

# Maggie Rose

*and*

# Sass



EUNICE BOEVE

# MAGGIE ROSE AND SASS



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by

**Eunice Boeve**



Rowe Publishing

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ISBN 13: 978-1-939054-21-0

ISBN 10: 1-939054-21-4

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A Kansas Notable Book



1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Printed in the United States of America

Published by



Rowe Publishing

[www.rowepub.com](http://www.rowepub.com)

Stockton, Kansas

*~ Dedication ~*

FOR MY GRANDDAUGHTER  
ALLYSON  
AND MY FRIEND  
ANGELA



~ Chapter One ~

## MAGGIE ROSE

The sound startled Maggie Rose. She snapped her book shut and sat up straighter on her bed. *Had something fallen in Grandmother's room?* She was certain Grandmother was still in there, in the bedroom next to hers. Even if she had gone downstairs, she would have heard the old woman's muttered complaints as she eased her bulky body down the winding stairway, her ancient liver-spotted hands gripping the railing. Maybe Hattie had made the noise. But in all the years she'd known the colored woman, and that had been all her twelve years of life, Maggie Rose had never heard her so much as rattle a pan or let a door slam back into place. No, Hattie Smith, when she moved through the house doing her work, made no more noise than a puff of smoke. Besides, she suddenly remembered, this was Sunday and Hattie's day off. If anyone checked on Grandmother today, it would have to be her.

She wished Hattie were here. She got paid for putting up with Grandmother's crankiness. In the days of slavery Hattie had waited on Grandmother hand and foot with no reward but a place to sleep and food to eat. Now she was free and getting paid, but she was also free to find work someplace else, so she must not mind putting up with the old woman.

Probably nothing was wrong. Most likely Grandmother had just dropped something. Since she had quit coming to the table, Hattie had brought Grandmother's meals up to her room. Except on Sundays, Hattie's day off. Then it was Maggie Rose's chore.

Grandmother had been all right when she brought her dinner to her at noon. It was nearly five o'clock now. She'd have to bring her some supper within the hour. Surely she could wait that long. No sense getting yelled at and called clumsy and stupid more times in a day than was necessary. Her decision made, Maggie Rose picked up her book and began to read, but this time she could not lose herself in the pages of this one of five books, her teacher, Miss Green, had loaned her for the summer. She sighed, pushed the book back up under her pillow, and slid off the faded, pink-flowered counterpane of her four-poster bed.

One day she had confided to Miss Green that she had read and reread her father's books shelved in a small bookcase in the attic, and that she wished somehow she'd discover one she hadn't yet read. How surprised and delighted she had been when Miss Green began bringing books from her family's library to school for Maggie Rose to take home and read. At first, getting the books past Grandmother's snooping nose had taken some doing. It was no problem now since Grandmother's last bout of illness kept her, most of the time, in her room. She was certain Grandmother would not have allowed her to accept Miss Green's generosity. She was quite sure that generosity was something beyond Grandmother's understanding. So as she read Miss Green's books, Maggie Rose kept an ear tuned to the sound of her grandmother's shuffling footsteps.

It didn't happen often now, since Grandmother had taken to her room, but she still might, without warning,

yank open the door to Maggie Rose's room and step inside, her sharp old eyes scanning every nook and cranny, as if, Maggie Rose thought, partly in amusement and partly in anger, they were back in the times of the war and she was sure her granddaughter was hiding a "Yankee soldier."

For Grandmother, the War Between the States was a constant memory. Even now in 1888, twenty-three years since the South's surrender, the war in which she'd lost her husband and had set the coloreds free, still lived on in her mind.

On stocking feet, Maggie Rose crossed her room and stepped out into the hallway. The drone of a fly against the windowpane, above the stairway, was the only sound in the quiet stillness of the house.

The other bedrooms along the hallway were empty. Hattie slept downstairs, and Grandmother's three children had been gone now for years. Edward, the eldest son and Maggie Rose's father, had died six years ago. He had been Grandmother's favorite and had lived with her all his life, even after he married. Grandmother had disowned her daughter, Susan, when she married a man Grandmother called "a piece of trash." The youngest child, a son named Caleb, lived out west in Kansas in a town called Solomon Town, where he ran a general store and had a wife and several children. He wrote to Grandmother once a year and sent money to her lawyer for their keep. Each year Grandmother answered his letter, promising him the moon if he'd come back to Georgia. Not that she had the moon to offer. The truth was she was penniless and it was Uncle Caleb's money that kept her in this big, old house Grandfather Goodwin had inherited from his father and had brought her to as a bride.

Maggie Rose knew her father had been Grandmother's favorite, and that his death had turned her already sour disposition into bitter anger towards life. Once, after Grandmother had yelled at Hattie about some cleaning not done to her liking, and had stomped off, Maggie Rose, sunk deep in an overstuffed chair and unseen by either of them, had heard Hattie mutter, "*Her soul must belong to the devil. Sure do wish Mr. Edward be here to keep her half fit to live with.*"

Even after six years, Maggie Rose still missed her father and, in a way, she missed her mother too. Her mother had died giving her birth, and Maggie Rose had learned the strange truth that you could miss, quite terribly, what you have never had, and she had shed many tears wishing for a mother's gentle voice and loving arms.

Hattie always said of folks who'd passed on, "*They gone to their eternal reward. Can't no thing be hurtin' them now.*" Maggie Rose's parents were buried in the Goodwin plot beside Grandfather Goodwin under the sheltering branches of a giant oak. Grandfather Goodwin had died in the War Between the States. "*Killed,*" Grandmother often said, her eyes flashing with anger, "*by a blue-bellied Yankee's bullet.*"

Grandmother always said Maggie Rose's father was the very image of Grandfather Goodwin. Once, Maggie Rose asked whom she favored. Grandmother had answered in a tone of voice that spoke her anger and hate louder than any words, "*That woman your father married.*"

There were no pictures of her mother in the house, and Maggie Rose had looked at her own image several dozen times trying to see how it could be so bad to look like her mother. Then one day she asked Hattie for her opinion.

**M***aggie Rose and Sass* explores the differences between two races and the culture of the times. The novel is set in 1888 in a fictional town based on Nicodemus, Kansas, a town settled eleven years earlier by ex-slaves from Kentucky.



Life in Georgia with an ugly-tempered, racist grandmother has not prepared the orphaned Maggie Rose for Solomon Town whose citizens are almost all black. Sass has lived all her life in Solomon Town, the daughter of an ex-slave mother and a free-born, educated, mixed-race father. Raised in such totally different cultures, the two girls are bound to clash.

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**"Insightfully written...historically moving..."**

—Angela Bates, Nicodemus Descendant, Historian, and Author  
(Recipient of the 2005 Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones,  
Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award)

**"A memorable addition to Kansas young adult fiction. Solidly based on historical fact, yet illustrates some perpetual truths. It is a celebration of both the pioneer spirit and of diversity. Readers will not soon forget this book."**

—Roy Bird, Kansas State Library Consultant,  
Author of *The Better Brother: Tom & George Custer and the  
Battle for the American West* and *Civil War in Kansas*



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