I guess.” Eve shakes her head.

I hear the doubt in her voice.

“I feel just as bad. I mean, I’m living with her.” A huge

lump forms in my throat. I feel terrible. So much for me trying to be the perfect daughter; working hard at school, focusing on my art portfolio, never getting home late, when I should have been helping Mum out more to make life easier. Why can't I get it right?

Jake pushes his plate to the other side of the table. "Stop talking! He doesn't like this bag. He wants the pink one."

There are beads of sweat on Jake's forehead.

I push down the lump in my throat and get all practical, like Mum does when Jake gets agitated. "Hey, Jake, I'll get your other bag in a sec," I say to him, then turn back to Eve. "We can manage on our own today, Eve, no problem. Can't we, Jake?"

"No problem. Can Jake see the boats?"

"Of course!" I tell him. "Mum totally deserves a day off."

Eve's voice cracks as she lowers her voice again to speak to me. "Honestly, I don't know if it is just a day, Maudie. I don't know what's going on – she hasn't texted me or anything since she called. Where could she have gone? I'm really worried about her."

I am too, as it isn't like Mum at all. I swallow hard to stop myself crying. "I'm going to check her bedroom. There might be some sort of clue in there as to where she's gone." My voice wavers. I know I'm clutching at straws.

Eve swallows hard, her eyes glassy. "Maybe. Don't get your hopes up, sweetie."

"I have to check." I hear the desperation in my voice.

“Jake wants Marmite.” He pushes the jar towards me.

“I’ll do that now.” Eve scrapes her chair back, eager to keep busy.

“Love it or hate it,” Jake booms at her.

“Yuck – I hate Marmite.” Eve laughs.

“Jake and Maudie love it.” He lifts his hand up to high-five me as I go past. We smack them together.

I walk out of the kitchen and stand at the bottom of the stairs, afraid to go up. “Mum?”

There’s no answer, of course, but I still climb each step one at a time and linger outside her bedroom door, which is open just a crack. I knock, just in case. But the silence tells me what I already know.

CHAPTER 4

Jake

Aunty Eve's in my house. I want her to go home. She doesn't listen to me. She didn't put cold water in my tea. My tongue is hot and burny. Ow!

Mum isn't here. She's gone out. Me and Maudie can go and find her. I'm good at hide and seek.