

Jacqueline Wilson

Illustrated by Nick Sharratt

Three secret diaries, two special friends,
one incredible hiding place . . .

Secrets



Contents

Cover

About the Book

Title Page

Dedication

Introduction

One: Treasure

Two: India

Three: Treasure

Four: India

Five: Treasure

Six: India

Seven: Treasure

Eight: India

Nine: Treasure

Ten: India

Eleven: Treasure

Twelve: India

Thirteen: Treasure

Fourteen: India

Fifteen: Treasure

Sixteen: India

Seventeen: Treasure

Eighteen: India

Nineteen: Treasure

Twenty: India

Things to Think About

Read on for the first chapter of *LOVE LESSONS*

About the Author
About the Illustrator
Also by Jacqueline Wilson
Copyright

About the Book

I'm India.

And I'm Treasure.

My mum's a famous fashion designer, and we live in this gorgeous house. Mum's a nightmare, though. Nothing I do is good enough for her.

I live with my gran. We don't have much money, but Gran's brilliant - and anything's better than going back to live with Mum and horrible Terry.

I wasn't sure Treasure and I would have much in common - but it turns out we do.

We both love Anne Frank - she's the reason we started to write our diaries.

So when Treasure needed to escape from her violent stepdad, I knew the perfect hiding place.

Not a secret annexe - a secret attic . . .

Jacqueline Wilson

Illustrated by Nick Sharratt

Secrets



CORGI
YEARLING

For Alex – thank you so much for compiling my diary.



Many of my books are about special friendships. Treasure and India, the two girls in *Secrets*, have one of the closest of these friendships, but on the face of it they are an unlikely pair. They're the same age, they're both bright, bookish girls, they both like drawing and colouring and inventing – but they are worlds apart when it comes to background.

Treasure's had a really scary life. Her mum has a boyfriend who hates Treasure, and vents his temper on her. He might be a good father to his own children, Bethany and Kyle and little Gary, but he threatens poor Treasure, making her life a misery. He goes too far and hits her with his heavy belt, cutting her forehead. Treasure's magnificent, feisty grandma sees this, and sweeps her off to live in her crowded council flat with her own extended family.

India lives nearby, but in a very different huge house. Her father wouldn't dream of hitting her with a belt – but he's too wrapped up in his own affairs to take any notice of her. India's dress designer mother is also absorbed in her own world, frequently impatient with her awkward challenging chubby daughter. India is ultra bright at school, but she makes the other girls groan. They can't understand India, especially her obsession with Anne Frank

and her diary. India in her own way is just as much a lonely misfit as Treasure.

I'm the author. I have power over the plot! So of course I made the girls meet and get to know each other properly. They tell their stories in alternate chapters - and when Treasure has to hide away, India is inspired by Anne Frank's diary to offer her a kind of secret annexe.

I'm not really a bit like Treasure *or* India, but we have a few things in common. I was brought up on a big council estate like Treasure, though I never learnt to ride a bike, let alone do wheelies. I was obsessed by Anne Frank like India, reading her very moving diary again and again. I had a photo of Anne by my bedside for years.

Do you think Treasure and India will stay best friends forever? I do hope so.

Jacqueline Wilson



One Treasure

THIS IS THE start of my whole new life. I am never going home. I don't ever want to see Mum again. Or Bethany or Kyle or grizzly little Gary. And I especially don't ever, ever, ever want to see Terry.

This notebook used to be the Official Terry Torture Manual. I invented a brand-new torture for him every day. It was a lot of fun. But then sneaky Bethany found the notebook under my pillow and showed it to him. He turned the pages very slowly, taking in all my carefully coloured diagrams of torture machines. I'd spent hours on the Terrible Tooth Tweaker and the Excrutiating Ear Enlarger and the Beastly Big Bum-Basher.

Terry looked at them. He nodded. He drew in his breath. Then he ripped the pages out and tore them up into tiny pieces. It was obvious he wanted to tear me into tiny pieces too.

Mum tried to turn it into a joke and pretended it was just my warped sense of humour.

‘That kid of yours is warped all right,’ said Terry. He stood up and unbuckled the heavy leather belt round his jeans. ‘She needs teaching a lesson once and for all.’

Mum tried to laugh him out of it, acting like he was just kidding. She said he didn’t really mean it. He was just trying to scare me. We were all scared. When he raised the belt Mum yelled at me to run for it. I didn’t run fast enough. He got me on the side of my head and broke my glasses and cut me all down my forehead.

Mum cried. Bethany cried because it was all her fault. Kyle cried too though he likes to make out he’s so tough. Gary cried, but that’s nothing new. I didn’t cry. I stood there with blood trickling down into my eyes and I clenched my fists and stared straight at Terry. He looked a bit fuzzy without my specs but he’s got these really cold green eyes that you can’t miss. I focused on them. Staring him out. He was the one who broke first. He looked away, ducking his head like he was ashamed.

He went straight out down the pub even though Nan and Loretta and her little Britney and Willie and Patsy were coming round for tea. It was all laid out on the living-room table: ham sandwiches and sausage rolls and leftover chocolate log and mince pies and fruit cake, though Kyle and I had nicked most of the icing. Bethany’s off sweet stuff at the moment because she thinks she’s fat. Well she *is*. I annoy her no end because I eat heaps and stay thin as a pin. Mum says it’s my nervous energy.

No wonder I get nervous living with Terry.

But I don’t live with him any more, hurray, hurray, hurray! He did me a huge favour hitting me with his belt. Nan took one look at me and went white.

‘My God, Treasure, what have they done to you?’

I just shrugged. I’m not a tell-tale like *some* people. Bethany and Kyle and Mum held their breath. Even little Gary stopped grizzling.

My nan’s not daft.

'Terry did it, didn't he?' she said.

Her voice was very quiet in the hushed room. She looked round, her eyes flashing.

'Where is he?'

'He's out, Mum. But it wasn't really Terry's fault. It was an accident.'

'Accident my bottom,' said Nan.

Well, she said something ruder and more alliterative. We have learnt about alliteration at school. I am Top Girl. Which isn't hard because heaps of our kids have got problems. Our school has got a bad name. But I won't have to go to it any more. I shall go to a school near my nan's. I am living with her now.

I can't believe it! Oh, I love my nan *sooooo* much. She got it all sorted. She made me stand under the light in the living room and gently pushed back my sticky fringe and peeled off the plasters Mum had stuck on. Nan swore again when she saw the size of the cut.

'Go and get your coat, Treasure,' she said quietly.

'What are you on about, Mum?' said my mum.

'We're off,' said Nan. She nodded at the rest of the family. 'Come on. We'll have tea back at our place, once we've taken Treasure up the hospital.'

'Hospital?' Mum whispered.

'She needs stitches, Tammy. How did he *do* it? Did he knife her?'

'No, no, it was an accident, his belt—'

'His belt,' said Nan. She hugged me tight. 'Right. Bethany, you get yourself upstairs with a big carrier bag and get Treasure's clothes packed. She's staying with me from now on.'

We all stared at Nan.

'Jump to it, Bethany!' Nan commanded.

'Yes, Nan,' said Bethany, jumping. She's not *her* nan but she does as Nan tells her. We all do.

'You can't, Mum,' said my mum, starting to cry.

I thought she meant I couldn't stay with Nan. I nearly cried then, because I didn't want Mum to feel I was walking out on her. She needed me. She's useless at keeping Bethany and Kyle under control and she doesn't always get up for Gary in the night. And then there's Terry. He hits her too.

I decided maybe I should stay.

But it turned out she didn't mean that at all.

'You can't take Treasure up the hospital, Mum. They'll want to know how it happened,' my mum sobbed. 'And then they'll get on to the Social - maybe even the police. They'll come down on Terry like a ton of bricks.'

Nan held me even tighter. She could feel me quivering.

'So it's Terry we've got to think of, is it? Our Treasure can get scarred for life but never mind her, let's all worry about Terry?'

Kyle was looking puzzled because he doesn't get sarcasm. Gary was wailing now, his nose running down into his mouth. Mum looked awful too, her mascara smudged and her face so white it made the pink rouge along her cheekbones look like clown make-up.

'It's just a nasty nick,' Mum pleaded. 'Take Treasure for a little holiday, it's maybe all for the best - but don't cause trouble, Mum, I beg you.'

'Call yourself a mother!' said Nan. She bent down, scooped Gary out of his baby chair, checked his nappy and grimaced. 'Here, try and take care of this one at least.' She thrust Gary at Mum and yelled up the stairs to Bethany.

Bethany came running with a carrier bag spilling clothes. Nan snatched it from her and gave my shoulder a squeeze.

'Right, pet, we'll be off.'

Mum was so busy crying she didn't say goodbye to me. Kyle just gawped. But Bethany suddenly put her arms round me and gave me a big hug, even though we've hated each other ever since we've been stepsisters.

‘I’m sorry, Treasure,’ she said.

She must have been truly sorry because when I unpacked the carrier bag back at Nan’s I found she’d put in her own black designer T-shirt, the one with the little grey squirrel on the front. She’d got it as one of her Christmas presents from Terry and she’d gone berserk on Boxing Day when she’d found me secretly trying it on. It fitted perfectly even though I’m nearly two years older, because she’s big and I’m a little titch. She had told me to whip it off quick or she’d tell her dad – but now she’d given it to me.

I’m wearing it now with my black jeans and my crocodile boots. I look seriously cool. OK, the boots are last year’s and so they scrunch up my toes a bit but I don’t care.

‘We women have to suffer to look stylish,’ says Nan when she kicks her high heels off and rubs her own sore feet.

My nan is young for a grandma and very, very glamorous. She wouldn’t be seen dead in the usual granny gear. My nan wears tight, lacy vesty things and short skirts that show off her legs. She looks especially glam when she teaches her line-dancing class. She has all these little matching outfits. I like the white one best: white waistcoat with rhinestones, short white skirt and white leather cowboy boots with spurs.

‘Can I go to your line-dancing class sometime, Nan?’ I asked her.

‘Of course you can, darling. I reckon you’ll pick it up in no time. Patsy goes, don’t you, pet?’

Patsy grinned at me. ‘Yes, it’ll be great, Treasure.’

Patsy is being so *kind* to me. She’s so, so different from Bethany. Patsy doesn’t even seem to mind that she has to share her bedroom with me. It’s not much bigger than a cupboard so it isn’t easy. She’s only got a single bed so Nan fixed me up with cushions and a spare duvet on the floor. It seemed all right to start with but in the middle of the night the cushions kept sliding sideways.

Patsy heard me rootling around, trying to reorganize my bedding. 'Here, Treasure, come in my bed,' she whispered.

'There isn't room. It's OK, I'm fine,' I whispered back.

'No, you're not. Come on, it'll be fun.' She paused and then giggled. 'Do as your auntie says, Treasure!'

I giggled too. Patsy is only seven but she is my actual auntie. She's Nan's youngest child. My mum is the oldest. Though she acts like she's never grown up, Nan always says.

Patsy is Nan's favourite. She calls her 'my little surprise'. She's Pete's child and Nan is nuts about him. I can't remember him properly but I think he's big and bear-like. Patsy is little and fluffy, like a baby bunny. She's got lovely, long fair hair. She wears it in a ponytail or a topknot with a cute little set of butterfly slides at either side. The only funny thing about Patsy is that she walks with her feet pointing out like a penguin, but that's because she does a lot of ballet. She does tap too and acrobatics. Nan's thinking of sending her to a special stage school soon as she has the talent and the looks to make it really big.

You'd think Patsy would be a horrid little show-off but she's not a bit. I've always liked her lots though we haven't met up much as I've lived all over the place with my mum and then, when Mum settled down with Terry, she and Nan kept falling out. But I like all Nan's family and I love Patsy second-best to Nan.

I squeezed into her bed and we cuddled up like spoons. Patsy felt so little and springy compared with Bethany. (We weren't usually on cuddling terms at all but if Terry and my mum were having a fight in the middle of the night it got so scary that Bethany and I would huddle together, the duvet over our heads to block out the noise.)

Patsy's hair tickled my face but I didn't mind. I reached out and stroked it gently. I'm trying to grow my own hair but it goes all wispy. If I tilt my head back and hunch up I can kid myself I've got shoulder-length hair, but it's not

really. Patsy is so lucky having lovely long hair. Patsy is so lucky, full stop.

Still, I've got lucky now. This is my new life and I'm happy, happy, happy. I look a bit weird still because I had to have ten stitches and they're still sticking out of my forehead. Nan hasn't dared wash my hair yet so my fringe is all stuck together. I shall have a big scar but I don't care. It will make me look TOUGH.

I didn't tell on Terry up at the hospital. I couldn't do it to Mum. I said me and my brother and sister were messing around playing a stupid cowboy game and I got lassoed.

Nan backed me up.

'Though why we should protect that pig I don't know,' she muttered, lighting up a ciggie. 'Still, I'm not having anyone call *me* a grass.'

She got told that the hospital has a strictly no-smoking policy so she stamped on it. She looked like she wanted to grind Terry under her high heel too.

'Your mum's the one needs her head looking at,' said Nan, as we trailed out the hospital, my forehead all puckered up with black thread. 'Why doesn't she *leave* him?'

I shrugged. It baffles me too. 'Still, *I've* left him now, haven't I, Nan?' I said.

'You bet, Treasure. You were such a good brave girl up the hospital. I'm proud of you.'

'And I can really, truly stay with you, Nan? I'll do lots of housework and keep an eye on Patsy and I could help Loretta with little Britney, I'm good with babies—'

'Bless you, pet,' said Nan. 'You don't have to earn your keep. You're *family*.'

'And I can stay in your family for good, Nan? Promise?'

'Yes, I promise, Treasure,' said Nan.

That's the best bit. You can rely on my nan. She never, ever breaks her promises.



Two

India

DEAR KITTY

I don't know what to put! And it sounds a bit silly, 'Dear Kitty' - as if I'm writing a letter to our cat, Tabitha. I started this new diary that way because that's how Anne Frank wrote *her* diary. She was this wonderful Jewish girl who had to hide in a secret annexe with her family during the last world war, and while she was there she wrote a diary. She was a brilliant writer. She described everything so vividly. You really feel you're hiding in the annexe with her, sharing your bedroom with a grumpy old dentist, eating rotten vegetables, running out of clothes to wear and having to creep about all the time, not even able to pull the lavatory chain when anyone's downstairs.

Well, I don't flush the toilet sometimes when I get up in the night, but that's because our water system's really noisy and it wakes everyone up. If Dad wakes up he can't get back to sleep because he's under a lot of pressure at work. That sounds so funny, as if Dad sits at his desk with a huge weight on his head. Actually he often rubs the back of his neck now as if it's hurting him.

It hurts me too. I really love my dad. He's a managing director of this big engineering firm, Major Products. I don't really know what major things they produce. I don't even know exactly what my dad does. He manages. He directs. He's always been a whizz at his job but now he acts like he's worried all the time. I tried massaging his neck for him yesterday but he pushed my hands away and said, 'Stop *dabbing* at me, India.'

I went away and cried. Mum happened to be home and came in to my bedroom to look for my coat and skirt to send to the cleaners.

'Maybe I'd better send you to the cleaners too, India,' she said, looking at my blotchy face and inky fingers. I'd written a poem to express my feelings. It started *Oh woe, I love my Dad so*. It wasn't one of my *better* poems.

Mum asked why I was crying, even sitting on the bed beside me and acting all *mumsie* for once. She seemed disappointed when I told her it was because Dad didn't seem to want me around him any more.

'For God's sake, India, don't be such a baby,' she said, laughing at me. 'He just snapped at you, that's all. That's nothing. You should hear the things he says to me sometimes.'

She sniffed resentfully. Then she smiled again. Mum has this really irritating, dazzling smile showing off all her cosmetic dentistry – but her eyes don't light up. It's as if her face is a mask and her eyes are the only real bit.

'Still, I suppose we'd better try to be understanding. Dad's having a hard time at work.' Mum sighed. 'Aren't we all?' The smile was still there but it was as if she was silently adding, 'But *some* of us cope without making all this fuss.'

Anne Frank loved her dad but frequently couldn't bear her mother. I feel Anne and I are soul sisters. I love to write too. I write my diary, I write stories and poems, I even wrote the nativity play at school. I tried so hard, rewriting

it three whole times, trying to be *original*, so it was mostly from the animals' point of view, with the ox and the ass and the littlest lamb as the major characters.

Mrs Gibbs said in class that it was 'a lovely idea, don't you think so, girls?' Everyone smiled and said it was super. But out in the playground they all groaned and made faces and said it was the most stupid idea ever and who wanted to act as a cow, for God's sake? Did I think they were all *babies*?

I should have said they were all acting like babies right that minute. I didn't. I just blushed and stammered and said I was sorry, yes it was a mad idea, in fact it absolutely sucked. So then they despised me for being wet as well as babyish and a teacher's pet. Sometimes I think I despise myself.

I have bright ginger hair. Most people think this means I have a fearful temper. I do get angry inside but I can't stick up for myself. I only get furious when I think things aren't fair for other people.

Maria waited until the others had all run off and then she put her arm round me and said she thought my play sounded very imaginative. It was maybe more suited to *little* children. She thought it would work a treat with them.

Maria was probably just being kind though. She's kind to everyone.

I wish Maria was my friend but she's Alice's best friend. *Everyone* in my class has got a best friend - or else they go round in little gangs like Lucy and Imogen and Sarah and Claudia. It's so awful not having a gang, not having a best friend.

I *used* to. I used to have Miranda. We knew each other right from when we were babies because we shared the same nanny while our mums ran this designer scarf company. Miranda and I were almost like sisters. We went to the same kindergarten and then the same school. We always had each other.

Miranda could be just a bit boring sometimes because she never had any ideas of her own – but I always had *heaps* of ideas so I suppose it didn't matter too much. Miranda wasn't much use at playing pretend games but at least she didn't laugh at me. When we were little we had two favourites: we played Monkeys, swinging about and being silly and scratching ourselves, or we played the Flying Game, pretending the sleeves of our coats were wings and swooping around all over the place. I know, it sounds so daft now, but we were *very* little.

As we got a bit older the two games merged. Flying Monkeys was the best game of all. We pretended we could whizz through open windows and throw peanuts at people. We could ride the weathercock on the church steeple, prance on the roof of the tallest multi-storey and nest in the tops of the poplars on the playing fields. We Flying Monkeys fiercely defended our territory against our enemies, Flying Elephants flapping their vast ears.

Mum saw us battling it out one day. She didn't understand this was Flying Animal Warfare. She clapped her hands and said, 'That looks great fun, girls' but when she got me on my own she hissed, 'I wish you wouldn't *shriek* so, India. And do you really have to galumph around like that?'

I said sulkily that I was being an elephant so I was *supposed* to galumph.

Mum said, 'Oh, I *see*, my little Indian elephant.'

If Dad had said it he would have been making a funny joke. But Mum was getting at me. She can't stand it because I'm fat. She's never actually *said* it. The nearest we come to it is 'large', as in, 'My daughter's a little on the *large* side.' She whispers the word as if it's obscene. She thinks it is.

My mum is so skinny her arms and legs look like you could snap them in half. When she wears a low-cut top you can see all her bones. OK, she's got a fabulous flat tummy

but she's flat *everywhere*. She isn't naturally thin. She is on a permanent diet. She doesn't *say* she's dieting. She says she eats perfectly normally. It isn't normal to eat fruit and salad and raw vegetables all the time. I know she loves cakes and chocolate like everyone else but she never weakens. Dad once bought us a special big cake from a Viennese patisserie. Mum smiled and said, 'How *gorgeous!*' And then had ONE bite of her slice. It was a little bite too. She's the same with chocolates. I've seen her *lick* one white Belgian cream chocolate and then throw it in the bin. She is amazing. I could never do that. I am the exact opposite. I could eat an entire great gateau and a giant box of chocolates all by myself, easy-peasy.

Mum and I have this constant battle. I am supposed to be on a diet but I don't stick to it. I eat my slither of chicken and my cherry tomatoes and my carrot sticks and my apple and my orange – and then I sneak upstairs and munch two Mars Bars and crunch a whole pack of Pringles.

Mum went bananas when she found all the empty wrappings under my bed. She shouted all sorts of stuff and I cried and that made her worse because she hates me being a cry-baby. She was furious with Wanda for letting me buy them. Wanda cried too.

Wanda is even more of a cry-baby than I am. Wanda is our latest au pair. We've had lots since I stopped needing a nanny. They never stay long. Mum never likes them. Dad likes the pretty ones so Mum gets rid of them sharpish. Mum and Dad had a big fight over Brigitte. And Selke. And Mai. So Mum decided to try an Australian girl.

'Someone sunny-natured and strong,' said Mum.

'And bronzed and bouncy and blonde!' Dad whispered to me, and we both giggled.

But the laugh was on us, because Wanda isn't at all the way we wanted her to be. She's certainly not sunny. She looks vague and misty most of the time, so the kindest way of describing her would be cloudy. When she cries she's