

Orphan

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Prologue

It's weird that some people are preferred or respected more than others because of their wealth or fame. Well, that's the kind of world I live in. I'm Lillian Hughes. I'm an orphan, and I'm **not** proud of it. It's absolutely terrible being an orphan. When I was little, I always wished I could have a mom or dad to hug me and comfort me whenever I got sad. Now that I'm 12, I've grown used to the fact I don't have and never will have parents. Oh, and I forgot to tell you, my mother and father went on a trip to the Isle of Wight but sadly their boat sunk, and along with the boat, my father and mother drowned. But don't worry, this is actually not a sad story, it is a story about the best Christmas ever!

{Chapter One}

Right now, it's the morning, so early in fact, that I can't hear the birds singing outside. I usually get up early. It's nice being the only one awake because that way you don't have to listen to the other orphans laughing and-oh wait, sorry, I've gone off-subject. Anyways, I usually take a trip down to the lake. If you're wondering why then here's your reason: it's peaceful. I'm the type of person who has no friends and likes to sit there reading instead of raging around the mud with the others. Anyways, I'm used to it. I'm not exactly ugly, but I'm not neat or polite. I have long blonde hair and a small nose that's always bright pink because of the cold. The boys at the orphanage always call me 'clown face'. I don't care. The only thing I like about me is my eyes. They're emerald

green and they remind me of my mother. She had the same eyes. I still remember vaguely what she looked like. She had blonde hair, just like me, but it was a bit darker. She had pale skin and glossy pink lips. So, that's mostly it about me. Again, it's a bit dreary, I know, but it gets better.

{Chapter Two}

I sat up in bed, light shining through the gaps in the curtains. It was so early I couldn't hear the birds singing outside. I usually got up early, so I could go to the lake in the forest when it's more peaceful. I decided I should go right then, seeing as the Matron would be waking up in an hour or so. The Matron was a nasty woman. She loved to punish kids, especially me. She said I was an 'annoying parrot' because I kept talking and talking, which I *didn't* but there was no point arguing with Matron. Besides, even her *looks* were better than her temper and her looks **weren't** good. She had greasy, tangled grey hair, which stuck out, making her look like she'd just been electrocuted. Her face was red and raw,

and she always had grey circles under her coal-black eyes.

Anyways, as I was saying, I crept out into the hallway, being careful to watch where I was treading, in case I hit a creaky floorboard. Every time I breathed out, steam came out my mouth. The old Orphanage was cold and damp, making me shiver. I managed to make it to the first set of steps, where I then went down, stepping at the sides of them so I didn't hit an old step. I then carefully trod across the next hallway downstairs, where I came to the last set of stairs. I carefully crept down these too and finally came to the last hallway, leading towards the entrance and exit door. I rummaged around to find my coat amongst all the others, and when I found it, I started my search for the keys. I suddenly remembered;

Matron always kept the keys under the mat! I quickly lifted the rag, and sure enough, I saw the glint of metal. As soon as I'd unlocked the door, I raced into the forest, so no passing villager could see me.

When I set foot in the grassy landscape, I was in my happy place. The sun smiled down at me from the gaps in the open canopy above, and the wind whispered in my ears. I could hear the rushing of the lake in the not-so-far distance. It was as if I could fall asleep, but I knew I didn't have time for that. I decided to venture a little farther into the forest. All of a sudden, a quiet rustling came from behind me. I froze. I didn't dare turn around, in case whatever was in the bush leapt at my face and attacked me. Instead, I craned my neck over

my shoulder, but what came out of the bush was not what I was expecting.

{Chapter Three}

Out came a small, brown doe, its back leg stained with dry blood. I gasped in horror before slowly putting out my hand.

‘Please,’ I whispered. ‘I can help’ The doe sniffed my hand, but then backed away, stumbling over its wounded leg. I looked into the small doe’s eyes, and what I saw was fear and hunger amidst the beady glass-like circles.

‘You must be starving,’ I mumbled. I rummaged around in my pockets and found a small piece of bread leftover from when I had been to feed the ducks. I laid it on the ground in front of me and backed away. The doe limped over to the dry lump and nibbled at it hungrily, although its eyes were still fixed on me. When the doe finished, it lifted its head and looked at me as if to say *more*.

‘I’m sorry, I don’t have any. I’ll come tomorrow; I promise you,’ I said. I put my hand out to stroke the doe, yet it still backed away. I sighed. I looked at the doe’s injured leg. It pained me to see animals in trouble.

‘You know what? I’ll come back tomorrow with some bandages too. That ought to help,’ I said. The doe cocked its head, staring at me. Its gaze felt warm and soothing.

‘I better head back now.’ I said, looking behind me, but when I came to face the doe, it was gone. ‘That’s weird,’ I remarked, then went back in the direction in which I had entered the forest. As I reached the orphanage door, I suddenly realised that I’d mailed the keys back inside. I growled with frustration. How could I be so *dumb*? That’s when

I realised that a window was open. The Matron's window.

'No way. *No absolute way,*' I told myself. I don't know how it happened, but a minute later, I was climbing up the drainpipe that led up to Matron's windowsill. I slowly adjusted my hands higher and higher, climbing up as far as I could. I looked down behind me, and my stomach dropped. If I fell, I was most likely going to shatter all the bones in my legs. Luckily, I made it to the windowsill. I perched there for a little while, restoring all my lost energy. The window was just about open enough for me to slip through. I sucked in my breath and shimmied through the window, my back hurting. I dropped through, onto the grey carpet without a noise. Matron lay there, snoring. I managed to stifle a giggle and paced out of her room. I went into

mine, which I shared with three other girls; Marianne, Ellen and Clarice (Mary, Elle and Clara).

I climbed into my bed. It felt rock-hard.

'What were you doing?' I jumped, but then realised it was Marianne talking.

'Nothing,' I mumbled. Marianne was the oldest in our room, and she was really pretty too. She had chestnut brown hair and hazel-green eyes, but her voice was strict and posh.

'I know you weren't doing nothing. I just saw you come in, so it can't be nothing,' she said.

Dang it. I thought. 'I got thirsty so I went to grab a drink,' I replied. Marianne paused for a second. I sucked in my lips, awaiting her reply.

'Alright. Oh, and, don't do that again, you're not allowed up before seven AM.' I sighed.

The next morning, I went to see the doe again. I'd come up with a name for the doe. It was a female, so I named her Dixie. I'd also brought some bread, and we went down to the stream to get Dixie a drink. It was frozen, so Dixie used her sharp hoof to break open the thin ice. I washed my face with the cold water. I felt refreshed and calm. We sat down against one of the trees and ate our shares of bread.

'Dixie, you're not going to leave me, right?' I asked in between mouthfuls. Dixie looked at me and cocked her head, then went back to finishing the last of her bread. 'Of course, I'm not, Lily,' I said for Dixie, making her voice all squeaky. I smiled. All of a sudden, Dixie got up and started walking off. She turned round to look at me, so I followed. She took

me deeper into the forest. *Where was she leading me?*

{Chapter Three}

We were walking for hours and hours through the deep forest, and my feet started to feel numb. Eventually, we stopped, at the edge of the woods. In the distance, I could see a beautiful-looking city, strewn with people.

‘Oh, my goodness! Come *on Dixie!*’ I yelled, rushing towards it. I couldn’t feel the numbness in my feet anymore. I was finally free from the orphanage! I ran until I was out of breath, and after a while, I came to a halt at the city gates. I then noticed Dixie wasn’t with me. Suddenly, I felt scared. There were more people than I had expected. Most were men or scruffy women carrying crying babies. The air smelt like horse manure. I took a deep breath and walked into the crowd. I’d never been to a city before so everything was quite strange. All the

buildings were dark, dull and tall, casting shadows over the city. All around there were Christmas decorations, like trees and festive lights. I sighed. Ever since my parents died, Christmas was something I didn’t look forward to. There is nobody for me to sing Christmas songs with, or to sit with at the Christmas tree, unwrapping presents. The air was foggy from all the smoke that was drifting out of people’s chimneys. I started to feel worried. I thought cities were beautiful, not bland and grimy. There was no sign of anything green, and instead of grass, on the floors, there was only concrete. I started shivering as the wind grew stronger. Christmas was in a week.

Suddenly, in the distance, I saw a silhouette. ‘Dixie!’ I called and ran after the shadow. I turned the corner, but the shadow disappeared and

appeared at the end of the next street. Again, I followed but the same thing kept happening until I got to the gates that led back into the forest. 'Dixie!' I yelled and ran towards the doe. I hugged her then realised, we weren't where we started, we were at the other end of the forest. I sighed with relief.

'Who'd want to live in a pigsty like *that?*' I commented. I stopped talking and started into the forest again, determined to find a different village.

After a few minutes, I got tired so I decided to sit down. I shivered. Dixie cocked her head, then came to rest on my shaking lap. I smiled.

'Thanks, Dixie.' I gave Dixie the rest of the bread that I had left. 'You deserve it,' I whispered. Dixie happily ate it and when she finished, she licked my face as if to say *thank you*. I breathed in the air

around me. It smelt much better than the air in the city. It smelt fresh and grassy. I stroked Dixie's fur. It was soft and smooth, like a blanket. I then remembered the whole reason I was here was because I had met Dixie. Without her, I would've still been in the orphanage.

'Dixie, what should we do now?' I asked. The doe stood up and seemed to point her head to something. I followed her gaze and saw smoke coming out from amidst the trees.

{Chapter Four}

I set off in the direction of the smoke, seeing it get closer and closer until I came to a small clearing. Inside the clearing was a small cottage with icicles hanging from its roof and a frozen lake surrounding the small house, and a bridge going over it, adorned with frost. I carefully stepped over the bridge and stopped in front of the cottage's door to marvel at the pretty sight. I could smell something delicious cooking; it smelt like cake. I was plunged into hunger, and so, taking a deep breath I knocked at the small door. After a few seconds, the door swung open, revealing an old woman, squinting at me through her crescent glasses. Her hair was a creamy white, but it was not greasy and tangled like the matrons, it was

neat and curled and bobbed gracefully around her shoulders.

'Oh my! Come in, come in dear!' she said, leading me by the arm. 'Oh my, sit, sit, please, I'll go fetch a blanket.' She hobbled off. I sat down in the lounge. There was a lit fire opposite me, giving warmth to the room. Dixie curled up beside me on the sofa. The old lady came back in with a blanket and a slice of lemon drizzle cake. A small man with a walking stick hobbled in beside her.

'Oh-oh my,' he stuttered. 'Where're your parents dear?' The word *parents* echoed in my head. 'Don't have any,' I muttered. I couldn't see myself, but I was sure my face was bright red.

'Oh my. Oh, you poor thing,' the lady muttered. I looked down at the ground. I wanted to disappear.

'I-I don't really like to talk about it,' I mumbled. 'Also, is it alright if I have a bit more cake..?' I'd finished the first slice, yet it hadn't fulfilled my hunger.

'Of course, dearie. Oh, and call me Elaine. My husband here is Ted,' said Elaine, gesturing to the old man. I nodded and gave Ted my plate. Elaine sat down next to me.

'That's a lovely pet of yours,' she commented. It was clear she was talking about Dixie. I nodded sheepishly.

'Her name's Dixie,' I whispered. 'She's my best friend.'

Elaine smiled kindly. 'What's your name dearie?' she asked. I felt a bit shy. I never really liked my name.

'Lillian,' I mumbled. 'Though people call me Lily for short. I like Lily better.' I was feeling a bit less shy. 'Well, that's perfect! Lilies are my favourite flower!' she exclaimed. I started to like this lady quite a lot. Ted came back in and gave me my lemon drizzle cake.

'Elaine, is it alright if we talked?' asked Ted. Elaine nodded, and they went out of the room for a moment, then came back in.

'So, you say you have no parents?' asked Elaine. I nodded. Elaine took a deep breath and said, 'How would you like to stay here with us?'

I paused to think. 'And Dixie?' I asked. Elaine and Ted nodded. I smiled and hugged each of them. Turns out I had found my happily ever after.

Epilogue

**Christmas Day. A day everyone looks forward to.
Now I have my new family, I'm one of those people.
Christmas is exactly how I'd expected it to be.
Sitting beside a roaring fire, by the Christmas tree,
unwrapping brightly coloured presents. Enjoying a
nice turkey at the dining table and singing
Christmas carols. Never again will I dread
Christmas. Now, it's a day to look forward to.**

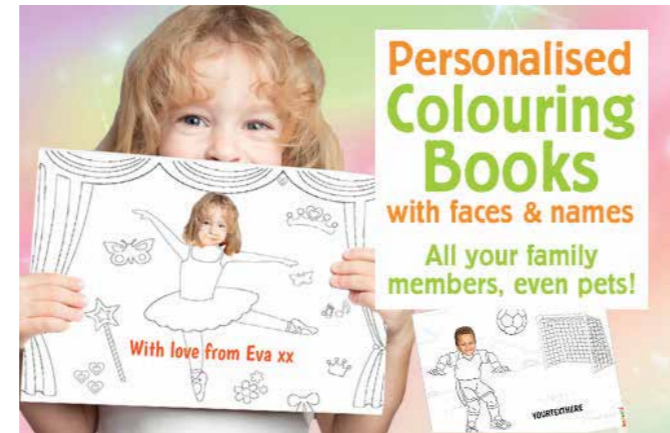
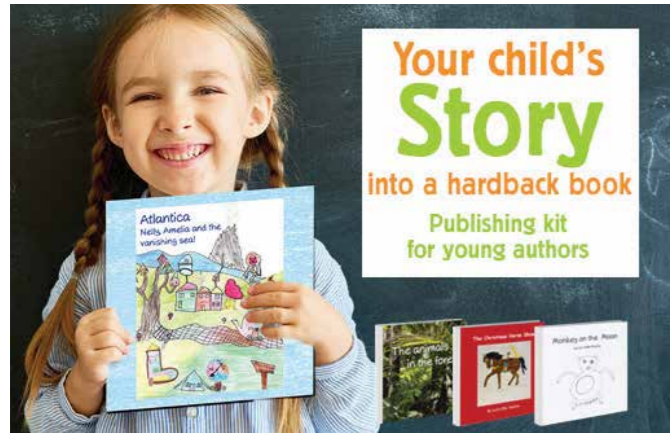
We hope that you, your family and friends enjoy the book you have created. This project was co-ordinated and facilitated by author Nikki Young for members of her Storymakers writing club.

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12-year-old orphan, Lily, lives in a lonely, cruel world, and has no friends. Just her luck, she meets an injured doe, and Lily soon realises that it's no ordinary animal. The doe leads Lily astray of the orphanage, searching for their happy ever after. Will they find it and have the best Christmas ever? Or will they fail on their seemingly impossible mission?