

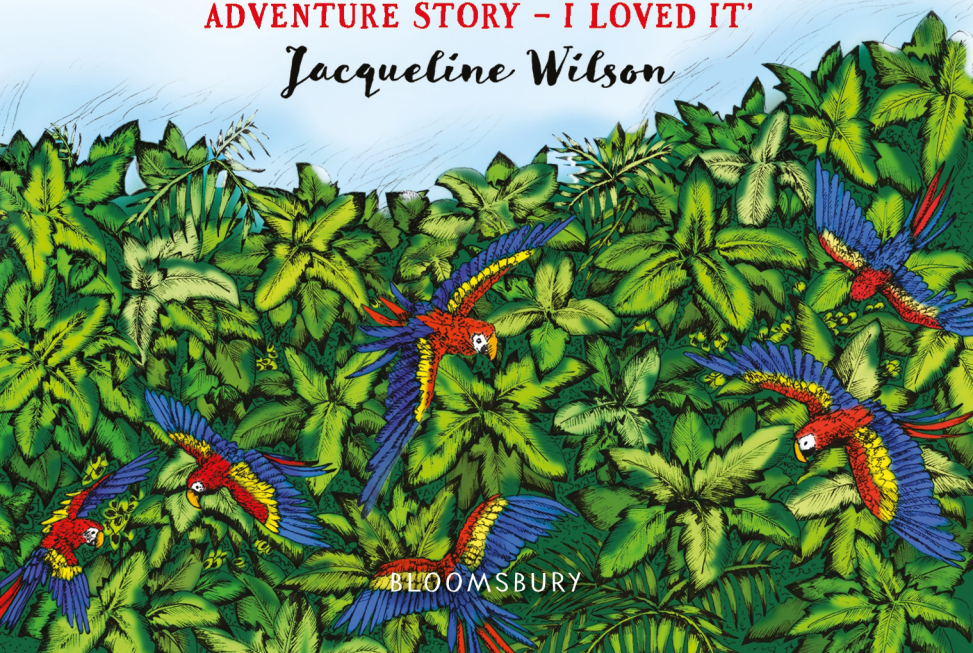


KATHERINE RUNDELL

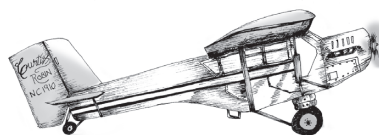
The
EXPLORER

'A VERY EXCITING
ADVENTURE STORY - I LOVED IT'

Jacqueline Wilson



BLOOMSBURY



The
EXPLORER

KATHERINE
RUNDELL

ILLUSTRATED BY
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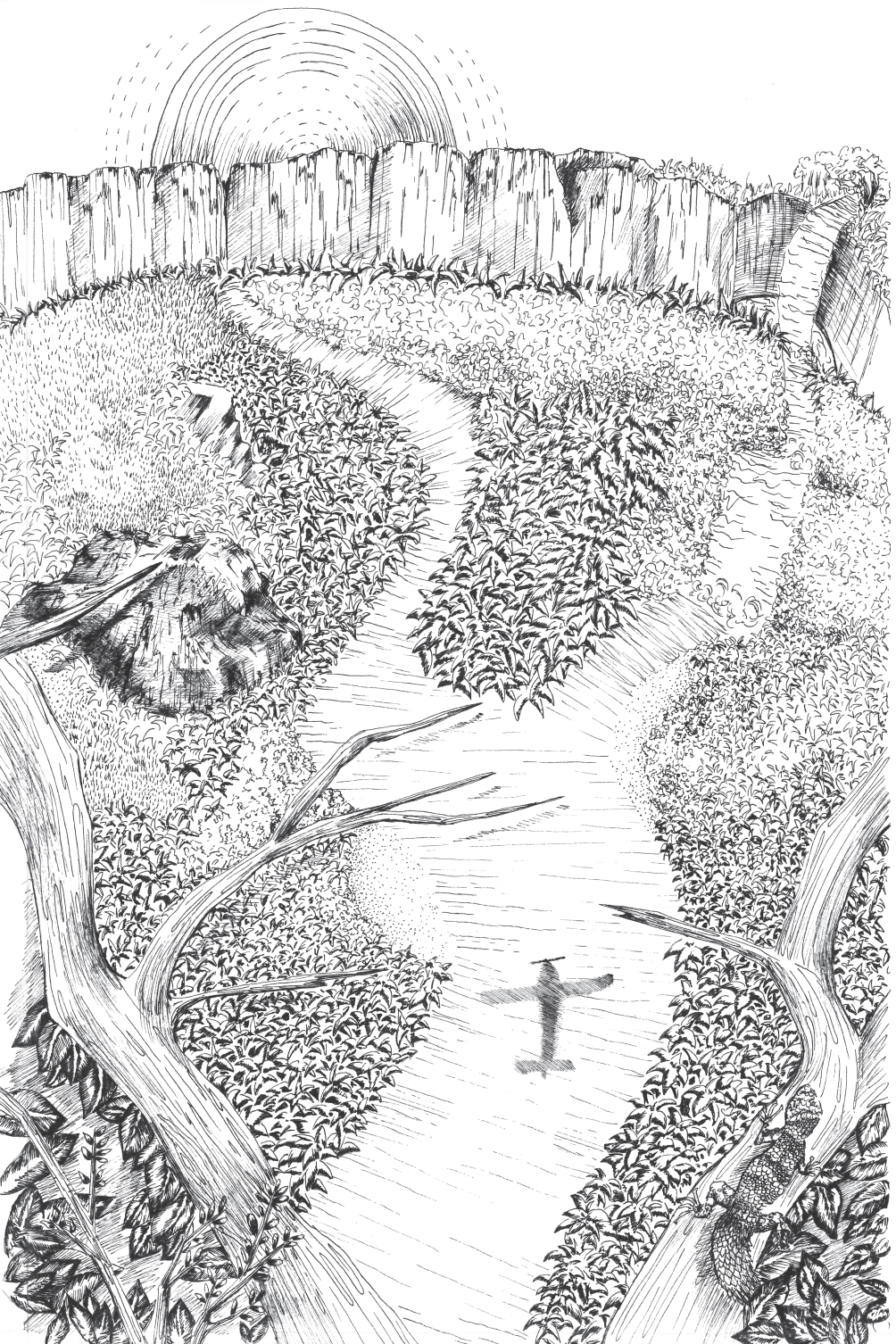
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To Charles



weaker, and the blood in his veins felt thinner.

At first, Fred went fast, his head down, marking the trees with an X scratched in the bark, watching his feet among the roots and fallen branches.

But soon he began to slow. There was so much to look at; so much that was strange; so much that was new and vast and so very palpably alive.

The trees dipped down their branches, laden with leaves broad enough to sew into trousers. He passed a tree with a vast termite nest, as big as a bathtub, growing around it. He gave it a wide berth.

The greenness, which had seemed such a forbidding wall of colour, was not, up close, green at all, Fred thought. It was a thousand different colours; lime and emerald and moss and jade and a deep dark almost black green that made him think of sunken ships.

Fred breathed in the smell. He'd been wrong to think it was thick, he thought; it was detailed. It was a tapestry of air.

The trees clustered more closely together the further he walked. The light grew dimmer, though he

was sure it was still mid-afternoon, a deep green filtering down through a roof of leaves and vines. He heard something move in one of the green bushes that clustered around his feet.

‘Hello?’ he called. He stepped backwards. ‘Hi?’

As he called something sharp scraped against his arm.

He jumped and leapt away, swearing, and felt his mouth fill with the taste of fear: bile and tin. But it wasn’t a snake, or even a spider.

‘Being stupid,’ muttered Fred. It was just a bush.

Or perhaps it wasn’t even a bush. He leant closer. It was a clump of spiky fruit.

‘A pineapple,’ he whispered aloud.

Fred felt his fingertips prickle, shot through with the spark of discovery. This, he thought, must be what Columbus had felt like.

He reached out to pull the fruit from its throne of leaves – and then snatched his hand back, watching blood swell from a serrated gash in his thumb. ‘Ach,’ he whispered.