

THE
LUCY WILSON
MYSTERIES



SWEET REVENGE



PAUL W ROBINSON

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CANDY JAR BOOKS · CARDIFF
2020

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Range Editor: Shaun Russell
Cover: Steve Beckett
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Published by
Candy Jar Books
Mackintosh House
136 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 1DJ
www.candyjarbooks.co.uk

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7.30am

'Quick!' shouted Lucy, who was the regulation two metres in front; her backpack bouncing on her shoulders as she ran.

Hobo saved his breath for running. After all, he was the one carrying the heavier load.

Behind them they heard the sound they had feared.

They were gaining on them...

6.00am

It started ninety minutes earlier. Dai Morgan, the post man, was guiding his electric postal cart along the road. He had one of the biggest walks in the area. By the end of his shift, he would have walked ten miles. Everyone around got to know his friendly face. People looked forward to seeing him in the street. In normal circumstances he would stop and have a little chat with people he met, but because of the lockdown, there was nobody around.

Dai walked along Ogmores high street and sighed. It was a quiet place at the best of times, but now, it was a ghost town. No one to talk to at all, with the very occasional exception of a dog walker. Dai liked to pet the dogs and chat with the owners – now everyone was keeping their distance. Some even crossed over to the other side of the road. It was not personal, but it *felt* personal.

There was something else as Dai trundled his cart along. He heard a noise behind him, like someone popping bubble wrap with really big bubbles. When he turned and looked back along the street, there was nothing to see. He stopped for a moment and mopped his brow. It was an unseasonably warm day. He heard something. He could not believe his ears. It sounded like a lot of people giggling.

Dai pushed his cap back and looked around.

‘Hello?’ he said. ‘Is there anybody—’

In an instant Dai was no longer there, his cart overturned, and letters scattered all over the road and pavement.

6.30am

Lucy Wilson was fast asleep. She awoke with a frown; something had disturbed her. She had had many strange awakenings in recent times, but none of them had involved a person calmly sitting on the chair in her bedroom. Actually, it might be better described as a *creature*. It had all the necessary bits and pieces – two arms two legs, a head, a human-ish face, although its ears were rather more pointed than the average human, and its eyes were somewhat larger than usual. The figure was wearing a grey suit made of a soft material. It wore a wide belt around its waist and had a shiny bald head. Here’s the thing though, the thing which made Lucy think she was

still asleep and dreaming – the creature sitting cross-legged on the chair in front of her desk was only about thirty centimetres high. It would barely have come up to Lucy’s knee, had she been standing.

She opened her eyes wide.

‘You’re not a dream, are you?’ she said, rubbing her eyes and yawning.

‘Finally!’ said the little figure in a cross, rather squeaky voice. ‘I thought you’d never wake!’

‘What?’

‘Manners, please!’

‘I mean...’ whispered a still not quite awake, flustered Lucy. ‘Pardon?’

‘Did you know you snore, too? I thought I was in a sawmill!’

Lucy was indignant. ‘I do *not* snore.’

‘Oh, pardon me, but these ears are never wrong!’

‘Look, who *are* you and what are you doing in my bedroom?’

The creature unfolded its legs, and stood, drawing itself up to its full height of a little over one foot tall.

Is it male or female? thought Lucy. It was not the most important question at the moment, but Lucy felt compelled to ask anyway.

‘Excuse me, but are you a boy or a girl?’

‘I started out a girl, but I haven’t made up my mind yet. We can choose you see, as we grow up.’

What we are born as does not dictate how we live. Is this not the same for you?’

Lucy was about to say no, but then she remembered something her brother Conall had said one day. Some people he knew were changing their gender.

‘Er, sometimes – but it’s quite hard, I think.’

Now that she was fully awake, Lucy could focus more clearly on her unbidden guest. ‘Wait a moment I know what you are. You’re a pixie, aren’t you?’

The creature sighed. ‘All right, let’s get it over with,’ it said and pressed a button on its belt. There was a flash so bright it dazzled Lucy. As the light faded, the little person appeared to have changed its appearance. It was now wearing a little green suit, and pointy hat, the nose was longer, and the ears were much bigger.

‘How’s that?’ said the creature, which now looked like a Cornish Pixie.

‘How did you change so quickly?’

‘I didn’t change. I used an image projector to blend into this backward planet of yours.’

‘So you’re an alien?’

‘Oh, well done, only after the third guess! First, I’m a dream, then some kind of mythical magical creature, although actually, to me *you* are the alien.’

By this time Lucy was beginning to feel cross. ‘May I remind you,’ she said, in her haughtiest

manner, 'that *you* came into *my* bedroom. I didn't ask you here.'

'*I didn't ask you here,*' mimicked the creature. 'There are things that need to be done, Lucy Wilson. Or shall we just leave it and let the Earth be taken over? It's not my planet after all, I don't care... but my sources tell me you are one of the seven young Earth Defenders.'

'What do you mean seven? And who's going to take Earth over?' Lucy was alarmed and confused, all at the same time.

The creature sighed.

'Okay, let me explain. I'm being chased by a race of space cowboys called the Neraida. They are small but violent; and they have the technology to back it up. They're not usually interested in your planet. It's usually too busy for them. They can't handle too many people at once, but at the moment your planet has become so quiet.' The creature dashed to the window to look out. 'Why are there *no* people in the streets?'

'The lockdown!' said Lucy, almost as though it was an obvious answer. She crouched down in front of the creature. 'The government wants us to stay indoors because there's a deadly virus going around the world. It's killing people.'

'That's nasty! And you don't leave the house, at all?'

‘Sometimes we do. We can go out for food, exercise and go to work, but we mostly stay in and order our food online, chat to our friends on Whoosh!, and even exercise using YouTube.’ Lucy tapped on her phone for a minute or so. She held the screen up for the creature to see. A man was doing exercise. ‘That’s Joe Wicks. He’s brilliant!’

‘Now then, pay attention. This is what the Neraida look like.’ The creature pressed a button on its belt, and a beam shot out of it, projecting a picture onto the wall opposite Lucy’s bed. Lucy gasped.

‘These are the Neraida. One of the most evil, mischievous, violent and cruel creatures in the galaxy.

Lucy gaped at the projections. The creatures on the screen looked harmless and very much like fairies. They had bright, beautiful faces and wings of glorious colours. They shimmered.

‘But everyone loves fairies!’ exclaimed Lucy.

‘That’s because of their mental powers,’ said the creature. They pretend to be beautiful and benevolent, when really they are extremely dangerous. Fairy tales are not just pretty tales for children. They are folk memories; they were meant to be passed down through generations as a warning!’

The creature changed the projected image. This time some fairies were attacking a group of Bandrils.

The fairy's teeth were bared, and they had vicious looking claws. The Bandrils didn't stand a chance.

Lucy closed her eyes, shocked by the images in front of her. 'Why are the fairies so angry?' she asked.

'Um, that might be because of me,' said the creature with a squirm. 'I took something from them: an inter-dimensional, translocational portal-formational, transportational device.'

'A what?'

'It's a key to unlock doors to other universes. We call it a Far Away Regional Transporter.'

Lucy mouthed 'Far Away Regional Transporter' to herself, and began to giggle. 'What do you need me to do?' she asked, regaining her composure. 'We're not supposed to go out, you know.'

'Yes. I was dismayed when I saw your planet was so quiet. Earth is usually so busy. My plan has been completely ruined. I'm not sure what to do, especially if you can't go out.'

Lucy drew herself up to her full height. 'We can go for a jog.'

The creature look perplexed. 'A jog?' it asked.

'Yes, exercise, go for a run!'

'Running might very well be involved,' the creature admitted. 'But there's something else.'

'Oh yes, what else have you nicked?'

'Mmm, nothing... okay, not nothing... something.'

'What else have you taken from them?'

‘Nothing from them, but something from someone else. I just wanted to get two jobs done in one go, multi-task, cut down the expense, save time. Two birds with one stone, I believe you humans say.’

Lucy was becoming annoyed. Her bedroom had been invaded by a self-confessed thief. She almost shouted, before she remembered her parents would still be asleep. ‘What little thing?’ she said quietly.

‘Ah.’ The creature tipped its head forward out of shame. ‘A baby.’

‘A baby?’ repeated Lucy quite loudly.

‘Sshhh.’

‘A human baby?’ whispered Lucy.

‘What? No, of course not. A human baby, no... Much worse than that!’

‘What could be worse than that?’

The creature projected another picture on the wall. It was a baby dragon.

‘A dragon!’

‘Sort of, yes, but they’re genuinely nice when you get to know them! Very family orientated.’

‘Please can you turn around,’ Lucy asked the creature. The creature sighed and turned to look out of Lucy’s window once more, as Lucy quickly pulled on her long black running tights, and did her laces up on her trainers. Luckily Lucy had fallen asleep wearing her black t-shirt, so in thirty seconds flat she was ready for action.

‘So, let me get this right,’ said Lucy, sitting on the bed. ‘You stole the dragon baby, and brought it here.’

‘I did, sorry.’

‘Fantastic! At last something is happening. This lockdown has been so dull.’

‘Dull! This situation is far from dull. The baby dragon is a Destrella prince. A war between the fairies and the Destrellas, with Earth as the battleground, will be devastating, and now they’re both coming here, they’re sure to fight.’

‘Then why did you bring them here?’

‘I’m working for the Empress Tromaktika. The baby was kidnapped by his father, the Emperor, to punish the Empress. I’m returning him. The Emperor is now very cross with me! I was going to take the little reptile to Harry Potter World – thought it would be nice for the little ‘un – before I dropped him back off with his mother at the castle. I hoped the crowds would keep us safe. The Destrellas are honourable. They wouldn’t attack when people are around. But things are different now. With the lockdown.’

‘But Harry Potter World is in England. You’re in Wales. Ogmores-by-Sea to be exact.’

‘I ran out of fuel,’ said the creature, ‘and crashed not far from the beach, behind a church.’

‘You came here in a spaceship?’ asked Lucy.

‘How else?’

'I don't know. I thought maybe you just, like hopped from one dimension to another.'

'No, I steal the technology. I don't use it. I've read *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory!*'

'You like Earth books, do you?' asked Lucy looking quite impressed.

'Of course, what other books are there?' replied the creature.

Lucy smiled and opened her backpack. She emptied its contents onto her bed, including a bag of sweets. 'You'd better jump in, I'll carry you.'

The creature swung into the backpack, grabbing the bag of sweets as he did so.

'Just in case. The Neraida hate sugar. They're allergic to it; it interferes with their nervous systems.'

7.00am

Hobo was waking up when he got the call from Lucy.

'Hi, Hobo. No time to talk. We need sweets, lots of them. Have you still got that sherbet you bought before the lockdown?'

'Whoa, Lucy, is that you? Slow down.'

'No time to explain. Aliens are invading, but they don't like sugar. Meet me in the field behind the church. Oh, and bring a bag. How big?'

Hobo realised this last bit wasn't addressed to him. Lucy had someone with her.

‘Bring your big rucksack. Hurry!’

‘But what about the lockdown?’

‘Go for a run. We’ll keep two metres apart. Don’t forget the sherbet.’

Hobo threw off the covers, jumped up and dressed quickly in his ‘never-been-worn-before’ tracksuit. Grabbing his rucksack, he opened his bedroom window, and climbed down the drainpipe. His mum was a police officer and it would be best if he could avoid awkward questions. He ran to his workshop. He called it his workshop. Most people would have called it a shed.

‘Sherbet, sherbet,’ he muttered. He had hidden his sweets away from his brother, Gavin. He quickly stowed them in his bag. He thought for a moment and grinned. He went back up the drainpipe, sneaked into his brother’s bedroom. Gavin was younger than Hobo, and he had something that would come in very handy. Hobo found what he was looking for, stowed it in his rucksack, and left. He set off at a dead run for the church, ten minutes solid jogging away.

Lucy and the creature had reached the spaceship. It was almost the size and shape of a car, a Mini perhaps, hidden by a tarpaulin. The creature hopped out of Lucy’s backpack and pulled the cover off. The spaceship was squat, square-shaped and somewhat

battered. Lucy was astonished, and not at all impressed.

‘Is that your ship?!’ she cried. ‘It’s tiny!’

‘Is that your mouth? It’s excessively big!’ snapped the creature. ‘How much room do you think I need?’

Lucy kept quiet as the creature slipped into its ship. Lucy felt, as first contact situations go, this was not going well.

The creature emerged, carrying a very heavy something. ‘Take this,’ it panted. Lucy took hold of the very heavy something. It looked like a projector. The creature once again disappeared into the spaceship and popped out carrying a package wrapped in blankets. The creature plonked the parcel into Lucy’s arms, and sat for a moment, panting. ‘There!’ it said.

Lucy pulled back the blanket. The parcel turned out to be a small dragon-shaped creature, clearly fast asleep. Lucy was charmed. ‘Aw,’ she said. ‘It’s lovely.’ The baby dragon burped, emitting a puff of scalding hot air. Lucy pulled back as the searing heat washed over her face. The creature laughed out loud.

‘What’s so funny?’

‘Oh, nothing. I think you look better without eyebrows!’ The creature’s laughter stopped as suddenly as it started. ‘Listen!’ it said. Bubble-wrap popping noises were coming from all around them.

‘When I say run, run!’ said the creature.

Lucy nodded.

‘RUN!’

It was too late.

Fairy-like creatures were popping, one-by-one, into existence. They were small, smaller than the creature, maybe twenty-five centimetres long. Lucy flapped at them uselessly. They were too nimble for her with their huge wings. The fairies laughed and giggled as Lucy cowered away from them, trying to shield the baby. Two of the creatures engaged in a tug of war with her, trying to take the little dragon creature out of her arms. The creature had disappeared. Five or six more ‘fairies’ grabbed the transporter device and were about to make off with it.

There was a whooshing sound, then a ping. One fairy fell to the ground, writhing in agony, wings folded around it. A second, then a third fell. They drew off. No longer laughing they now sounded like an angry swarm of enormous bees.

Lucy looked around and spotted Hobo. He was climbing over the churchyard wall, holding Gavin’s catapult. He had a sherbet lemon loaded and was looking around for his next target.

The creature reappeared. It had been hiding under the tarpaulin.

‘Don’t just stand there! Run to the sea!’

Lucy was galvanised into action. The creature jumped into her backpack and they all headed back towards the church, over the wall and through the churchyard.

'Hello, Hobo,' puffed Lucy. 'Enjoying the lockdown?' She pushed the transporter device into his hands; he put it into his rucksack. She gave him the baby too, which he clasped in his arms.

'Baby dragon. Long story,' she told him. He was strong enough to carry both these things together, but he gave the catapult and the bag of sweets to Lucy to put in her bag.

They ran towards the sea.

'Oh, no!' exclaimed the creature.

'What do you mean "oh, no"?' demanded Lucy.

'It's the dragon's dad.'

They rounded the corner. Standing directly in front of them was a seven foot tall purple monster. It had stout thick legs and arms. It had a reptilian head, a bit like an iguana.

'STOP, HUMANS!' it roared.

'This way!' shouted Hobo, and he led them away. The purple monster set off in pursuit, but he got stuck in the narrow alley. His frustrated roar, to say nothing of angry flames, followed them down the passageway. They ran around the corner, and escaped with a light singeing.

Lucy swept past Hobo and they ran on. They

were approaching the beach. Lucy managed to pant, 'Why are we heading to the sea?'

'I arranged to meet the empress here. She's going to get the baby to safety,' said the creature. 'It was at this critical moment that the Neraida reappeared, with greater numbers. The creature jumped onto Hobo's shoulder.

'Go on, you two. I'll hold them off,' said Lucy.

Hobo didn't argue. He did, however, pause long enough to thrust the big jar of sherbet into Lucy's hands. Lucy managed to get three of them with some extra large gobstoppers, but then they were all round her. She fought them off long enough to get the jar open, then she took a big handful of sherbet and, holding her breath, she threw it into the air. She was not prepared for the reaction. The Neraida screamed and shied away their faces. They fought with each other in their attempt to escape the deadly sugary dust. Lucy wasted no time; she turned and ran. She soon caught up with the others. Once again the creature dived into her backpack and on she ran on towards the beach.

7.30am

Quick!' shouted Lucy, who was the regulation two metres in front; her backpack bouncing on her shoulders as she ran.

Hobo saved his breath for running. After all, he

was the one carrying the heavier load.

Behind them they heard the sound they had feared.

They were gaining on them...

'It's Daddy!' wailed the creature. 'The Emperor!'

They were on the beach now and heading for the water. Lucy became conscious that the creature was doing something near her face. 'What are you doing?' she asked.

'Signalling the baby's mum, the Empress. I hope she's here!'

A ship arose from the sea some way out, like an elegant shiny green submarine and headed for the shore at speed, sending up plumes of spray either side of its bows. It came to a halt a little way away and a second dragon creature emerged and waded ashore. This one was almost identical to the Emperor, but there were little signs of difference; narrower shoulders and broader hips perhaps.

The Emperor came thundering down the beach towards the little group from one direction. The empress waded towards them from the other.

'Start the FART thing!' hissed Lucy. 'Warm it up or whatever you have to do.'

'Are you giving me orders?'

'No time for, for...!' She used one of her father's favourite words, '*Ego*. Just start the bleedin' thing up.'

‘Oh, I get it, you want to escape. Good thinking!’

‘No, I don’t want to escape.’

The creature looked confused but nevertheless did as it was told. The transport device hummed, and a vortex opened in mid-air. Through it could be seen a completely different world.

It looked hot and very dusty.

Lucy held up her hand. ‘STOP!’ she shouted to the parents of the baby she was holding.

‘Stop, or I’ll push the baby through the portal, and then smash the machine!’

Both dragons froze. Lucy couldn’t help but notice Hobo looking on admiringly.

The creature sidled over to Hobo and whispered, ‘That’s a bit dark, even for humans!’

‘Watch!’ whispered Hobo.

‘Now,’ said Lucy. ‘Do you love your baby?’

‘Yes!’ was the emphatic reply from both parents.

‘Then stop making him a football to play with!’ She moderated her cross voice a bit. ‘Look, I’m sure you can come to some arrangement where you can both see him?’

The Emperor looked to his partner. ‘Can we, Tromaktika?’

The Empress hesitated. ‘Not if you snatch him from his nurse and carry him off!’ she snorted.

Lucy walked over to her and handed the baby over. She couldn’t believe it; this big tough fire-

breathing monster was weeping. Hot tears rolled down the dragon's face. They *were* hot too! One splashed on Lucy and burned her arm.

The Empress looked beseechingly at the baby's father. 'Come back with me, Tromeros. I'm sure we can work things out. At least we can make a timetable for us both to see Muro.' She turned to look at Lucy. 'The baby doesn't need these blankets. We have our own internal heating system!' And she gave the blankets to Lucy.

After a brief struggle with himself, the Emperor walked over to her and took her arm. They touched heads and walked off together through the surf to Tromaktika's ship. Which took off shortly after.

Then they heard the popping noises again.

'Oh no!' said Hobo, 'I thought we'd got rid of those!' He thought for a moment. 'What do they want?'

'This inter-dimensional, translocational portal-formational, transportational device.'

'Really.' Hobo thought for a second. 'Quick, give me the blankets!' he said. He arranged the blankets in his arms. There was something hidden beneath it. The Neraida appeared all around them, fewer of them this time.

Hobo backed away. 'No!' he shouted. 'You won't have the inter-dimen—'

'Inter-dimensional, translocational portal-

formational, transportational device!’ shouted the creature.

The fairies focused their attention on Hobo, who ran away down the beach with the blankets in his arms, straight towards the swirling portal.

‘Well, here goes nothing!’ shouted Hobo.

He dived through the open portal, and the Neraida swarmed after.

‘Hobo!’ shouted Lucy.

Lucy could just about see Hobo. He threw the object wrapped in the blankets and disappeared from her view. There was a sound of glass breaking, then screams from the Neraida. She heard heavy footsteps slipping on ice, crunching on the sand, approaching the portal. Hobo reappeared and dived through.

‘Close it, close it!’ he gasped. The creature did as was told and turned to Lucy and Hobo.

‘They didn’t like the sherbet dust cloud I made.’

‘And they won’t find it easy to get back from there. It’s almost a thousand light years away,’ said the creature. It turned to Lucy. ‘Lucy Wilson, I guess you *are* the Defender of the Earth!’

‘Me, *and* Hobo!’ she replied with a smile.

They walked back to the creature’s ship. ‘I’ll get this device back to where it belongs! The Movellans will pay me good for this. Goodbye, Lucy Wilson, goodbye, Hobo.’

'I thought you'd run out of fuel,' said Lucy.

'If I'm really careful and leave the radio and air-conditioning off I should be able to get back okay.'

'Where's the nearest intergalactic filling station?' asked Hobo.

'Pretty close. About ten thousand miles away.'

Hobo and Lucy exchanged a glance, then burst out laughing.

The two friends waved as the ship spluttered into the air, then shimmered, and disappeared.

'I'll race you back!'

And they set off for home, two metres apart.

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