

**The
MUSEUM of LOST
UMBRELLAS**

About the Author

Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick is a writer and illustrator from Dublin, Ireland, who creates children's books across the age groups. Her award-winning titles include *Izzy and Skunk*, *There, Owl Bat Bat Owl* and *Hagwitch*. Her debut YA novel, *On Midnight Beach*, received rave reviews and was shortlisted for the Carnegie Medal. *Sisters of the Moon*, also YA, was longlisted for the Carnegie Medal and shortlisted for an Irish Book Award. *The Museum of Lost Umbrellas* is a middle-grade novel, the first in a series. Marie-Louise lives in County Kildare and runs on coffee and chocolate.

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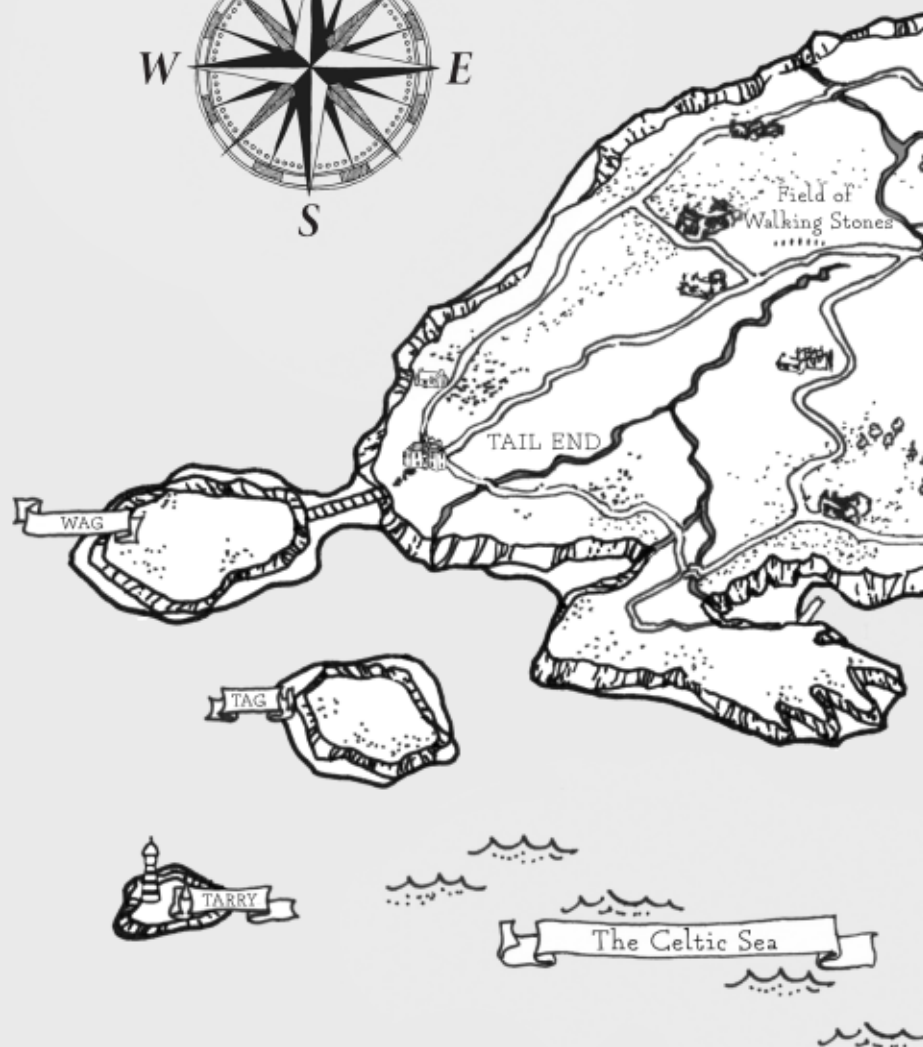


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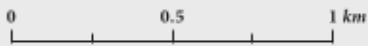
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*I wrote this one for me. I hope you enjoy reading it
as much as I enjoyed imagining it! Marie-Louise X*



OLLIPEST ISLAND



SCALE



1

The cottage looked like one from a storybook. Roses rambled up the walls and wound themselves around a small circular tower, which grew from a corner like a mushroom on a tree. The late evening sunshine glinted off the latticed windows and lent a golden glow to the cream brickwork.

‘It’s very pretty,’ said the child standing at the gate.

Her name was Dilly Kyteler. She’d never been to this house before this very moment, and now she was going to live in it.

‘It is pretty,’ the woman beside her said, ‘though old houses can be dark and pokey inside.’

‘The door looks like an owl,’ Dilly said, tilting her head.

‘An owl?’ The woman, whose name was Claire Madden, squinted through her glasses. ‘I don’t see it.’

‘The windows are its big round eyes,’ Dilly said. ‘The knocker and letterbox are its beak. Those lines carved

there and there' – she pointed left and right – 'they're its wings.'

'Maybe,' Claire Madden said, but she didn't look convinced. 'Owl or no owl, let's go and knock on that door and get you inside your new home.'

Home.

For ten years Dilly's home had been a cosy flat in Bristol. She'd never known her dad; it was always just Dilly and her mum, Poppy. Then, last year, Mum got sick, and five months later Dilly was alone. After that, 'home' was a house in the suburbs with temporary foster parents. Claire Madden, the social worker assigned to Dilly's case, scoured the records for relatives who might take Dilly in. She'd eventually tracked down an aunt of Dilly's mum, an aunt Dilly had never met, who lived on an island no one had ever heard of. This morning, as Dilly was trying to fasten her suitcase, she'd overheard Claire telling her foster mum how unfortunate it was that the only place she could find for Dilly was on a godforsaken island in the middle of the Celtic Sea, living with a cantankerous middle-aged woman who hadn't even bothered attending her niece's funeral.

Cantankerous? Dilly wasn't entirely sure she knew what the word meant but it didn't sound good. She'd imagined that having a grand-aunt would be almost like having a grandmother. She'd been excited about

having her own family again. Now she wondered if there was a chance her mother's aunt wasn't happy to find herself lumped with a ten-year-old grandniece she'd never met before. Maybe Claire Madden had caught her grand-aunt on a bad day? Dilly hoped so, because she had nowhere else to go.

The journey to Ollipest Island had involved a train trip and two ferries. Claire had been peaky on the first boat and violently ill on the second, so their roles had reversed and Dilly had ended up minding her minder. When they finally reached Ollipest Harbour at seven o'clock in the evening, they discovered that Tail End Cottage – their final destination – was two miles away. The only way to get there was to walk. Claire had taken hold of Dilly's wheelie suitcase in one hand and Dilly in the other, and turned to face the road out of the port with the grim determination of a seagull flying into a storm. The colour returned to her cheeks as they walked, and now she seemed more like the brisk-but-kind woman Dilly had come to know.

'Come on, then,' Claire said as she ushered Dilly ahead of her along the garden path. At the doorstep they arranged the bags in an orderly pile and looked for a doorbell. When they couldn't find one, Claire took hold of the brass knocker and clapped it sharply three times.

‘Please, please, may there be a cup of tea and something to eat on the table,’ she said. ‘My stomach thinks my throat’s been cut.’

‘Tea would be nice,’ Dilly said, touching the door-knocker beak with her fingers. ‘But what I really wish for is a dog. Mum always promised we’d get one once we moved to a house. Do you think there’s any chance that Grand-Aunt Florence owns a dog?’

‘If she does, she didn’t mention one in her letter, love,’ Claire said. She suddenly seemed as nervous as Dilly, and her attempt at a reassuring smile didn’t quite reach her eyes.

The door opened so abruptly they both jumped. A tall woman with a stern face regarded them from a gloomy hallway.

‘Yes?’ she said. Her eyebrows were raised, as if she was surprised – and not particularly pleased – to see them.

‘Miss Kyteler?’ Claire said.

‘Ms,’ the woman said. ‘Ms Kyteler. You, I presume, are Claire Madden, of Bristol Social Services, and you’ – she stared down at Dilly – ‘are my grandniece, Dill Kyteler.’

‘Dilly,’ said Dilly, determinedly pushing the wobble out of her voice. She had imagined that her grand-aunt would look like an older version of her mother, but she didn’t. Not at all. *Maybe that’s a good thing. Maybe*

it would be hard if this rather cross woman looked like Mum, Dilly thought, unaware that she was answering her grand-aunt's frown with an identical one of her own. 'My name is Dilly,' she said again. 'It's very nice to meet you, Grand-Aunt Florence.'

'Perhaps we might drop the "grand". Plain "Aunt Florence" will suffice,' said the woman. 'Come in.'

She stood aside, waved them through and shut the door, plunging them into semi-darkness. She must have flicked a switch because lamps began glowing, revealing a short corridor with several doors and a stairway. The walls, ceiling and stairs were covered in warm chestnut panelling, and a bunch of dull-looking men and women were bestowing vacuous smiles on Dilly from the paintings that hung along both sides of the corridor.

'My ancestors,' Aunt Florence said as she led Dilly and Claire past the portraits. '*Our* ancestors,' she said, correcting herself. She looked back at Dilly. 'I see you have the auburn hair of the Kytelers. Mine was the match of yours once.' She touched a hand to her silver bun. 'And you have grey eyes, another family trait.'

Dilly frowned. As far as she could see, everyone in the paintings had hair the exact colour of a house mouse and eyes the shade of old tealeaves. She was about to say so but Aunt Florence was studying her

intently, as if waiting to be contradicted. Dilly smiled politely and said, 'Oh.'

'Humph,' said Aunt Florence. 'Ms Madden, your letter said you require accommodation for tonight. As I don't have room for you here, I've booked you into The Thirsty Wurme. It's a very acceptable establishment in the centre of town and much more convenient for your return journey on tomorrow's ferry.'

Dilly was dismayed by this announcement. She'd expected to have Claire with her until morning, to help her get to know her aunt a little and settle into her new home. Aunt Florence didn't appear to notice the consternation she'd caused. She turned and opened the door at the end of the corridor, motioning them to pass through ahead of her while she stopped to straighten a vase. Dilly and Claire found themselves in a big kitchen with large windows and glass doors through which they could see the sea.

'Tea!' sighed Claire, catching sight of the table.

It was set for three people and laden with plates of sandwiches, scones and a painter's palette of pretty cupcakes. A slab of golden cheese sat on a platter, surrounded by crackers. There were little jars of jam and honey, and the butter was arranged in fancy curls in a glass dish. A round teapot steamed happily in the middle of the table and a jug of cold

milk stood beside it. Dilly had never seen such an amazing spread.

Aunt Florence must have been baking all day, she thought. Maybe she's not as irritated by my coming as she seems?

'There's no time for tea, Ms Madden,' Aunt Florence said, following them into the room. 'You'll need to set off right away if you're to reach Wurmston by nightfall—'

She stopped quite still and stared at the spread on the kitchen table as if she hadn't expected it to be there. Her head barely turned, but Dilly saw her glare down the corridor in the direction of the front door. 'Well, I suppose there's no use for it,' her aunt said. 'Eat, if you must.'

What an odd thing to say, Dilly thought. What other use could there be for this huge table full of food? She was seriously hungry, so she did what she was told, and Claire did the same. The tea tasted just as good as it looked. After sampling a bit of everything, the social worker leaned back and cleared her throat.

'So, Ms Kyteler – or may I call you Florence?' she said, adjusting her glasses on her nose.

'You may not,' Aunt Florence said. 'Are you finished?'

'Finished what? Eating? Speaking?' Claire exchanged confused looks with Dilly.

‘Either. Both.’ Aunt Florence stood up.

Claire stayed seated with half a cupcake hovering in her hand. ‘Actually,’ she said, ‘there are some gaps in the information around Dilly’s future schooling that I’d like to get to the bottom of before I leave—’

‘Contact me by post,’ Aunt Florence said. She leaned across the table, whisked Claire’s cup, saucer and plate away and deposited them in the large sink behind her. ‘The sun will go down shortly, Ms Madden.’ Aunt Florence nodded to the view beyond the windows where the sky was blushing. ‘There are no streetlights at this end of the island – not a single one for over a mile. I really must insist you leave now and begin your walk back to town.’ She whipped the half-eaten cupcake out of Claire’s hand, picked up another, plus two scones, and plonked them into a large napkin. She pulled the corners of the napkin together and tied them in a knot. ‘Here,’ she said, handing the bundle to a startled Claire. ‘You may take your confounded tea with you.’

Dilly flinched at her aunt’s brusqueness and stumbled to her feet while Claire hurriedly pulled on her jacket and grabbed her bag. Another goodbye. The day had been a big rush of goodbyes – goodbye to her foster parents, goodbye to her friend Jill, goodbye to Bristol, goodbye to England. Now she had to say goodbye to Claire Madden. She ran after her aunt as she bustled

Claire back down the narrow corridor towards the owl door. At the last moment the social worker dug in her heels and came to a halt. Dilly squeezed past Aunt Florence and ran into Claire's arms.

'Write to me,' the woman said. 'Anytime, for anything. A letter, or an email if there's such a thing as a computer here. Promise me you will.'

'I promise,' Dilly said. She blinked back tears, not because she knew Claire so very well, but because, at this moment, here on this island, Claire was the *only* person she knew. Claire let her go and stepped out of Tail End Cottage. At the gate she turned and waved. Dilly waved back, then Claire walked away up the hill and was gone.