

I'm going to find Jack.

I can do it.



I am Rosie.



ROSIE
LOVES
JACK

Mel Darbon

USBORNE

*To my brother, Guy,
who made me the person I am.*

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DOWN'S TEEN MISSING

FEARS are growing for a 16-year-old girl with Down's syndrome who has not been seen since leaving home five days ago.

Rose Tremayne set off for Henley College just before 9 a.m. on Friday, December 12, but never arrived.

Police want to speak to a caller who rang the college in Oxfordshire to say Rose was unwell and would not be going in that day. Chief Inspector Tim Jones, who is leading the search, said it was possible that the teenager, of Rupert's Lane, Henley-on-Thames, was making her way to Brighton, where her boyfriend is currently staying.

"The recent heavy snowfalls and resulting

problems on the trains mean her journey won't have been straightforward," he said. "I would urge any member of the public who thinks they may have seen Rose to contact the police immediately."

He added that Rose's parents were desperately worried and anxious for news.

Rose is described as 4ft 11in, with a pale complexion, green eyes and shoulder-length red-gold hair.

She was last seen wearing a black duffel coat, black jeans, a cream cable-knit jumper and distinctive purple Dr. Marten boots with a rose design and carrying a purple fake-fur bag covered in badges.

Chapter 1
2nd December

Ur marsh-melos have sunk xxx

I put my phone down and clean a circle on the glass to look for Jack. I can't see him anywhere. Jack always gets here at three. It's three and a quarter now.

It's Christmas outside. I like the lights on the tree in the square. They go blue...then green...then red...then white. I like blue best. It looks like the moon shining. And hundreds of stars. And everyone's breath is coming out of their mouths in clouds.

I try writing Jack's name in the window mist.

It's noisy in the cafe today. There are lots of students from my college here. They've taken all the sofas up. The girls have tinsel on their heads and they're joining in with all

the Christmas songs, but real Christmas is three weeks and two days away.

Jim is laughing at something one of the girls said. I like Jim cos he's always happy. He wears a green stripy apron with a pocket at the front, for his phone and some mints for fresh breath con-fi-dence.

It's going to be three and a half round the clock soon.

My friend Jess walks by and waves to me. She comes into the cafe. Jess helps me with literacy at college on Tuesdays. She's cool. I want to get a silver nose stud like her.

"Hi, Rose, good to see you. I love your new Doc Martens, they're sick! Oh – that doesn't mean they're—"

"Yeah I know. Ben told Mum her meatballs were sick, and Mum said it was a revolting expresshun."

"True, lol! Can I join you?"

"Course."

"I'll miss seeing you when I'm away."

"I don't want you to go. I like you coming to help us read and do writing on Tuesdays."

"Six months will fly by. I can't believe I started planning this gap year seven months ago and now I'm off next week, it's crazy."

"Will you come back to help after?"

"I hope so, but I don't know for sure. I'm probably going to have to find a proper job to pay for me going to uni, so I might not have Tuesdays free to help you and Lou any more."

"I wish I could go away with Jack."

Jess takes my hand. "Perhaps you will one day."

"Only if Mum and Dad are with us, or someone."

"I thought you did quite a lot on your own together?"

"In Henley-on-Thames. And once in Reading with Jack."

"Where is Jack?" Jess drops my hand and peers out the window.

"Don't know. I'm worried."

"Nothing to worry about. He'll be in the art room and have forgotten the time. I was like that with my photography A level."

"It's ICT today. Jack hates ICT. P'raps he doesn't want to see me any more."

"Don't be silly! Have you checked your phone?"

"Lots of times."

"Give him a call and I'll get us a drink. Your usual?"

"Yes please. My healthy option, please."

I kiss my Jack on my phone screen before pressing the button to ring him.

"Hey, it's me, Jack. I can't talk cos I'm busy. Leave me a message. Ta."

"Hello, it's Rosie. I'm sitting at our table and your hot choclet's gone cold. All the squirty cream has gone invisible. So hurry up. Love you."

Then I ring him again, just so I can hear his voice. I wish it was his real voice.

"Here's your green tea, Rose, be careful, it's very hot."

"I know, thank you."

“Hey, sweetie, your tongue is out again. Remember what we said? It can make people stare.”

“I didn’t see it sticking out.”

“No probs. Did you get hold of Jack?”

I shake my head. “I think he’s with Emma Golding. He told her he loved her in Drama.”

“We’ve talked about this, Rose. Jack does NOT love Emma, they were just acting in a play.”

“He said, ‘I love you’ to her.”

“It was just pretend, not real, okay?”

“Okay... But he said he loved Emma *two* times.”

“Jack loves *you*, he doesn’t want to be with anyone else.”

“Then where is he?”

Jess looks at her watch. “He’s late, even for Jack, so let’s hope he hasn’t done anything dopey.”

“Whatd’youmean?”

“Well, Jack has been a bit *arsey* recently.”

I don’t want to look at Jess for a bit. She’s all wrong about Jack.

“I didn’t mean to upset you, Rose. Jack’s great, I like him a lot, we all do, but he can...overreact.”

I turn my face away from Jess.

“Rose, look at me, I’m not being mean. When you first met Jack he was much more chilled—”

“That’s cos of me.”

“Yeah, I get that, lovely, he’s been coping with his anger

so much better since he met you, but since his gran died he’s been getting worse again.”

“Jack cried and cried when his gran died. He loved his gran best of all after his mum.”

“I’m sure she loved Jack very much too, which is why he’s been finding it so hard. But lots of people don’t understand why Jack is so angry; you and your friends might in your part of the college but not everyone in the main part of the college does. All they know is that he shouts and swears and hits out at them.”

“Jack’s brain got hurt when he was being born.”

“I know, Rose, and that’s very sad, but people can’t see that his brain is hurt inside his head, all they see is the nice-looking Jack on the outside, so they don’t get his fighting. He’s frightened a few of the students. Nadia Johnson’s mother complained about him.”

“Henevergetsangrywithme.” I shove my chair back. “I’m going to check for him outside.”

Jess sighs. “I’ll watch your stuff for you.”

It’s night-time on the street already, cos it’s winter. Jack always meets me just before the dark comes.

The cold air nettle-stings my face. I pull my jumper up over my nose to stop it but then my middle freezes. I put it back and wrap my arms around me. Whichever way I look, I can’t see Jack. I don’t feel right inside me. I check the time. It’s gone past an hour. Jack is never that much late without telling me.

Toby Varley knocks on the window of the bus as it goes past. He's waving his arms about and pointing up the hill. I don't know what he's doing, but he's always silly. He should be in Pathways at the college, where you need LOTS of help.

I go back into the warm and get my coat. "I'm going to find Jack. Something's wrong."

"He'll be fine; I bet you meet him on your way up the hill. Aren't you going to finish your tea? If the cafe were on *fire* you'd usually finish it."

"OhnoI forgot! Jack filled up my head." I drink my tea to the bottom of the cup. "All gone. ByeJess."

"See you soon, Rose, take care."

I pick up my bag and head to college. I look over my shoulder at the bright lights spilling out of the cafe window. Jess is laughing into her phone.

My feet keep slipping on the snow cos I can't walk fast enough to get to Jack.

All the students are going in a different direction to me. Jack's face isn't coming down the hill with them. He's vanished.

I can see the college at the top. It's the same size as my hand. I push my legs harder up the hill. They hurt by the time college is bigger than me.

As I run through the car park I see a police car. The light is spinning in a circle on the top, making the snow blue.

Inside the building the corridors are empty. My boots

squeak on the floor. I tiptoe along to make them hush. The swing doors at the end burst open and make me jump. A police lady runs through the gap. She stops to find her breath and asks, "Did you see a young man in a grey hoodie go past this way?"

I shake my head. She turns and goes back through the doors. My heart has a race in my chest. Jack has a grey hoodie.

My legs can't decide which way to walk, so I make them go to the art room. It's Jack's best place. When he was little his mum told him to paint all the angry monsters fighting in his head. To get them out. He painted all the time after that. He's the best artist ever. Everyone says so.

I'm worried as I go up the stairs. Please be there.

I open the art room door, smiling my special smile for Jack.

It's empty.

I so wanted him to be here. I try not to get upset. My head is too muddled to sort it all out.

I check my phone again. Still nothing. Maybe Jack went home instead of meeting me? I don't want to think that. Or about the police lady.

Street light from outside shines into the room. It makes shadow shapes across the wall. I shiver. Something taps on the window, which makes me drop my phone. It clatters across the floor. I stand very still and listen for anyone coming.

I hear something breathing in the darkness. All the hairs

on my arm stand to attention. I watch as the paint cupboard door opens by itself. My mouth un-shuts but no sound comes out. In the gap, I see an eye looking right at me. I scream. A body leaps out of the cupboard and grabs me. A hand stops my mouth.

“Don’t scream, Rosie,” a voice shout-whispers in my ear, “it’s me, Jack.”

He takes his hand off my mouth and I push him away. “Whatareyoudoing? Youscaredme!”

“Shush!” Jack puts his finger on my lips. “We can’t make a noise.”

Jack’s face is white and full of fear but a bubble of angry pops out of me. “Why are you hiding in there? I waited and waited but you didn’t come. I got upset.”

Jack grabs my hand and pulls me into the cupboard and shuts the door. It smells of damp paint. I can’t see Jack very well, but I can feel his body shivering against mine.

“Whatisit?” I whisper into the dusty air.

“I fucked up big time, Rosie.”

“Don’t say that word! What’s happened?”

The dark starts to go away and my eyes see Jack’s looking into mine. Then he groans and lets his head fall into his hands. “I’ve ruined everything.”

“Stop being a drama person. You’re scaring me. Jess said you’ve been scaring lots of people at college. And one of the mums com-plained about you.”

Jack holds my face and says, “I couldn’t help it. I lost it in

ICT. That prick, Davidson, wound me up and wound me up. Bastard!”

“Stop it! I don’t like mean words. Whatdidyoudo?”

Jack won’t look at me now, so I pull his face round. “Tell me.”

“I smashed a computer. I couldn’t control myself, Rosie. Then...then, shit!”

“What?”

“I threw a chair at the window.”

“Jack that’s badbadbad.”

“A bit of glass flew into Mrs Foster’s eye. Oh God, Rosie, there was blood everywhere. I never meant to hurt her. I’d never hurt anybody, you know that, don’t you?”

“Yes... But you did.”

Jack looks at the ground. “The police came and it was horrible. They were asking hundreds of questions. Mr Dean shouted at me, then Mrs Foster grabbed him as she went by on the stretcher and told him that I didn’t hurt her on purpose and that she won’t press charges or anything, but—” Jack takes a big shuddery breath...

“What does *that* mean?”

“Press charges?”

I nod.

“They won’t send me to prison—”

“Nonono! Not prison!”

“No, it’s okay, *not* prison. But, Rosie, remember when I kicked the art table and it fell down?”

“I do. You broke Sam’s work.”

“And they said I might have to go away to some place and deal with my anger? What if they send me away now?”

I start crying. “They can’t send you away. What will we do? We need us. I stop your angry, Jack. And you make me strong. You make me Rosie.”

“And you make me a good Jack. When you’re with me, Rosie, all the darkness vanishes and my brain calms down; even more than when I paint. You take away the black inside my head and turn it into colours.”

I touch him gently where he showed me his brain had got hurt. He puts his hand over mine and kisses my wrist. He looks at me with eyes full of frightened.

“I’m so stupid! We can’t be apart, that’s why I ran away from the police so they can’t take me. I need you, Rosie, I have to find a place to hide, so we can be together.”

Jack folds his arms around me. I bury my face in his chest and smell his Jack smell. Lynx and sweat and lemon shampoo. He strokes my hair and whispers, “Rosie, Rosie, Rosie,” over and over again.

I don’t want to leave the cupboard. They can’t take my Jack away. I kiss his eyes and his lips and the soft bit at the bottom of his ear. He trembles when I touch him.

“I love you, Rosie Tremayne,” Jack says softly.

I’m about to answer him when the door flies open and a torch light shines in our faces. All I can see is white in my eyes. I scream and Jack pulls me to the back of the cupboard

with him. I bury my face in Jack’s chest and wrap my arms around him, so I can’t let go.

“Come on, you two,” a prickly voice says. “We’ve been looking everywhere for you, Jack. You’re not helping yourself by running off like that.”

A police man with a big frown on his face looks into the cupboard. A police lady next to him shakes her head from side to side. She comes in and takes my arm.

“Leave us alone! Take your hands off my girlfriend!”

“Come on now, let go of him, love.” The police lady tries to tug my arms away from Jack. He knocks her hat off, sending it flying out the door.

“Jack, don’t! Calm down.” I try and stop Jack doing anything else but the police lady pulls me out of the cupboard.

“Let go of him now, it’s for the best.”

The main art room doors swing open and Mr Dean, the principal, comes in. He’s all out of his breath.

“Have you...found him? W...what are you doing here... Rosie?”

“They’re taking my Jack. Stop them taking my Jack, Mr Dean.”

“They have to...Rosie. Where is he, off...officer?”

The police lady nods at the art cupboard. The police man drags Jack out into the art room. He’s trying to sit on the floor but the police man won’t let him.

“Control yourself, Jack,” Mr Dean bellows at him. “You’re making things ten times worse.”

The police man stands Jack on his feet. "Let's get you to the car. Your mother is waiting for you at home."

Jack struggles to reach me, but the police man holds him tightly by one arm.

"Rosie! I'll come back and get you. Wait for me at our special place!" He swings his fist out at the police man, who grabs it and yanks Jack's arm behind his back.

"Enough! Or I'll handcuff you if I have to."

Jack stops fighting and goes sad all over. The police man leads him out of the room. He looks round at me and whispers, "I'm sorry."

I twist myself free, then run after Jack. Mr Dean shouts my name. I catch Jack and hold on to him as hard as I can. The police man marches Jack along, making me run with him. "Don'ttakehimaway! Pleasedon'ttakehimaway."

I stumble and let go of Jack. The police lady catches me as I fall.

"JACK! JAAAAACK!"

The doors slam.

He's gone.

Chapter 2

10th December

"I don't feel like talking, Mum."

She strokes her finger over my forehead. "All right, darling, but it might make you feel better if you do."

I turn my face to the wall. "I haven't heard from Jack in eight days."

Mum sighs. "He has a lot to deal with, Rose."

"He could text or call. Hedoesn'tlovemeanymore."

"Maybe it's best you forget about Jack and let him sort himself out."

"I'll never forget Jack. Jack took away my lonely." I pull my duvet up to cover my face. When I peep back over the edge, Mum has gone. Mum's upset. I always talk to her, but I can't now cos she doesn't understand about Jack. No one does.

Jack. Where are you? Why haven't you called me? What did I do bad?

I take my phone out from under my pillow and send Jack another text.

don't u luv me eni mor? Rosie :((((xxx

That's eighty and two texts I've sent him. No texts back.

I went to bed early at seven and ten bits round the clock. So I could think about what to do. It's not working. I throw my covers off and go and look out the window. A piece-of-orange moon plays hide and seek with the clouds. I hold it between my fingers. I wonder if Jack can see it too.

I can't shake off my gloomy head. I'm falling deeper and deeper into sad. I shut my eyes and make my head think about a happy time with Jack. All I can see is his face full of frightened as the police man takes him away through the college doors.

I pick up the photo on my bedside table of me and Jack dancing. He didn't stop smiling at me for the whole dance. I sit on the floor with my back to the radiator and rest our picture on my lap. Behind me in the photo I can see my best friend, Lou. In her new motor-wheelchair. With red wheels with silver stars on. We've been best friends since we joined college. She can't talk by herself or walk by herself. Except her arms and legs move all on their own sometimes. Once she hit Toby Varley on the nose by mistake and made it

bleed. I look after her and she looks after me. She's very clever.

I trace my finger around photo-Jack and it helps me back to that memory. When Jack kissed me for the first time. That was seven months, one week and three days ago. I was at the Monday Night Club, which is a disco just for people who are special. At the youth centre.

I watch as Jack Darcy shoots across the car park. He does a hardflip around Mrs Dean's car on his skateboard. Then he does a spinny thing in time to the disco music spilling out the door. He's such a show-off. He stops by Jamie and Sandra who are kissing under the Horse Conker tree. Jack high-fives Jamie and kisses Sandra on the cheek. I don't like him kissing her...but I don't know why.

"What you lookin' at, Rose?" Elaine, our supervisor, presses her nose against the glass and peers outside. "You watch out for that one, my girl. He'll break your heart. Tsk! How did those two sneak out there? I can't turn my back for a minute. You lot know you're not allowed outside." She walks off grumbling.

Jack spins round on his board and catches me watching him. He blows me a kiss as he races past the window and heads for the doors. I push back from the window and nearly fall over Lou in her wheelchair. Her iPad voice shouts at me, "WATCH IT!"

As I stand up straight the door flies open and Jack

Darcy races around the edge of the dance floor before he does an ollie in the middle of the room.

“SWANKER,” Lou says on loud.

Angus Jones whistles loudly with his fingers and everyone claps and cheers. Jack holds his board up in the air and bows. Toby Varley tries to whistle with his fingers like Angus, but it sounds like a fart. Everyone starts to laugh. Jack winks at me, but I turn my back and help Lou with her drink.

“YOU’VE GONE BRIGHT RED,” Lou voices. I glare at her but she sticks her tongue out at me and pushes her finger down on the keyboard. “YOU’RE INTO JACK.”

“Are you?” a voice says behind me.

I turn round and Jack is standing looking at me with his sky-blue eyes. His dark brown hair keeps falling over one of them. I feel all wobbly and my words won’t speak.

“Dance with me?” He smiles and it makes me go all pleased shivery. Then he takes my hand. And I never want him to let it go.

“GO, ROSE!” Lou cheers and waves her arms around her head.

Jack laughs and takes me onto the dance floor.

After a while a slow song comes on and Jack pulls me in close to his chest. I look up at him and he bends his head down to kiss me—

“Why can’t you leave me ALONE?”

Ben’s shout reaches into my happy thought and snatches it away. He slams his door and I can feel the shake through my feet. I was just about to kiss Jack. I try and get the picture back in my head. It’s no good. My brother has spoiled it up. Little brothers can be a pain. ‘Cept he’s not little, he’s very big for fifteen years old.

I go to the bathroom to get some water. Downstairs Mum and Dad are talking in whisper-shouts. I lean over the stair rail to listen. It’s me talk.

“It’s not fair, Mike. You can’t do this to her. What harm would it do to let her have the postcards Jack wrote?”

Cards? Cards Jack wrote? I don’t know what Mum’s saying.

“Keep your voice down, Sarah. What harm? I’d have thought that was obvious. She needs Jack out of her life now. You give her the cards and she’ll think she’s going to see him again.”

“She’s heartbroken, you could at least stop her thinking that he doesn’t love her any more.”

“Good, I hope she does think that, then she’ll get over him sooner rather than later. It’s no good looking at me like that, Sarah. What if Jack hurt her?”

I want to shout to them that Jack would never hurt me. Ever. I hear Mum tap her fingernails on the table. She does that when she’s upset.

“I’m not stupid, I can see the risk and I *obviously* think it’s best they forget about each other, but he’s not all bad, Mike. Rose has been with him for seven months, so if you thought

he was that much of a liability, why didn't you say something before?"

Mum's words make knots in my head. There are too many to make sense of them all. But I get that my mum wants me to forget Jack. I fold my arms around me where her words kicked me.

Dad's voice is getting shoutier. I try and catch up with what they are saying.

"...nobody would listen, as usual. Whose side are you on anyway?"

"No one's, everyone's – oh I don't know, it's not about sides. I just think we should give her the postcards."

"Over my dead body!"

"Shush! Stop shouting."

I can't hear any more cos someone shuts the kitchen door and Ben has put Li-turgy on very loud in his bedroom.

My feet are glued down on the carpet. My back slides down the wall where I am, so my bottom sits on the floor. I go over what they said. Jack sent me cards. Why would Jack send cards? Why didn't he phone? Or text? Cards... Dad has cards from Jack. My cards.

Jack still loves me.

Mum doesn't want me to love Jack any more.

Dad hates Jack.

I think Dad took my cards from Jack.

Dad *stole* my cards from Jack.

I must find them.

I go back to my bedroom and wait. I curl up in a ball on my bed. I feel tears run down my cheek. I have a water-fall on my face. I'm too unhappy to wipe the wet away, even though it tickles me. I climb under my duvet to make my crying quiet.

My clock says it's half way round the clock past twelve. That's the time I put my alarm on for. I squashed it under my pillow so it only woke me up. Mum and Dad are in bed cos I can hear Dad snoring. I can go and look in his office room now.

It's very dark, so I have to find my way by walking my hand along the wall. I touch something spidery and nearly scream. I bite my dressing gown to stop me.

The floorboards are creaking. I try not to step on them too hard. I'm sure I'll wake somebody up before I get downstairs. My heart is wave-crashing in my chest.

It's taking me for ever to get to Dad's office. That's where my Jack cards will be hidden. I know, cos we're not allowed in there. Not many more steps and I'll be there. I know I'm half down the stairs cos my foot gets caught where our dog, Winniebago, chewed the carpet. I reach the bottom and creep past the kitchen so she doesn't scratch at the door. Then I run to the office on the tops of my toes.

The office door is shut. I twist the handle and nothing moves. I try again and give a little push with my shoulder. It swings open and I fall through the gap. I stay in my fallen-over place on the rug. Not daring to move. After lots of bits

I pull myself up. I mouse-quiet shut the door, and switch the light on. And wait until no one comes.

The room is a mess. Dad's papers are piled all over the place. His laptop snoozes on the table... I'll never find my Jack in here. I don't know where to look. I pick a file up and look under a magazine. They could be anywhere. I start to get gloomy but tell myself off. I've got to put my shoulders back and be strong.

I open drawers. I pull one out too fast, tipping it up. Lots and lots of pens and paper clips fall everywhere. I'm sure Mum will wake up now. She can hear a dropping pin.

A door opens and footsteps walk along the ceiling. They stop. I hold my breath until my lungs are about to pop. The toilet flushes. The footsteps walk away and vanish.

I must hurry up. I push things out the way and turn things upside down. Dad smiles out from a holiday in France photo, on the top of his desk. I turn it flat, so I can't see his face.

On the floor, Dad has built up some boxes in a tower. I rip the lids off and throw out anything in my way. I don't care. Then I remember I don't want him to know I've been here. I put everything back.

It's all taking too long.

In a middle box I find a card with my name on it. And then more cards, all with Luv Jack and lots of his drawings on the front and back. I've found them. I hug them to me.

I sit down on the rug and spread the cards in front of me. One, two, three, four, five, six. Six cards. Jack has written

nearly all the days. I snatch up each card. First I look at his drawings on the front. He's drawn the cards specially for me. So I can read the pictures. To help the writing. He always does that to help me with hard homework and stuff.

I can see his picture head with monsters jumping out of it. Jack paints the monsters in his head to throw his angry out. There's a little fly on one card buzzing round the edge. I don't know why he's there. And then I see a picture of Jack crying. That makes me more sad than I am.

I read the words after the pictures. I'm not fast at reading but every card tells me how much Jack loves me.

I need u Rosie. I luv u 4ever.

That makes the sun shine in my head. Then I see why he didn't text me or call me. A picture of his phone explodes on one card.

POST CARD

Im sori Rosie. I throo my mobile at a wall and broke it. I was mentel about going away from u. I stood owtside my howse in the sno and swor at Mum. I woodnt get in the car. Mum showtid at me. I sat in the bak of the car and lisend to our song over and over agen al the way to Bryten. Ther waznt enny luv in the air tho. I didnt say goodbi to Mum. I woz to sad. Then I felt even sader.



Rosie Tremayne

61 Cromwell Av

Henley-on-Th

Oxfordshire R

I picture Jack in the snow. His hurt is my hurt. All inside me. I wipe my eyes with a tissue. Then I read how lonely he is.

Ware r u? Why dont u rite? I cant bare anuther day wivout u.

Then I find the bit that breaks my heart into pieces.

Dont u luv me enny more?

I cry for Jack and I cry for me. I hide my face inside my dressing gown, so no one can hear me. Then I cry it out, so I can find my strong.

I wipe my nose on my sleeve and put the cards in order. One, two times Jack has written where he lives in Brighton.

*Manor House Farm, Woods Lane, Hassocks, Brighton,
BN6 7QL.*

I kopid that from a leaflet on the hall tabul at the howse. Its the 1 paynted wite with see-green shuters like ur eyes :)

I pick up all the cards and hide them in my pyjama pocket.

I'm angry-hurt with Dad. He tried to rub me and Jack out. I'm sad-cross with everyone.

I make a plan in my head.

I'm going to find Jack.

I can do it.

I am Rose.