

Wilberforce: A Novel

H. S. Cross

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At St. Stephen's Academy, the students are on the verge of revolt. While the younger boys plot an insurrection, the older ones are preoccupied with sneaking out-of-bounds, thrashing each other, tearing each other's clothes off-or some combination of the three. Morgan Wilberforce, for one, can't take it any longer.

Everything Wilberforce touches turns to disaster in his desperate attempts to fight off desire, boredom, and angst. He knocks himself unconscious tackling the unattainable Spaulding on the rugby pitch, his headmaster detests him for crimes committed years ago, and even his closest friends are subjecting him to physical tortures normally reserved for juniors. When an accident at the boarding school leaves him with more suffering than he could have fathomed, he finds himself alone and adrift. And the workaday charms of cricket practice, Victorian pornography, canings from classmates, and fumbling with the pub-keeper's daughter can only do so much to mend a broken body and a restless heart.

Stylishly inventive, H. S. Cross has crafted an imaginative, ritualistic world of men and boys narrowly confined by tradition and authority. *Wilberforce* is an indelible portrait of a young man caught between lust and cruelty, grief and God, frustrated love and abject longing-and a tour de force that heralds the arrival of a brilliant new novelist.



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