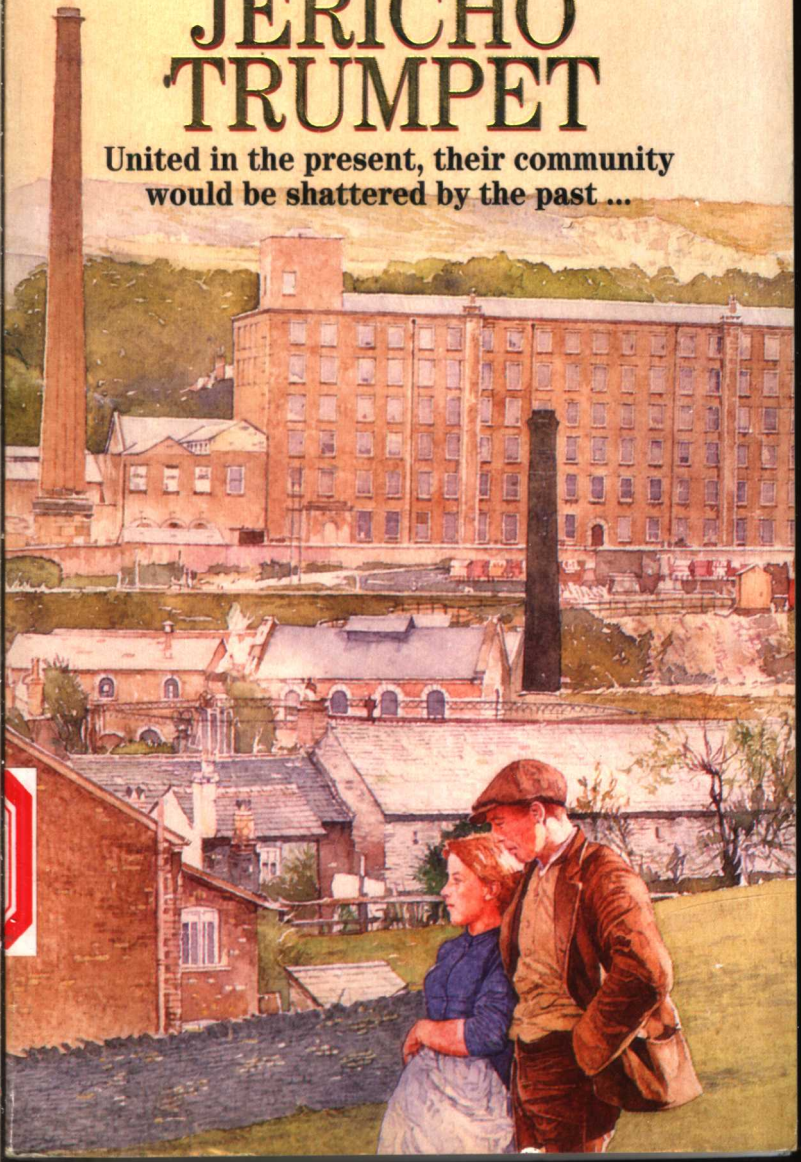
OLIVE ETCHELLS

THE JERICHO TRUMPET

United in the present, their community would be shattered by the past ...



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A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.

Quotation inscribed inside the great dome of the
Royal Exchange, Manchester

CHAPTER ONE

1876: Secret Friends

Rosanna Raike was hiding. Bales of straw and sacks of oats gave ideal cover for games of hide-and-seek in the stable loft.

She liked playing with Charles. He was ten, a year older than her; a large, gentle, slow-moving boy with the bright blue eyes and blond hair of the Schofield family. And she was sure he liked playing with her – he must do, because he'd told her that she was more like a boy than a girl – praise indeed. What was more, he sometimes used her given name when everybody else called her Rosie. 'Rosanna's a pretty name,' he said, 'and it's different. That's why it suits you – you're pretty *and* you're different.'

She was glad he thought her pretty but not sure why he found her different; he'd blushed when he said it, just as he'd done when he said she was like a boy, though perhaps that remark had been wishful thinking because there was no boy for him to play with at Meadowbank House. He sought her out whenever he came to visit, though for the last few weeks they'd had to play in secret because of his mother. She was a strange lady, a bit like a bird – a pretty, pecking little bird with claws and a sharp beak.

All Saltley knew that Esther Schofield had made High Lee Court into a grand mansion, living there with her husband and son as if they belonged to the aristocracy. One

day she'd come down to Meadowbank House in her carriage and settled herself in the big sitting room; then she'd sent for Rosie's mother and made it very clear that Charles was on no account to play with a gardener's daughter.

Rosie had known as soon as she came in from school that her mother was upset, because her soft little mouth was in a straight line with the corners tucked in. When her mam did that you realised that she wasn't even nice looking; it was only when she was happy that she looked almost pretty.

'Mrs James Schofield has been here, Rosie,' she'd told her. 'She says you're not to play with Master Charles when he comes to see his grandfather an' his uncle. He's not allowed to mix with the labourin' classes.'

Puzzled, Rosie had stared up at her mother. 'But he doesn't mix with the labourin' classes, Mam, he plays with me. He chases me round the yard an' we play whip an' top an' have games of hide-and-seek in the stables.'

Her mother had given her a squeeze. 'He's a nice young lad,' she'd conceded, 'but his mother's made a rulin' that you're not to play with him, so that's that. She says he's been told, but if ever he should forget an' seek you out you're to tell him it's forbidden. Is that clear?'

Rosie pouted and narrowed her eyes. 'Me dad's not a labourer, so how can I be one of the labourin' classes?'

Pride and devotion had illuminated her mother's small face. 'Your father's no labourer,' she'd agreed. 'He's Mr Schofield's head gardener – that's his proper title – and he's groundsman at his Working Men's Institute. What's more he has folk queuein' up to buy his woodcarvin'. But you see, love, we're well set here at Meadowbank. We mustn't do anythin' to upset the applecart and risk losin' our lovely little house, now must we?'

Rosie had been silent, inwardly appalled. Lose the house? She'd seen the houses of some of the girls in her class at day school – those who went part-time and didn't have to pay. She'd nearly been sick once, when Becky

Cropper had taken her home to look at their new baby. The house was in a yard below the level of the street and inside it was all browny-black – walls, floors, ceilings, everything – with wooden boxes to sit on instead of chairs. Becky's mother had been lying on sacks filled with wood shavings, and the baby had been in an old shopping basket. It had been awful, horrible, but it had been the smell that had turned her stomach.

When she'd got home her mother had told her sharply that a smell like that came from bugs. She'd made her take off all her clothes and she'd shaken them outside and then put them in soak ready for the wash, declaring that she didn't want wick things brought in.

Rosie's brown eyes had swivelled thoughtfully from side to side, observing the bright little room with its view of the leafy stable yard. She didn't see how Charles's mother could make them lose their house, not when her dad was in the pay of Mr Joshua Schofield himself. Still, grown-ups could do bad things, spiteful things; the girls at school said so. Sighing, she bobbed her head in agreement that they mustn't upset the applecart. It wasn't so very hard agreeing to that because she was a bit frightened of Mrs Schofield. Charles didn't like her either, she could tell; he didn't like his own mother, but he never said so. He never even mentioned her if he could help it . . .

Now Rosie crouched in the dim silence of the loft, her restless body still. She'd been shocked but deeply admiring when Charles had followed her to the buttercup field one day and announced that they would still play together. 'It will be in secret, that's all,' he'd said calmly. 'I've thought it all out. I won't be able to chase you round the yard but we can meet in secret out here under the hedge and we'll have to be very quiet when we play hide-and-seek. You'll see – it'll be more exciting.'

It was. He might be big for his age but he wasn't clumsy; he could move in silence, with a kind of slow, painstaking grace, while for her part she was quick and light and sure-footed. They both tried never to raise their

voices, but once she forgot and let out a squeal when she found him hiding under the manger in the end stall. Scared that her mother had heard and would know she'd been disobeyed, Rosie burst into tears and had to tell Charles why she was frightened.

He expanded his chest with a burst of bravado. 'I'll tell her I made you play with me,' he promised, but there was no need for that: her mother had been in the back kitchen and had heard nothing.

The floorboards of the loft creaked under her, and Rosie knew he was coming. She breathed so quietly she could hear the beat of her own heart and the hum of bees in the climbing rose outside the hoist. It was late afternoon and very warm, the empty yard slumbering through the peaceful hour before the mills shut down and workers clattered through the streets. Then a warm hand touched her shoulder. 'Boo!' laughed Charles in her ear.

She knelt up, eyes bright with admiration. 'Ooh, you're that good at bein' quiet!' she whispered. A sunbeam pierced the gloom and shone down on his hair; she could see specks of stable dust in the shaft of golden light above his head. Joy flooded through her, sudden and overpowering; it was a special moment, a shared moment, tinged with the magic of their silent game. 'I do *like* playin' with you, Charles,' she told him earnestly, 'oh, I *do*!'

He leaned towards her and all at once took hold of her hand. His hair still glittered in the sunlight, but his eyes seemed very dark. 'Rosanna,' he said hoarsely, 'will you marry me? When we're old enough, I mean.'

Her jaw fell open, so she closed it with a snap of her teeth and chewed her bottom lip, considering. 'Your mam won't let you,' she pointed out flatly.

'She won't be able to stop me when I'm twenty-one. I'll be earning my own living long before then and I'll buy us a house of our own. That's – that's if you want?'

'Oh, I want,' she assured him, then gave a wriggle and sat on the floor instead of kneeling. It occurred to her that it should be the man who knelt for a proposal of marriage,

yet Charles was just sort of squatting, his smart knickerbockers covered in straw.

'That's settled then,' he said in relief. 'Uh, kissing and stuff, that'll come later, will it?'

Rosie rather liked kissing, even when her dad's chin was all bristly. She looked at Charles's smooth young face and crushing her disappointment, spoke with authority. 'Yes, much later. We'll just be friends for now, shall we? Secret friends, though.'

'Oh, very secret.' He stood up, smiling. 'It's my turn to hide, so close your eyes.'

Obediently she put her fingers over her eyes and her thumbs in her ears, telling herself that by the time they got married they'd be too old to play hide and seek ...

Her dad worked late in the summer months, even on Saturdays, so it was Sunday dinner time before they all three sat down together and she could be sure of her parents' full attention when she asked about getting married. She would deal with it in a roundabout way, of course; there must be no mention of Charles.

She liked Sunday meal times; they used an embroidered tablecloth instead of the everyday hemmed calico, and she always wore her best dress because of Sunday school. Her mother would be wearing her blue pinny with the frills and, in his good shirt and waistcoat, her dad looked more handsome than ever, especially when he was suntanned, like now.

She made herself wait until they'd finished their roast lamb and vegetables, then as her mother cut into a strawberry pie asked, 'Mam, Dad, how old will I have to be before you let me get married?'

Matthew Raike exchanged an amused glance with Martha, who shook her head in amazement. He swallowed a grin and said seriously, 'Well, it'd depend on who wanted to marry you. Have you met Mr Right already?'

Rosie willed her cheeks not to turn red. 'No,' she lied. 'I'm just wonderin', that's all.'

Martha eyed their daughter carefully. Chatterbox she might be, but she never 'just wondered'; there was always a reason for her questions, especially the more startling ones. 'It's the law of the land that you can't marry without your father's permission until you're of age,' she said weightily. 'That's when you're twenty-one – twelve years off – so there's no need to get worked up about it just yet.'

Rosie shot her mother a look from under her lashes and concentrated on her father. 'If somebody suitable asks me before I'm twenty-one, will you give your permission, Dad?'

Matthew reached across the table and touched her cheek. She was so like his sister Dorcas who had died as a child; they might have known how she would develop when they had her christened Rosanna Dorcas. Three names they'd chosen: Rose for the deep-red bloom he gave to Martha the first time he kissed her; Anna for Martha's mother, who had died within a week of their wedding; and Dorcas – pretty little dark-haired Dorcas, laughing and skipping and good at her lettering ... Yes, Rosie had eased the ache inside him, the nightmare ache for Dorcas that had dogged his teens and early twenties. She'd eased something else as well – the grief that he and Martha had known when their baby died; the bitter, bitter grief of losing Luke, their first-born son ...

'We'll have to see, my liddle maid,' he said gently. 'If some fine young fella with good prospects asks for your hand, we might let you leave us a year or so before your twenty-first. He'd have to be able to support you, mind.'

Rosie thought about that. Charles would be twenty-one before he could defy his mother, and by then she would be twenty. It was going to be all right.

Suspicion was tugging at Martha's mind, instinct telling her to issue a gentle warning. 'Look, love, as you grow up you must always remember that though you might be friends with somebody above your station, they'll always stick to their own class when it comes to gettin' wed. Don't ever get set on somebody above you.'

Matthew directed a steely glare at his wife but kept silent. They didn't argue in front of Rosie. In any case, what was there to argue about? An innocent question from a child? He knew what lay behind Martha's remark, of course – the ban on Rosie playing with young Charles. It was just like the lad's mother to shame Martha, who needed no telling that working class and moneyed class must never mix. Their children must never play together, not even in a household as liberal as Joshua Schofield's; certainly not when the mother of the moneyed class child was the vengeful little shrew who had married the eldest Schofield son ...

While Martha and Rosie cleared away and washed up, Matthew sat in his wicker chair by the open back door, looking out on his small garden. It backed onto the great curving meadow that lay behind the Schofield house, a view that normally satisfied him in the way a good meal satisfies a hungry man. Now, though, he was restless and on edge because of Rosie's question; or, more accurately, because of her mother's warning.

Life had taught him that it never paid to cross those who were better off than yourself, but oh, it had galled him to hear Martha preaching at their daughter about keeping to her class, especially when the one 'above' her was Joshua Schofield's grandson. It might be bigheaded of him, but Matthew often felt that there was a bond between him and the master of Jericho Mills; there was certainly respect – mutual respect, at that. Years back, when Martha had worked in the weaving shed at Jericho, Matthew had laughed at her because of the way she doted on her employer. Now he had to admit that his own feelings equalled hers, maybe even surpassed them. He shrugged. There might be a certain closeness between him and Mr Schofield but it would be criminal of him to give Rosie false ideas about who she might end up with. He stared out at the sunlit afternoon and chided himself. There was no call for bad humour because his wife had used her customary good sense and looked to the future ...

The washing up finished, Rosie was putting on her best bonnet ready for Sunday school when Matthew got to his feet and looked at Martha. 'Do 'ee fancy takin' a walk through Soar Park?' he asked.

She avoided his eye. At that moment there was nothing she fancied more than a stroll with her husband, both of them dressed in their best, seeing and being seen by half the population of Saltley in the town's splendid park. But she was acutely perceptive where Matthew was concerned – she could read the merest flicker of his eyelids or the set of his mouth as clearly as if they were words spelled out on a slate. At this moment he was restless in his mind, and when that was the case there were only two courses of action that brought him comfort: a spell with his wood-carving or a long, solitary walk in the hills that climbed and folded away into the distance beyond the meadow.

Placidly she said, 'I'm sorry, Matthew, but I think I could do with puttin' me feet up for an hour.' She pretended not to see the glint of relief in his eyes. 'Why don't you go off on your own for a good walk, or have an hour or two at your bench?'

'Well, if you're sure ...' It wasn't easy to sound disappointed, so he bowed to his daughter, who giggled in delight. 'I'll accompany Miss Rosie Raike to Sunday school,' he said, 'and then perhaps stroll up towards Holdwell.'

Savouring solitude, Matthew climbed the track that led to the hill side overlooking Saltley. His good boots trod the rough ground in comfort; his best suit, though, was too warm for the day, so he slung the jacket over his shoulder. That morning it had occurred to him that it was almost exactly twelve years since he had arrived in the town, so it was not by accident that he was now treading the very same path as on the evening of that first exciting day in Saltley. Twenty-two, he had been: a man of Devon come all the way to Lancashire because a one-legged old sailor had told him tales of his home town ...

Always ready to indulge in fancy, Matthew let himself imagine that his earlier, younger self walked by his side: lean, eager, adventurous; boots falling apart, a bundle holding all he possessed over his shoulder, a faded red kerchief round his neck and an old, wide-brimmed felt hat on his head. Ah, that hat . . . powerful fond of it, he'd been.

Now Matthew touched his newly acquired bowler and smiled. That young fella had yearned for a proper home, for respectability. And now he had it; oh, indeed he had. He was verging on the prosperous, with a clean, loving little wife and a pretty, bright-eyed daughter . . . His thoughts went back to Rosie, causing the adventurous young man to fade from his side unnoticed and return to the fringes of his memory.

Joshua Schofield walked through Jericho Mills, exchanging greetings with his managers and overlookers and nodding amiably at the respectful murmurs of his workforce. He kept to no set times for such inspections; he wanted no special shows put on for his benefit, no preparations for his visits. It took him half a day to do a good walk through, as he called it; twelve floors in all – six in West Side, six in East – then the weaving shed, the yards, the engine house and boilers, the coal tip where his waggons came straight from the pit. . .

Hair snow white, face deeply lined, his body taut because flesh was now spare on the broad frame, he deliberately slowed his stride, reluctant to finish what gave him such pleasure – the contemplation of his mills, his workers, his products. As always he observed the smallest detail and from time to time made notes in a little cloth-bound book that he kept in his coat pocket.

The need for the book irritated him, but it was a fact that in the last year things had sometimes slipped his mind. He could hardly credit it – his memory had always been one of his main assets in business. He told himself that he was sixty-nine, not some old dodderer in his eighties, but since he couldn't abide anything to be missed or neglected he

wrote down whatever merited action or discussion with his son.

'I shouldn't worry about it if I were you', Sam had laughed when, somewhat shamefaced, he had first produced the book. 'You still see more on a walk through than all your overlookers put together *and* take action on ninety-five per cent of what you query.'

Joshua was far from reassured by that. Ninety-five per cent was no good to him. He'd always aimed for a hundred per cent efficiency and had encouraged Sam and James to do the same. He kept back a scornful retort because he was always careful of Sam's feelings; he was like his right arm, was Sam, pure gold, but under that confident front he was sensitive – aye, and maybe easily hurt. Seeing the rueful grin on his face, Joshua knew that his son had read his thoughts about the ninety-five per cent. It was a strange, unspoken bond between them, the linking of their minds, but it was Sam who had the real gift for it – a gift he shared with his sister, Sarah ...

On impulse Joshua turned and reclimbed the last flight of stairs, then went up through the trap door to the roof of Jericho's tower. Above him the company flag flapped against the post, its emblem of the trumpet and the rose visible one moment and obscured the next. It was almost peaceful up there with the hills rising silently behind the great mills, but as always Joshua looked to the town, his hands flat on the parapet. He could hear the clop of hooves from a grocer's cart climbing the road that led past Jericho, the shouts of a ganger as his men unloaded raw cotton down in the yard, the clatter of the hoist, the rumble of the colliery waggons behind the boiler house. And under his feet he could feel a steady thrumming – the endless vibration of machinery that was the heartbeat of Jericho.

He felt an easing of tension inside him, putting him in mind of engine oil on hot, dry metal. He sighed. Folk might think him a bit soft if they knew, but he always felt close to Rachel up here on the tower. She'd been gone eleven years, and God only knew he missed her every hour of his

life, but he'd managed – aye, he'd managed to live without her. Up here under the flag he felt her very near. In the terrible weeks after she'd gone he'd sometimes found himself talking to her out loud, not just in private but in the street or on the train. Now, though, he could just let everything flow to her unspoken.

Maybe he felt her presence because from such a vantage point he could view what he'd achieved over the years with her, and that gave him strength: the mills beneath him, the pit over there in the distance, Meadowbank House, the Working Men's Institute with its velvety bowling green and gardens, the glass roof of the swimming baths for his cotton operatives and his colliers. Rachel had always listened to his schemes, always encouraged him ...

Then, blue eyes glinting, he smiled. Sam was down there in the yard examining the consignment of cotton, and – yes – there was young Charlie running along the road towards the mill gates. Since he'd been coming into Saltley for his schooling his grandson liked to meet him and Sam and walk home with them before being taken back to High Lee. Joshua stared down, intrigued. The lad was touching the embossed trumpet on the gates, running his hand over the brass in the way some folk stroked a horse or a dog that they loved ... Then he glanced up to the flag and saw his grandfather outlined against the sky. He smiled – even at this distance Joshua could see the glint of his teeth, and at the sight he laughed aloud, taking off his hat and waving it before heading back to the stairs.

Laughter gave way to serious thought as he made for the ground floor. He had always imagined that grandchildren would bring undiluted joy – all the pleasure of children with none of the responsibility. But that wasn't the case with Charlie; he loved his only grandchild, but the joy was well diluted. He needed protecting, guarding against being damaged by his mother; Joshua had to give him the backing he should get from a strong father, because James wasn't strong at all – he wasn't a fighter. His eldest son was good, truly good, but in common with many a man he liked

peace on his own hearth. And in order to keep that peace he gave way to Esther in the ordering of their lives and the upbringing of their child.

The three of them walked home with Charles in the middle. In fine weather Joshua always walked the half mile between home and mill, using the carriage or horseback for longer journeys. He was well aware that the other mill-owning families thought him mad to walk the same pavements as his operatives, but that didn't worry him. If Eli Walton and Ezra Boulton and the rest of 'em chose to race around in their carriages with footmen bowing and scraping then let 'em get on with it. He himself had never found that walking diminished his authority with the workers. And in any case, he liked it.

Charles was trying to match his stride to theirs, taking several overlong steps and then a scuttle of short ones. Over his head the men exchanged amused glances, and unobtrusively shortened their stride.

'How are you getting on at Mr Wild's place, Charlie?' asked Joshua. 'Do you do much figuring, or is it all Latin and Greek and such?'

'We do everything,' Charles informed him dolefully. 'They keep on telling us it's an all-embracing education for the sons of gentlemen. Arithmetic, English, history, geography, French, Latin – oh, lots of stuff. They don't teach technical engineering, though, and there's no music except in assembly.'

Joshua refrained from pointing out that at his grandson's age he himself had had three years' technical experience behind him from working in the mill. 'You can afford to wait another year or two before you study engineering,' he comforted, 'and as for music, you get that at home, don't you?'

'Pianoforte, yes; it's easy, and it – it pleases Mama. But when I'm older I might change to some other instrument.'

Joshua thought of him at the mill gates only minutes earlier. 'Any instrument in particular?' he asked with interest.

Charles looked up with his wide, eager smile but didn't reveal a preference. 'I haven't decided yet, Grandfather. It might – it might have to be something pretty quiet.'

Sam gave his father a look. They both knew why that should be. 'You could practice in my room at home,' he offered. 'We could all plug our ears, couldn't we, Father?'

In shared good humour they reached Meadowbank, but Joshua had noticed the intent tightening of his grandson's mouth; he didn't know whether to be pleased or sorry at what it might herald for the boy's future. A flair for engineering in the mill or the pit would be grand; an interest in the business side of cotton, such as went on at his Manchester rooms, even better. Maybe a fondness for estate management and country life, like his father ... but what would they do with a musician in the family? He watched the boy leap ahead of them up the front steps and knew that he would back him in almost anything. He smiled somewhat grimly at his mental reservations. 'Almost' anything. As he moved into old age it sometimes seemed that nothing was certain, nothing was absolute. Life was a sequence of 'all being well' or 'when cotton picks up a bit' or 'if the markets are stable'. The days were gone when he sailed through life with never a doubt or misgiving.

It was his habit on reaching home to turn for a last look at Saltley before going indoors. The town was getting more and more grimy, but it did him good to see the forest of mill chimneys, especially the tallest of them all – that of Jericho Mills. Jericho – his own model community, the fruit of a lifetime's work. He couldn't help but be proud of it.

He turned to go indoors and saw a small figure standing by the hedge that separated the front garden from the stable yard. It was Matthew's girl, young Rosie. She dipped her knee respectfully, and when he smiled and waved his stick she blew him a kiss, clapping a startled hand to her mouth when she realised what she'd done. Pink cheeked, she ran off with her skirts bouncing and the ribbons fluttering in her dark hair.