



Jackie
FRENCH

**The Lily
in the Snow**

From the bestselling author of *Miss Lily's Lovely Ladies*

Angus&Robertson

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Chapter 1

There is an art to feeding a man so he is no longer hungry, and yet longs for more.

Miss Lily, 1913

LONDON, 20 DECEMBER 1928

VIOLETTE

Rats scampered, frozen footed, across the snowdrifts in the alley next to Worthy's Teahouse in Mayfair. The child stood singing by the doorway, angelic in her plain white dress, paler than the grey slush of London, her curls blonde, her face and fingers tinged with blue. Her voice soared, high and pure.

In front of her, fashionable London hurried home dressed in fur coats, fur-lined gloves or fur-collared overcoats, arms loaded with Christmas presents, or with footmen to carry the parcels walking behind.

Only those who paused to listen noticed that, though the words of the Christmas carols were English, the accent was French, perhaps, or Belgian. Others might wonder if the child's thinness disguised her true age, closer to thirteen, maybe, than ten. None saw the calculation in her eyes. She made very sure that they did not.

An elderly gentleman pushed open the teahouse door, then paused to drop a shilling in the cloche hat at the girl's feet. Such small feet, stockingless, in shoes slightly too large. 'Are you hungry, my dear?'

‘I am always hungry, monsieur,’ she said, presenting him with a smile that might have been worn by the angels in the battered convent, years before.

He gestured to the doorway. ‘If you would like ...’

‘Thank you, monsieur,’ she said demurely. She bent to pick up her hat with cold stiff fingers, wrapping it around its coins.

He followed the girl inside. This would never do at the Savoy, of course, nor even at Simpson’s. But taking a shabby child into the warmth of Worthy’s for a cup of tea was so obviously a charity.

The room smelled of toasting teacakes and damp shoes. He sat across from her and watched her read the menu, her hat and its coins on her lap, the snowflakes melting in her blonde curls. It was not easy coiling naturally straight hair in rags each night to ensure ringlets, but the effect was worth it.

‘Hot chocolate, monsieur?’ the girl asked shyly, glancing up with wide blue eyes.

‘Of course, my dear.’

‘And may I perhaps have buns?’

He smiled expansively. ‘Anything you wish.’

‘Buns *and* cheese on toast? Oh, thank you, monsieur!’

He gestured to the waitress.

Worthy’s service was efficient. The cocoa and buns were brought immediately. The kind gentleman waited till she had sipped her hot drink and eaten half a bun quickly but delicately. ‘What is your name, my dear?’

‘Violette, monsieur.’ The girl finished the first bun, and began on the next.

‘It’s a miserable day for a child all alone in a big city,’ he suggested.

She raised blue eyes to him. ‘Oh, yes, Monsieur.’ The answer might have been an admission that she *was* alone, or simply agreement. She finished the second bun, then smiled as the toasted cheese was placed in front of her.

‘You are French?’

‘Belgian, monsieur,’ she said shyly, as if she did not like to correct such a knowledgeable man.

‘A refugee?’ he asked, sympathetically. The Great War had been over for a decade but some, at least, had not returned home, their villages destroyed or haunted by the atrocities they had suffered.

‘No, monsieur. I have come to England to find my mother. Her name is Lily Shillings. She came from a village called Shillings too, but I cannot find it on a map.’

She offered the information, as she always did, in the hope that it might elicit information, an ‘Ah, I know the family well’ or ‘You mean Shillings in Yorkshire?’ But the man showed no sign that he knew the name.

‘How did you lose her?’ The kind words did not quite disguise his, still unspoken, quiet planning. ‘During the war?’

Almost every family across the British Empire had been fractured by the war, but those countries where it had been fought had suffered worst, homes turned to rubble, farmland to blood and mud, families running in the night.

‘Yes, monsieur.’

The gentleman didn’t query how a Belgian child had an English mother. Violette was used to that. This conversation was simply to establish that she was, indeed, unprotected, and to suggest that he, a nice man, grandfatherly — though of course he would think of himself as virile, an elder, not really old — might help. He touched her thin bare hand briefly with his gloved one. ‘What will you do when you find your mother, my dear?’

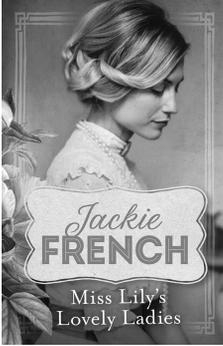
Violette finished her cocoa before she answered. Usually she gave an answer the gentlemen would like — ‘I will never leave her side’ or ‘I wish so much to be loved’ — before quickly pocketing whatever tip they left on the table then escaping into the crowd before he offered her a warm, safe ... and, presumably, discreet ... place to stay.

But this was the third teahouse and friendly gentleman today. Violette was no longer hungry and the money in the hat would pay for her lodging. And so she smiled at him, her first genuine smile of the day. ‘When I find her I will kill her, monsieur.’

She took the last slice of toasted cheese with her as she left.

MEET MISS LILY AND HER LOVELY LADIES . . .

BOOK 1 — Out now



A tale of espionage,
love and passionate heroism

Inspired by true events, this is the story of how society's 'lovely ladies' won a war.

Each year at secluded Shillings Hall, in the snow-crisped English countryside, the mysterious Miss Lily draws around her young women selected from Europe's royal and most influential families. Her girls are taught how to captivate a man — and find a potential husband — at a dinner, in a salon, or at a grouse shoot, and in ways that would surprise outsiders. For in 1914, persuading and charming men is the only true power a woman has.

Sophie Higgs is the daughter of Australia's king of corned beef and the only 'colonial' brought to Shillings Hall. Of all Miss Lily's lovely ladies, however, she is also the only one who suspects Miss Lily's true purpose.

As the chaos of war spreads, women across Europe shrug off etiquette.

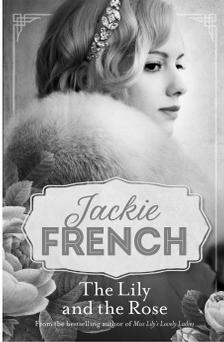
The lovely ladies and their less privileged sisters become the unacknowledged backbone of the war, creating hospitals, canteens and transport systems where bungling officials fail to cope. And when tens of thousands can die in a single day's battle, Sophie must use the skills Miss Lily taught her to prevent war's most devastating weapon yet.

'The story is equal parts Downton Abbey and wartime action, with enough romance and intrigue to make it 100% not-put-down-able.'

Australian Women's Weekly on Miss Lily's Lovely Ladies

THE WAR IS OVER, BUT CAN THERE EVER TRULY BE PEACE?

BOOK 2 — Out now



Australian heiress Sophie Higgs was ‘a rose of no-man’s land’, founding hospitals across war-torn Europe during the horror that was WW1.

Now, in the 1920s, Sophie’s wartime work must be erased so that the men who returned can find some kind of ‘normality’.

Sophie is, however, a graduate of the mysterious Miss Lily’s school of charm and intrigue, and once more she risks her own life as she attempts to save others still trapped in the turmoil and aftermath of war.

But in this new world, nothing is clear, in politics or in love. For the role of men has changed too. Torn between the love of three very different men, Sophie will face her greatest danger yet as she attempts an impossible journey across the world to save Nigel, Earl of Shillings — and her beloved Miss Lily.

In this sequel to the bestselling *Miss Lily’s Lovely Ladies*, Jackie French draws us further into a compelling story that celebrates the passion and adventure of an unstoppable army of women who changed the world.

‘If you’ve sped your way through *The Crown* and are looking for another historical drama fix to sink your teeth into, *The Lily and the Rose* is going to fast become your next obsession.’

New Idea on Miss Lily and the Rose