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Goblins and Ghosties
Stories of Darkness from Around the World

Written by

Maggie Pearson

Illustrated by

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MAGGIE PEARSON

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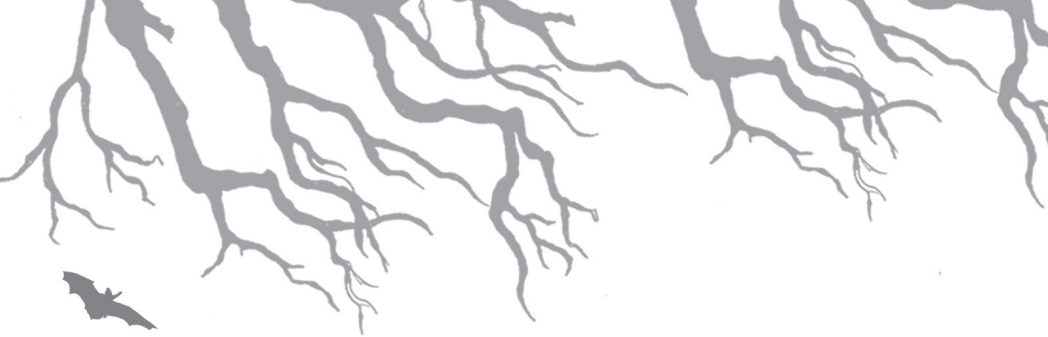

From goblins and ghosties and long-leggitty beasties
And things that go bump in the night,
Good Lord, protect us!

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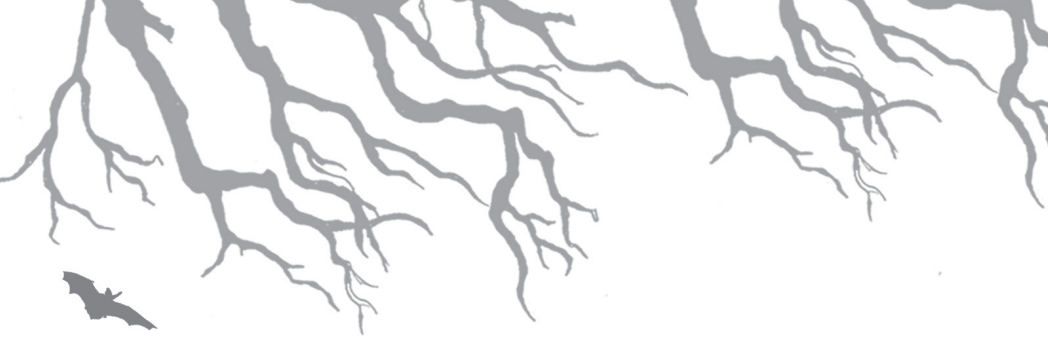



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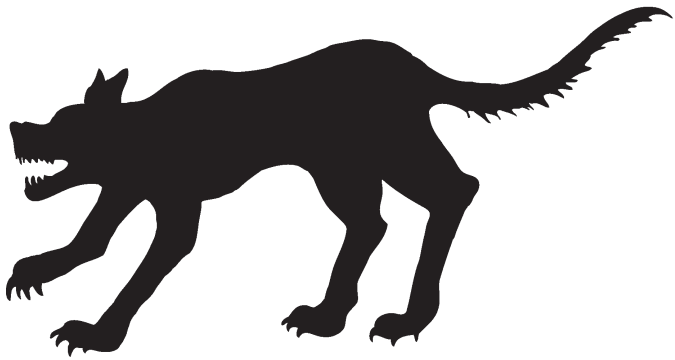

The Moddey-dhoo

Isle of Man

It was a dark and stormy winter's night. Peel Castle was deserted, apart from the three soldiers and their sergeant who'd been left on watch. There they sat, huddling round the fire in the guardhouse, when in walked a great black dog.

'How did that animal get in?' roared the sergeant. 'Which one of you left the gate open?'

The other three shook their heads.

'It wasn't me.'

'Nor me, sarge.'

'Nor me neither.'

'Hang on a minute,' said the first man. 'We're on an island. How did the dog get across?'

'It must have swum,' said the second.

'So how come it's as dry as a bone?'

The third one said nothing.

All four of them stood and stared at the dog. The dog stared back for a bit. Then, it sauntered over to the snuggest, warmest place by the fire and lay down with its chin on its paws, watching them.

The size of it! Big as a moorland pony, it was, with feet the size of tea plates and eyes like red-rimmed saucers.

At last the third soldier found his voice. 'That's no dog we've got there. I reckon that's the Moddey-dhoo.'

'I've heard of it,' the second man said. 'You see the Moddey-dhoo, that means death!'

That's not what I heard,' said the first man. 'The way I heard it, there was this fisherman on his way to work who found his way blocked by the Moddey-dhoo and had to

go home again. The boat he should have been on was lost with all hands.'

'There you are, then. Death!'

'Not for the man who saw it.'

'What you're saying is, we're all right then?'

'What I'm saying,' said the sergeant, 'is if we don't bother it, it won't bother us. Right?'

They tried to go on as if the dog wasn't there, chatting and playing cards, but of course it was there and though every time they looked it seemed to be asleep, they couldn't get over the feeling that it was watching them.

Whenever the duty man got up, took the keys and went to the door to go on his rounds, the dog was there at his heels.

So one of the others went with him, to keep one eye on his comrade, the other on the Moddey-dhoo.

All three of them came back safe and sound. No problem.

At first light the dog got up, strolled to the door and disappeared. Not a whisker of it was to be seen up and down the corridor outside.

But, the next night, it was back again. And the night after that. It didn't come every night but often enough that the soldiers got into the habit of going round in pairs, just in case they met the Moddey-dhoo on the way.

Then, one of the four got transferred to another posting. A mainlander took his place. A Londoner they called Mad Jack.

Mad Jack just laughed when they warned him about the Moddey-dhoo.

'You're having me on!' he said. 'It's just a big, black dog, right? I'm good with dogs. Where are you, Moddey-doody-dhoo? Here, boy! Come!'

Suddenly, the dog was there in the doorway, fixing Mad Jack with its red-rimmed eyes, padding past him on its paws the size of tea plates to its favourite spot by the fire.

'Like I said,' laughed Jack. 'It's just a dog.'

The time came for the duty man to go on his rounds. 'I'll go!' said Mad Jack. 'No need to come with me. Old Moddey-dhoo will keep me company. Come on, boy. Walkies!'

Straightaway, the dog was on its feet and

at Mad Jack's heels as he swaggered out of the room. Following so close that it might have been his shadow.

The other three men sat listening, as the sound of Mad Jack's footsteps and the jangling of the keys faded into the distance.

Silence. Long enough for a man to count to ten, very slowly, but then broken by a terrible, blood-curdling scream.

And silence again, until the first light of morning when the three men crept out to see what had happened to Mad Jack and the Moddey-dhoo.

Although they searched the castle from top to bottom, they found not one trace of either.

Note: In the old Manx language Moddey-dhoo would be pronounced moor-tha-doo.