

Marrow

Forward To
Go Back

By
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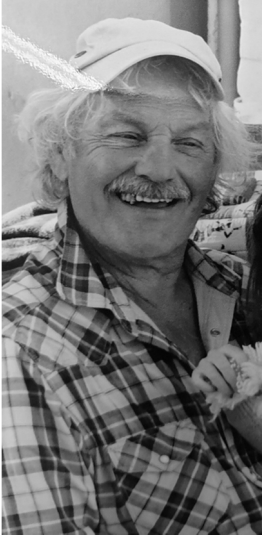
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Dedicated to my niecelette,

Miley

About the Author



"Ever since my mother introduced me to the Rupert Bear books, Alice and Wonderland, and The Once and Future King (just to keep me quiet), I could not get enough children's fantasy/ fiction. I read whenever I could, and it certainly helped me a lot at school with my English and other Language lessons! After reading and telling endless stories

to my own and other children, that to my surprise seemed to enjoy them, I was encouraged to try writing my own. Endless short stories later, and children all grown up, I decided to carry on because I thoroughly enjoyed writing. A few years ago I took a bold step and decided to write a full length story.

"The result is in your hands. Enjoy."

T.L.G

About the Illustrator



"I have always drawn from such an early age; in fact, I remember drawing with crayons and felt tips on the walls when I was only 4 years old. I was constantly doodling and I always took a pencil to bed to draw the curtains!

"Nearly 50 years later I am finally realising my dream to illustrate a children's book.

"During my life I have been trained in Accounts and this was my career until motherhood. Then, because of my love of children, I trained as a teaching assistant but my love is to paint and do all things creative. In Ross-On-Wye where I live, I teach art in my studio and online, check out my website www.marydeaville.co.uk for my gallery of artwork and my Facebook Page or YouTube channel called 'Mary Deaville Artist.'

"I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I did

and look out for more stories from Theo L Gardener.
I also have more illustrations to be shared in the
future."

Mary Deaville

MARROW 2

CHAPTER ONE

"Once upon a time," puffed Skeleton, making a complete hash of trying to shimmy under a low branch, "when I was a just a bonelet, my mother wanted tae enter me in a Father Christmas competition."

"Oh, and I suppose you won," said Marrow rolling her eyes.

"No," sighed Skeleton, "they could nae find anywhere tae hang the beard!"

A gaggle of pigeons that were quietly sunning themselves on a low branch scattered in panic as Skeleton let out a very loud sneeze that echoed for some time around the trees.

"How on earth can you get dust up a nose that isn't there?" asked Marrow. "But bless you anyway."

"Well bless my soul, bless you for blessing me but you leave my blessed snorter alone," said skeleton

snapping off a leaf and wiping his nose wetly with it.

Marrow had just about finished telling skeleton the whole story, every adventure that had good and not so good bits that had happened to her from the nasty portrait at the top of the stairs until discovering the bone filled sack.

"Well," yawned skeleton, "I agree that it's no fun being stuck in someone else's painting that's fer sure, even so I have tae say that's just about the wackiest story I've ever heard."

"Wacky!" protested Marrow. "Wacky? How dare you! Sheesh, I've been accused of spying by a ridiculous ostrich, side-swiped by a Diplodocus sized snail, snagged by a giant frog, bounced around trees by a big hairy spider that thinks it's Tarzan and almost barbecued by two idiots that tried to cannibalise me."

"Aye, just like I said, wacky, and also the longest story if ye don't mind me saying. it's a wonder ye don't have mouth ache because I've sure got earache," mumbled Skeleton rattling a bony finger around in his

empty earhole to make the point. "You've no stopped yakking since we left the clearing, and that was almost an afternoon ago," groaned Skeleton throwing his arms wide. "But don't go getting ye teeth in a tangle lassie, I'm no sayin' I don't believe ye, course it's all true, er if ye say so, but ye have tae admit it's still wacky."

"Yes all right, I admit it is a rather a longish story," sighed Marrow, "but don't forget you did ask me to tell you everything didn't you, and 'don't you dare leave anything out' you said. Well I didn't, and it's difficult even for me to believe that so much has happened, ending of course with wandering lost in a forest with another brainless Diplodocus, enter sir moanalot, a babbling Scottish Skeleton basket case that tells bad jokes, huh yakking indeed."

"What, moan, me? I do not moan a lot at all," protested Skeleton, "except of course when I'm bein' tossed around in a sack like a loose rugby ball by a bossy red-haired schoolgirl, or having ma ear assaulted by you warbling on forever, but that's not

moaning, that's just complaining."

"Yes you do too," said Marrow picking up a thin hollow stick and using it as a telescope. "You moan and grumble aaand complain over just about everything, in fact you haven't stopped moaning or complaining since I rescued you, oohh you are positively earitating."

"Hmm, ah well it's probably moanday today that's why," said skeleton with an exaggerated sniff. "Anyway, isn't that something that grows on the side of ye head."

"What?" said Marrow.

"An earitater," grinned Skeleton.

"See what I mean about bad jokes," giggled Marrow. "Anyway, I guess it's my turn to listen now because you promised to tell me just how you came to be all jumbled up in that sack I found you in, and to be honest I'm still not all that convinced you're not a bandit, a cut throat or a thief, in short some sort of criminal."

"Well I'll be honest wi' ye Lassie, I'm not all that

lilywhite, I admit I was once up before the beak," said Skeleton quietly.

"I think you mean Judge don't you, and just what were you in court for?" asked Marrow taking a couple of precautionary steps backward, ready for a quick retreat. "Not cut-throating I hope?"

"Och no Lassie, someone accused me of stealing his Sporrán," said Skeleton sheepishly.

"Oh yes, I know, a sort of Scottish bum bag you wear back to front, but is that all?" sighed Marrow. "And did they send you to prison for that?"

"Och no, the Judge found me not kilty," giggled Skeleton.

"Aagh, I should have known," groaned Marrow giving an innocent branch a thump which immediately swished back to smack her full in the face. "Ouch, ouch, flipping ouch, and as for you Mister Sporrán Thief," squeaked Marrow spitting out bits of leaf and bark, "now are you going to tell me about how you ended up a jumbled bag-full of moaning bones or not?" she finished, stamping a foot, then with a shake

of her head and a lopsided grin she walked on.

"So I did miss bossy-boots, so I did," said Skeleton who had walked a few yards sideways and was now busy shaking the branches of a large leafy bush, "but look here, these branches are loaded with nuts so what do you say we have a wee rest and chomp on a few."

Marrow agreed and so after a mad game of who could gather the most nuts, they began piling leaves into cushion sized heaps and making themselves comfortable.

"Hey, the shells on these nuts are really quite hard to get off, what sort are they?" asked Marrow, busy trying to prise one open with her thumbnail.

"Thumbbits," said Skeleton with his mouth full. The nuts had a thin split at one end like a pair of pursed lips. "Just enough to get a thumbnail under and prise it open."

Marrow had to compliment Skeleton on his skill as he quickly opened one after another. She was just about to ask why they were called thumbbits when she

shot to her feet, letting out a loud yelp of pain and began hopping around with one of the nuts firmly attached to her thumb end.

"My gosh lassie, that's a pretty fair imitation of the highland fling," said Skeleton raising an eyebrow. "Where did ye learn that?"

"Aah ooh eek, it's biting my thumb off," hooted Marrow.

"Och aye, that they will," chuckled Skeleton. "You see if you're not careful opening one, or quick enough getting them oot of their shells, they have a nasty habit of snapping shut, just like that one you've got there on the end o' yer thumb, but they are super tasty actually, you don't have to crack them hard, just give one a hefty twist, like this," he demonstrated, "and mostly it cracks itself open, see."

"How delightful for you," groaned Marrow finally shaking the offending nut free. "You're awfully good at cracking bad jokes, so you crack the nuts, after all your thumb is only bone, you wouldn't feel

anything."

After a while of sucking her wounded thumb and sulking she accepted one of the nuts Skeleton offered with just a bit of suspicion, taking a couple of nibbles first, then finally popping the large nut into her mouth and declaring it delicious.

"Tastes a bit like chicken noodles aaaand yes, marzipan," she said smacking her lips. "Very tasty even if it is a bit dangerous to get one out."

"Yeah you've got tae have the knack to crack," joked Skeleton. "If you can't do it Skelly can."

"Oooh no," groaned Marrow, "enough, please, of your awful jokes and get on with your story!"

"Oh, aye, where was I?" said Skeleton tapping his jaw.

"Actually, nowhere," sighed Marrow.

"Ok, ok, now it all started when my best friend and companion Mac and I got separated," began Skeleton settling comfortably back against a tree, every now and then tossing a nut in the air and expertly catching it with his teeth. "Sure, ye don't want a

plaster for the thumb," he winked.

"Get on with it," sighed Marrow.

"Well," he chuckled, "it's like this, one minute Mac was right behind me and the next he was gone, just like that," he said trying to click his fingers for effect resulting only in his bony finger end flying off and landing in Marrow's lap. "I could nae believe it, I searched left and right and back behind and all over for him. I shouted and whistled 'til my mouth dried up, and then when the sun started going down, I gave up and concentrated on finding somewhere reasonably safe and hopefully half comfortable tae lay ma weary heed, I mean head, and sleep."

"There I was completely nicknacked and paddywhacked after a long and hard days searching and shouting, listening, and wonderin' just where ma friend coulda disappeared tae in the blink o' an eye, I just could nae fathom it oot...

"After searching about for a while I'd finally got meself all comfortably snuggled down in some nice warmish ferns ye see and was just about dozing off

when I heard some odd snuffling noises, lots of 'em and getting closer, it wasn't really dark so I pops ma head up tae have a gander about like, you know, see what it was. it was pigs, wild ones, black hairy boar beasties with them big curly teeth and there was a whole stompin' gang of 'em too, all rootin about, chompin' on acorns and roots and things, they was even bitin' off chunks of bark and chewin' the stuff.

"Well, I ducks ma head back down a bit quick hoping they hadn't seen me but they had, one of 'em gave out a squeal and on they came like a porky tidal wave, snuffin', snortin' and gnashin' them teeth.

"Before I could think of a way oot, one of 'em grabbed me arm and another got me leg an' they began pullin' and gnawin' and chewin' on me like I was some old dogs bone, and all those flat wet snotty snouts pokin' and pushin' an dribblin' everywhere."

From somewhere close by came the distinct 'brrrrrrrr rrrrrt' of a woodpecker, sounding a bit like a woody front door bell, breaking Marrow's concentration, it was quickly followed by an

answering 'rrrrt' from somewhere deeper in the forest.

"Wouldn't you have lots of scratches and scars from their teeth, if they were gnawing at you?" asked Marrow, examining skeletons arms. "I can't see any, oh, perhaps you had better have this part of you back too," she said, handing back Skeletons finger end.

"Aye, aye well, um they're probably all healed by now," said Skeleton.

"Goodness, yes, and it didn't take long at all did it?" said Marrow with a grin and a wink.

"It's true I tell ye," answered Skeleton. "Anyway, up I gets and I began a right old battle with 'em, put up ye dooks I shouted, I was outnumbered but I fought like a lion," and with this he leapt up and began to shuffle about, punching the air like a boxer. "Aye, I was holding ma own, kickin' and punchin' left and right, but there was just too many of 'em."

"Yes yes," said Marrow, raising her eyes to the heavens. "I'm afraid I've heard all that gubbins

before from the boys in my school, just hurry up and get to the bit where you finally escape, *ahem*, bravely of course."

"Look here, I never interrupted you every minute when you were telling your marathon saga," said a slightly miffed Skeleton.

"*I was nee exaggeratin' any of it either laddie,*" giggled Marrow in a mock Scottish accent.

"Me, exaggerate? May ma sporrans turn in tae a hairy haggis," protested Skeleton. "Huh, well anyway, by this time one o' them big porkers had pulled off ma left arm and was mekin' off with it. Well I could nae go around the rest o' me life wi' only one arm now, could I. I had no choice I just had tae chase after that fat bunch o' lumberin' pork chops tae try and rescue it.

"As I galloped after the thievin' porker I had tae keep stopping tae pick up the fallen bones with me one good arm, and when I finally found ma hand I thought great, I've got 'em all, so I bolted for the trees and put meself back together as fast as I

could, and then ran like the merry clappers, mind you this elbow is still a bit wobbly you know," he said swinging his arm about.

Marrow shuffled about trying to get into a more comfortable position, stifling another yawn and wondering if it had been such a bright idea asking Skeleton to tell his story, it seemed to be going on forever, and getting nowhere.

"After a while," said Skeleton, "I stopped running because I'd stumbled head first into a huge pile o' smelly old leaves, when I finally pulled meself free I could see I was in a clearing but anyway free of them nasty piggies.

"Great heaps of leaves were piled up all over the place, most of them were dry at least and looked comfortable enough, so I thought hey, one o' these will make an ideal bed, and I can burrow deep down if them wild snouters come back.

"The light was a wee bit gloomy but as I nosed around looking for the biggest, driest pile I saw what looked like an oversized scruffy old rucksack in the

dirt by a tree, a bit like yours actually only bigger, this one looked as though it had been thrown away and had been lyin' there for years.

"I thought it can't be anybody's cos there's no one about, but it looks like it would probably make a right comfortable and safe beddio, and dry too. So, keeping a wary eye oot for pork pies on legs and other silly things I made me way over to it, and checked it over, yeah why not I thought and opened it right up.

"I was just about halfway in when something monstrous, all hairy and twiggy that had been lyin' by the next tree, began to sort of scratch itself, then grunted real loud and turned itself over.

"It looked tae me like half a human person joined on te half a tree, anyway one half of it began tae snore, and the other half was rustlin' leaves about, very spooky. Right, I thought, I'll be long gone in the morning before that ridiculous looking bush thing wakes up and so, hey presto I crept right in tae the sack, it was clean, roomy and warm, absolute heaven."

"Goodness, you're making me feel tired,' yawned

Marrow. 'I thought you said my story was longish, is there much more?'"

"Nearly done lassie. Now, I had just about fallen asleep," continued Skeleton, "when things began tae bully me about and as much as I tried tae scramble my way oot o' that sack I kept getting pulled back, until I ended up being pulled completely apart.

"I got all wrapped up in some sort of maniac cloth, and then after ages of quiet everything starts tae move again, well there's poor old me getting all debone'd and battered about, and then I'm spat out on to the ground where everything starts moving around, all by themselves.

"All these things like plates, pepper pots, aggressive spoons and forks all whizzin' past ma head, and there I lay, an unhappy heap of loose bones on the floor when that blitherin' bunch o' branches woke up."

"Aha, seems to me you'd just met Haycorn," laughed Marrow, wide awake now, "and it must have been breakfast time, that cloth you were wrapped up in

was probably the tablecloth. Oh, by the way, excuse me for interrupting but once again didn't you tell me that MY story was a bit long... er, sure you don't want a plaster for the finger?" she chuckled.

"What, yes, I mean no," said Skeleton trying desperately to click his unruly finger end back into place. "I mean, well I'm almost there, or do you want me to stop."

"I suppose you might as well plough on to the end now I'm fully awake. If there is an end that is," sighed Marrow, struggling to pop another nut.

Skeleton gave a half bow. "You're so kind o' bossy one. Right, so, when twiggy brain, haybarn or whatever ye said it was called woke up he was a bit surprised tae find me lyin' there in a heap in the middle of his breakfast, and so would you believe it the blunderin' bush headed barbarian began rakin' me up!

"Oh, the humiliation, can ye imagine, bein' raked up like a heap o' garden rubbish? Well I tried yellin' at the useless walking hedge, but I dare say the thing

was stone deaf."

"Ah," said Marrow with a mouthful of thumbit, "it's Haycorn, not hay barn, and he probably still had his earplugs in, he uses two moles you know."

"Oh does he now," said skeleton finally securing his finger end in place with a loud clack. "I wondered what was hanging oota his lug-holes... Anyway, that shuffling stack of twigs shovelled me into that sack, tied it up and left me for dead, the rotter. Next thing I know I'm bein' bullied, and battered and bashed about by a bossy schoolgirl." He let out a long sigh. "Flattened by the steamroller of life."

"Mmmmm, I know how it feels," sighed Marrow in sympathy, "a bit like me up that Elephants trunk."

"You're right, snot fair," sighed Skeleton, and they both began to roll about with an unstoppable fit of giggles.

A long time later still wiping tears from their eyes they decided to move on, and so they finally heaved themselves up from the oh so comfortable leafy, cushions. First they gave the nut bush a good old

shake, then with Marrow's pockets bulging with thumbbits they began walking again. For quite a long time the duo trundled on, each lost in their own deep thoughts.

CHAPTER TWO

"Guess what I'm thinking of?" asked Skeleton after what seemed like miles of silence.

"Dunno," replied Marrow.

"Nuttin," said Skeleton and the silly giggling began again. "What exactly is a Diplodocus?" asked Skeleton, coming to a full stop.

"Well, it was one of the largest dinosaurs, about eighty feet long from nose to tail, and really heavy probably thirty tons or more," answered Marrow, "from the Jurassic period you know, millions of years ago. We're learning that at school."

"I see, well I don't weigh that much so why did you call me a Diplodocus?" asked Skeleton.

"Because they had a large body and a very small brain," giggled Marrow.

"Ach, I walked into that one right enough," sighed Skeleton and carried on walking.

It was while they were walking that Marrow felt that irritating tickle behind her ear again and sure