

## Lilly and the Lost Crown

Imogen R, Year 2

Once upon a time in the Land of Magical Things there lived a queen, a princess and a prince. The queen's name was Beatrice. Her children were called Lilly and Jack.

Lilly was very pretty with beautiful blonde curly hair and her eyes sparkled like diamonds. She was also very kind.

Jack was handsome with hair as black as coal but he was rather naughty. He was secretly jealous of Lilly because he thought she was the queen's favourite child.

One night, a wicked witch called Maleficent crept into the castle where they all lived. She had come to steal Queen Beatrice's crown. The crown was lying next to the queen on her pillow. She was fast asleep. The witch tiptoed into her bedroom and using her special night-vision camera she spotted the crown straightaway. She picked it up and left the room as quietly as a mouse.

"Now the kingdom will be mine!" she cackled to herself.

When Queen Beatrice woke up, she saw that her crown was gone. She picked up the note. It said:

Dear Queen Beatrice,  
I have taken your crown. You have until sunrise tomorrow to find it otherwise I will cast a spell to turn you into stone forever. Then the kingdom will be mine.

Yours wickedly,  
Maleficent

Queen Beatrice dropped the note and let out a big scream! Princess Lilly and Prince Jack came running.

"What's the matter, Mum?" Lilly asked.

The queen showed them the note. She was shaking like a leaf on a windy day.

Lilly said, "Don't worry, Mum. Jack and I will find your crown."

Jack agreed but he had a cunning plan to get Lilly lost in the forest! That way he would finally become the queen's favourite child! The queen thanked them and gave them a big hug and off they set.

Meanwhile, Maleficent was flying away on her broomstick. She was taking the crown back to her lair in the middle of the deep dark forest.

“No-one will ever find it there,” she cackled.

Suddenly, there was a loud clap of thunder. It frightened Maleficent so much that the crown fell off her head and disappeared into the forest below. It was lost! Maleficent started to cry like a baby.

Lilly and Jack stood at the entrance of the forest. The trees were towering in front of them and there were lots of strange, creepy noises. They were scared but they knew they had to go on because they wanted to save their mother and the kingdom.

After a while, they saw the biggest tree they had ever seen. Hiding behind it in the shadows was a ginormous giant! The children screamed! They wanted to run away but then they remembered why they were there.

“Please let us pass, Mr Giant,” Lilly begged. “We have to find Queen Beatrice’s crown before it’s too late.”

The giant thought about it.

“Very well but only if you complete my challenge,” he boomed. “Climb this tree to the top and slide down the zipline. Then you may go.”

But Jack was terrified of heights! “I can’t do it!” he cried.

“Yes, you can,” said Lilly. “I will help you.”

So, very slowly they climbed the tree together. They slid down the zipline holding onto each other tightly until they were at the bottom.

“Thank you for helping me,” Jack said to Lilly. “I couldn’t have done it without you.”

He gave her a big hug and they set off deeper into the forest.

Soon they heard a rustling noise coming from the bushes. It was a dreadful fire-breathing dragon! Lilly and Jack were afraid but they couldn’t run away because they really had to find the crown.

“Please let us pass, Mr Dragon,” Lilly begged. “We have to find Queen Beatrice’s crown before it’s too late.”

The dragon thought about it.

“Alright but only if you complete my challenge,” he roared. “Swim across the river all the way to that tree. Then you may go.”

But Jack was afraid of water and he couldn't swim.

“I can't do it!” he cried.

“Yes, you can,” said Lilly. “I will help you.”

Jack followed Lilly into the river. She showed him what to do with his arms and legs. Jack began to swim and before they knew it they had reached the other side!

“Thank you for helping me again,” said Jack. “I couldn't have done it without you.”

He gave Lilly another big hug. Jack was sorry about his plan to lose Lilly. He realised that he loved his sister and he didn't want anything bad to happen to her. They set off again.

By the time it got dark, Jack and Lilly were starting to think they were never going to find the crown. There was a bridge in front of them. Suddenly, they saw something sparkling in the moonlight at the other side of it. They were very excited! As they stepped onto the bridge out jumped a terrifying troll!

“Where do you think you're going?” screeched the troll.

Lilly was so afraid that she couldn't speak.

“Please let us pass, Mr Troll,” Jack begged. “We have to get that crown back to Queen Beatrice before it's too late.”

“No, I will not let you cross my bridge,” said the troll.

Lilly and Jack looked at each other and held hands. They took a deep breath and ran across the bridge as fast as they could! They picked up the crown and did a little dance.

“We did it, we did it!” they cried happily.

The troll disappeared back under his bridge.

Lilly and Jack raced back to the castle. Queen Beatrice was delighted to see them! She was so glad they were safe and she was really proud of them. She decided to throw a big party to celebrate and her two brave children were the guests of honour.

And what became of the wicked witch? She was never seen again!

## Lightning

Carys M, Year 6

I remember that day as though it was yesterday. It was a cold, crisp winter's morning. Ice spread like a sheet over the ground, and the water in the horse's troughs had to be broken as it had solidified. The trees of the orchard sparkled with a silver frost and the peak of Dead Horse Pinnacle was glittering with ice across the valley of Clarion's Drop. It was a beautiful winter wonderland.

"Perfect for snow hunting," my best friend Julian had said. He had claimed that every morning since November, yet today it may be true. So with difficulty, we had tacked up Flame and Guinness (our two fluffed-up horses) and set off for Clarion's Drop. There we were, 2 rugged up horses, two wrapped up riders and unbeknown to us then, one trapped wild stallion.

"Julian, are you sure this is safe?" We had started the ascent up Dead Horse Pinnacle, and the going was getting rougher and more steep, not to mention the snow and ice that was underfoot. Guinness was panting heavily and there seemed to be no marked path to show us the way.

"Of course, I've done this sev....whoa!" Flame had just slipped on some black ice and gone down on both front knees. Julian was flung from her saddle despite his desperate grab at the pommel. With no rider to direct her, Flame panicked. Rearing up onto her hind legs, she spun around and galloped back down the mountain, kicking up the thin dusting of snow as she went. Julian cried out for his horse as she swiftly leapt a ditch and threw in a few frightened bucks. Without hesitation, Julian tore down the mountain after her, stumbling occasionally over the rocks, calling for Flame all the while with no regard for his own safety. I watched, helpless, as Julian and Flame rounded a bend shadowed by pine trees and disappeared.

"What should we do, boy?" I murmured to Guinness. "Follow? Come on then." I pressed my heels against his sides, asking him to walk on, but he just pinned his ears back and squealed. "Come ON!" I asked more forcefully, but he squealed again and swished his tail angrily. And then I heard it. A high pitched whinny, a whinny for help, thin with fear and weakness. A horse was in danger, and I had to help.

"How can we get DOWN there?" We had just found the horse in trouble, stranded in a gully, his path blocked by a landslide probably caused by Flame's bid for freedom. He was a jet-black, lying on his side, a huge boulder trapping his front leg and blood pouring from a deep gash in his flank. The edges were steep with no path to go down on. I had no choice. If I was to reach the stallion in trouble, I would have to climb. I dismounted and told Guinness to stay. Summoning up all the courage in me, I placed my foot on a rock jutting out and began to lower

by body down, searching for handholds and footholds to use. Looking down, it seemed a lot steeper and larger than it looked from up top. Gulp. I had to carry on. With each step I took, a tiny chunk of the cliff tumbled off into the gully. This was terrifying: terrifying because I had no ropes, and one mistake would land all 3 of us dead. I imagined Guinness, lying at the bottom of the gully, unmoving, all thanks to me. No. Can't think of that, I need to concentrate. I was almost at the bottom (how tall was that cliff, 50 metres?) when Guinness became impatient. He began to paw, knocking down stones that fell close to my head. "NO!" I shouted. "STOP!" He whinnied loudly, then pawed again. A large stone tumbled down, getting closer and closer. It smashed against my forehead with tremendous force and I felt myself falling backwards, then everything went black.

"Josie? JOSIE!" Julian's cry made me drift back into consciousness slightly. I could make out the blurred outlines of him, Guinness and Flame standing at the top of the cliff face. But they were joined by another figure. A black figure of a horse, his front hoof held into the air as it was injured. The stallion.

"Julian?" I called back woozily. I realised I was on the ground, a throbbing pain in my arm and head making me want to throw up. What we were all doing here, I couldn't remember. It was for a horse though... I could feel myself drifting back into unconsciousness. "Save the stallion, Julian.." I called weakly, then once more everything was covered by a velvety black.

When I woke up again, I was in something soft and warm. Was I in hospital? I opened my eyes. No. I was in my bedroom, in my bed, still in my riding clothes. Julian was standing by the door, looking immensely relieved at my reawakening. Then everything came flooding back to me. Julian falling off, Flame accidently causing a terrible landslide, the trapped stallion, the rock knocking me out... was it all a dream?

"Julian, is Guinness OK? Is the stallion OK?" I could hear Julian chuckling slightly at my question.

"I thought you would say that. Guinness is fine, he's in his stable eating his hay net. This stallion? Oh, I've named him Lightning by the way. He has a couple of deep cuts and a bit of shock but generally OK. He managed to find a path on the other side up to me. Guinness led the way to me, he seemed to know you were in trouble." He smiled.

Phew. It wasn't all a nightmare, the horses were ok and I felt not too bad. This was probably one of the most important days of my life (not including winning Olympia and Guinness almost getting killed by a madman.)

In spite of all the commotion, I felt almost brilliant.

## Then and Now

Mia H, Year 8

Then;

As the blood, burning mass surrounds me it engulfs me within the power of its flames. Scraping away at my skin. Slowly making me suffer, tragic, yet no one seems to notice. How long have I suffered through this torture? What even happened to start this deadly beast creeping up behind me?

Now;

I lie in wait. The bed made of ice stiffens me. Sending shivers down my spine. Dripping dirt onto the polished floor. I look down on my empty body, plastered in bandages. Making me look like a horrified mummy. It comes back to me then, as always, as forever.

Then;

What sounds like a scream escapes my throat. Terrifying even me. It burns, cuts deep in to my flesh never letting go, afraid of losing me. Choking me almost to my death. So close to me, yet so far away.

Now;

The world goes dark. It rises up in await of me. Knowing this would happen. I am swallowed by the monster, inside of it although I can still see me, but that's not possible. How can you see yourself with no reflection?

Then;

The sensation to rip free of this pain is killing me. Not knowing how to escape. Poking me, trying to aggravate me. My bones start to prickle and I feel what's left of my body shake and destroy every living cell inside of me.

Now;

I wake. Dark silhouettes stand above me. Peering over me. Trying to read my thoughts. Who are these people? Why do they seem so worried? I feel no pain any more. It all just, disappeared.

Then;

I feel like I am being torn apart. Limb by limb, bone by bone, particle by particle. I can only see you now, monster. Why do you do this to me? Make me feel as though I'm dying in slow motion. Make me feel as though I have no life to live. Make me feel as though the only thing in the world is you and me.

Now;

I have this urge inside of me to just let go. Let go of the world. No, I must show this monster I am stronger than he thought. Stronger than he knew I would be. I must live in order for this monster to die, 'cause otherwise, there was no point in trying.

Then;

I see you monster, hide if you will but you're just too big to cover. You're everywhere, in my mind, in my body, in what was my favourite place on the planet. You're in the stars that write the sky, the universe that wishes it were something else. You can't hide from me, there's nowhere to go!

Though it might not seem like it, I would've thought it be me hiding from you. Not the other way around!

Now;

"It's alright, sweetie. Everyone's afraid of something. Just thought I should let you know you're a survivor. You know that, right? That beast of a thing tried hard, it really did, you didn't let it though and that's one heck of a fight, if you ask me. You're lucky we found you before you really left, but what am I saying? This isn't about us, is it now? It's about you and how you found a way to survive when most couldn't last five seconds."

Then;

You swarm around me monster, like a nest full of bees. You need someone else's life in order to live yours. That's not how it should be. Even though you lash out at me and scrape my living flesh against your scorching, dry body. I still live. I will survive this, even if it takes me to my last dying moments.

Now;

I never realised how good it is to live. To be wanted. To feel needed. I never thought you could survive something that was determined to finish you. Suck all of the life out of you until you're just a corpse lying on the charcoaled floor.

Then;

Monster, you don't scare me anymore. You can't hurt me when there's nothing left to hurt inside of me!

Now;

I rise to my feet. Slowly. I wobble. I stumble. I fall, but I get back up. I remember you then monster, tall and bright. Never falling, but then again, never flying.

Then;

I hate you monster! I know I shouldn't but I do. You have no right to do this to me, and you know it.

I know you hate me to, that's why you chose me. That's why you're torturing me!

Now;

I will fly. I am determined to accomplish great things. To prove I am more than just a victim of you, monster.

Then;

My breath starts to quicken, my vision begins to blur but I still see you monster, taller than before and somewhat stronger.

Now;

I get up, but this time I don't fall. Like I said before, I will fly. I will do whatever it takes to fly. In a way monster, you have shaped my future. Even though you wanted to murder me, and I will never think of fire in the same way again. I am not afraid of you anymore monster. I am just simply not afraid.

Then;

You seem broader, monster. Whilst I fight for my life you age. At first you seemed so harmless, like a child when it's born, but like all things you aged and now you've chosen the wrong path, because as you know everyone and everything will eventually burn out.

Now;

I remember you, monster. The way you ignited your flames against my skin and threatened to burn me out. Never letting me see daylight again. Now I realise I was afraid of a light that would never return. Needless to say, I have overcome you, monster. I no longer fear your presence. The light you gave me will always be inside of me. I just don't fear it anymore.

I will always remember you monster, for always and forever!

### Fearless Girl and the Charging Bull

Rosie P, Year 10

The cobble stone pavement leads up to an array of towering offices and banks, lining the street like prison fences. Glowing street lamps create warped ashy shadows on the ground in the thick light. Red, white and blue flags hang loosely from poles and infinite buildings, floors piled on top of one another like jenga blocks whilst the calm wind tugs the flags gently into ripples as people briskly stride, dressed in dark coats and hats, down the dimming street. Burnt out cigarette butts and tissues boarder the ridges in the pavement, echoes of lively tourists caught in gurgling drain pipes and overflowing the bins. The beginnings of powdery snow settles on the pale stone shoulders of the buildings, unable to be seen by a pedestrian on the walkway; and collects on the ground next to the glossy black posts.

In the middle of the street stands a girl. Barely a metre tall; her chest confidently pushed forwards, hands on hips, ponytail flowing behind her in an imaginary wind. The skirt of the girl's simple dress like a metallic bird's tail in a storm, her jaw steady in its jutted out position, eyelids unblinking. However, the men, transactions and applications running through their heads, disregard the child; their own heavy eyelids half shut, heads lolling slightly forwards into their tightly buttoned up coats as they walk through the night.

Business men peer out of their box sized window into the dusty darkness; lamp posts the size of match sticks, the girl barely an ink splodge on the cobble stones. She doesn't need their help.

Still, the girl stands. Her eyes daring, bold, waiting for the first move. She stands, assured and brave, unafraid of the beast looming before her, an image of brutal masculinity and ruthlessness. She does not cower or tremble, she stands, challenging the creature. The bull, rippling muscles, hooves the size of boulders, jousting lances for horns, has its burning eyes fixed on her.

But still, the girl stands. The great bull is poised ready to charge, nostrils flaring, threatening. It is no match for the girl. She remains in the same stance, unflinching, illuminated by the washed-

out street lamps. They wait, facing each other, the dark copper colour of the girl's skin impenetrable, her moulded features challenging the numbingly cold bronze behemoth brute ahead.

Both bronze. Both untarnishable; resilient. The combination of traits, metals, make them stronger and tougher than standing alone. The two figures, same materials, same alloy, same ambitions, unable to share the same space.

He wants the girl to move. To sit down, walk away. He thinks the girl has turned the bull into an object of destruction and aggression. Before the girl, the bull was powerful creature resembling hope and dominance. All it took was for one small girl to stand to reveal the truth of which the bull was moulded from, the hooves created to crush, the horns created to stab, and the legs created to charge. The attention is no longer on the picture of strength and force, but on the determination and fearlessness of a little girl.

And so, she stands.

### A fear-less house

Ellie McV, Year 12

34th January, 2038. I halted on the brink of the square, somewhere between a step into the Streetbeam and a falter into shadow. There I waited with streaming breath. Somewhat wheezy, through flared nostrils, the air left tart by the harsh scent of thick chimney smoke - a relic of a bygone Industrial Age. The Cyber-industry. I am obliged to recount this whilst I am able, for once the years have tolled, memoirs of an age such as this shall wither: or my own memoirs, scribbled feverishly onto a mechanical tablet, shall become shreds of data in the heap of cyber-industrial muck that we once had the pretentiousness to call a cloud.

Conscious of the Oldlondon chill, I tucked my arms around myself, effectively tightening my greatcoat for some degree of warmth. A wheeze of a breath, I took the courage to step fully into the white glow of the Streetbeam, and, encouraged by the boldness of my disregard for what lurked in the intense flood of light, I skipped across the concrete, metal toe-caps clipping delicately as I went. How I enjoyed the sound of that! Oh, the horror of retrospect - who knows what might have heard? Yet I cannot claim fearlessness, even in those days: it is a preposterous notion, reserved for the bullish.

Anticipation fuelled me that night, may have sucked out most of the nip of the Oldlondon chill - anticipation and the bite of nerves, for even a clairvoyant cannot be comfortable amongst the dead. Shadows can only offer so much protection from the sinister buzz of the residual energy, a hive of memories of the passed. I was grateful, therefore, to be allowed inside with efficiency - none of the fanciful decorum, the Victorianaesque psyche the British chose to cling on to in the

face of it all. It was a man who opened the door. He opened up, ushered me in, and I was seated. He addressed me thus:

“Tarion Hatton... a pleasure, to put a face to a name.” Percy Collins was *his* name. Ordinary enough, but slimy: the sort of man you’d associate with the name ‘Percy Collins’ - and his monocle looked fake.

“You flatter me, sir. How might I be of service?” I offer an investigation of sorts, a clean sweep of the modern home, sponging away the haunts of data which collect in the Streetbeams.

“Oh... the usual, if you may. Ask whatever thing that keeps jamming my laptop to bog off,” he drawled.

“Naturally, Mr Collins. I suppose you’ve asked this spirit to... ‘bog off’ as you say?”

“Words to that effect, yes.” It was his pride that irritated me so. Ignorant fool.

“Then it will not be entirely difficult to convince them to leave,” I concluded, adding an innocent bat of eyelashes for good measure. I must add here that we conversed in complete darkness – for initial safety. Investigations were all the more difficult since the snap which brought about the end of Cyber-industry. Traditional ghosts are more readily sifted out, you see, but the souls contained within the data? Not so easily persuaded, and disturbingly recent.

Taking a last wheeze of breath, I flicked on the lights, and allowed the investigation to commence. I began with the lounge, modestly decorated with sparse furniture. Sparse, yet luxurious, and carrying the sterile scent of ‘new’. Additionally, I became aware of the silence which oozed from every corner, the aching quiet which longed for a fizz of energy, or even a floorboard creak. If I were to recount the rest of the house, it would be quite the same. Immaculate. Sterile. Silent. It was uncanny. Despite my fears, the empty space conducted a loneliness, and I longed for some benevolent spirit to knock an ornament off the mantelpiece. I resorted to slumping in an armchair, bored senseless and listening to the clock. Tick. Tock. Repeat. It wasn’t usual – it wasn’t correct, something should happen – something always happened... But the house was fear-less. No hint of the past. Nothing to fear.

“Come on. Move,” I whispered to a hanging beam. Stillness. No sounds, no pixelated faces peering from the door. “Move!” I whispered again, forcefully glaring at the white glow. Just silence...

Then tapping – no, clicking? Keyboard sprung to mind, someone working away at a keyboard... Confirmed, then: it was a cyber-ghost. My chest twinged with fear. I crept out into the hallway, regulating my breath. Why could it not have been a traditional ghost? Nothing to be done about it, I admonished myself, working through the hall. Surely enough, blue light was filling the gaps of a door-frame. Keyboard clicking, growing ever-louder. Paralysis held my arm to my side...I would not open the door! No, I had to. Boldness sparked then, and with sudden determination I swung open the door.

It was Percy Collins.

He swivelled his office chair, fixed me with a look of sheer malice. Fear. I understood it in that moment: the greatest fear in that fear-less house.

“Ah, Tatton. Joined us, I see?” his manner was warped, a grim setness in his jaw.

“Tell me what you’ve done, Collins. The cyber-ghosts. Where are they?” I tried to conduct myself through the shivers.

“Gladly, my dear, I’m eager to share. It’s a new piece of technology: something I call tech-xorcism – a simple solution to the nuisance of cyber-ghosts. It will revolutionise the way we combat our past!”

He presented so calmly, so self-assured of the goodness his invention would bring. But it was not salvation. It was murder. So many memories, tenderly stored in great pools of data, all put aside – or erased. What of those people, their lives? Drawing closer to the desktop, I began to notice the low humming of the entrapped cyber-ghosts... They wanted to escape.

Boldness overtook me again, I swept forward, seized the keyboard and swung it at the blue light of the computer screen, which splintered. Splintered, and faded to black. The house would be fear-less no more.