

# **The Meggie Stories** by Elizabeth Cordiner

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## Happy an Sad by Elizabeth Cordiner

'Good Morning, Meggie.'

Miss Buchanan wis haudin the big school door open.

'You look happy. You've really settled in well.'

Meggie, oot o breath fae runnin a' the wey, thocht, Ah suppose ah huv.

Her new schule wis suitin her. So wis her new classroom.

Loads o books displayed on the library tables, free pincils that were sharp every mornin. She liked sharpenin them, seein the curly bits o wuid an lead as they peeled aff, an smellin that special pincil smell. She liked stirrin thick dauds o brightly-coloured paint intae pots, an she liked somersaultin on the big blue mats in the gym.

Aye, she wis happy.

No like on her first day.

She had stood then at the classroom door, her stomach jumpin an knottin. Mrs. Monroe, the Headie, had taken her airm and drawn her intae the white-painted room. Pictures on the walls, a plant wi rid leaves, an 20 pairs o eyes lookin at her.

'This is your teacher now - Miss Buchanan.'

The Headie turned then tae the class.

'Tiffany Margaret will be joining us from today, and I know you will look after her. Won't you?'

The class chorused,

'Yes, Mrs. Monroe.'

And she had swept fae the room.

The class had looked silently at Meggie and she had glared back at them.

Look efter her? Nae fear.

‘Sit here, by LEEANNE, please.’

Miss Buchanan had pinte tae a table, an smiled.

Miss Buchanan seemed sae gorgeous wi her blue troosers an rid jumper, an hair that wis a’ short an stickin up, that Meggie had slid intae her seat withoot a word.

‘Tiffany Margaret is a lovely name,’ said Miss Buchanan, ‘but what do you usually get called?’

‘Meggie,’ said Meggie.

‘That’s what it will be then, if that’s O.K. by you,’ said Miss Buchanan.

An it wis.

There were 5 ithers at the table: LEEANNE, a wee lassie wi a badge that said, ‘Table Monitor’; William, wha wis drawin cars on the cover o his jotter; an Carol, wha wis pickin her nose. Then cam Melanie, wha wis layin oot pens an rubbers fae her pincil case; an a thin-lookin black-haired girl ca’ed Isobel.

They a’ said Hello - except Isobel, wha stuck oot her tongue when Miss Buchanan wisnae lookin.

‘We’re very pleased to have Meggie,’ said Miss Buchanan to the class.

Meggie wisnae quite shair if she’d be pleased tae hae them, especially Isobel. But she’d gie it a try. Fur her mum’s sake. Till she could go hame again, whenever that wid be.

The class had a routine – first thing in the mornin wis silent readin, which had just finished - then writin.

‘Write about the view from the window,’ said Miss Buchanan.

The view fae the windae, green hills, gress, an trees wi birds on them.

Whaur she'd come fae, there'd jist be mair flats an concrete.

She had begun tae write.

When the bell rang, she had been surprised that the time had gone sae quickly.

'Playtime, Meggie,' said Miss Buchanan.

'Leeanne will show you everything.'

Leeanne had run aroond like a busy wee bee.

'There's the toilets, buzz buzz, there's the gates, dinnae go oot them, buzz buzz, there's the benches, ye can sit on them, buzz buzz buzz, see ye,' an she had jined her pals at the corner.

Meggie had sat doon an ta'en in whit everywan wis daein. The playground wis fu o kids runnin, shovin, playin fitba an jist hingin oot. Leeanne wis showin aff a bracelet, William wis swoppin magazines, Carol an Melanie were gigglin an listenin tae somethin in their earpieces.

Meggie opened the packet o crisps she'd brocht wi her.

Suddenly Isobel wis staundin beside her.

She spoke richt intae Meggie's ear.

'Gie me some o yer crisps an ah'll no punch ye.'

Meggie continued tae eat.

'Naw,' she said.

'Ah mean it,' said the girl.

'So dae I,' said Meggie calmly.

'Ah'm a great puncher,' said Isobel.

'So am ah,' said Meggie, 'Try me.' An she turned her heid an looked straight intae Isobel's een.

The blackhaired girl had looked back for at least a minute, then drapped her een, an turned awa.

Meggie had watched her find a place by the wa, staundin by hersel at the corner until the bell rang. She didnae ask fur crisps again.

As the days had passed, Meggie had found that the kids were O.K. So wis the work, an Miss Buchanan wis a great teacher. But Isobel stood oot fae a'body. She wisnae popular. Meggie could see why. She jist didnae care aboot folk. She stood by hersel in the playground, talkin tae hersel, an pullin faces, she laughed when folk fell ower an she ca'ed the fitballers names if a ba cam onywhere near her.

Leeanne said Isobel had nae been at the schule lang, but she wisnae as new as Meggie. She wis a puzzle.

Then Meggie had suddenly understood. It wis as if a licht had come on in her heid.

Isobel wis staundin on her ain pretendin no tae care. But she did. Really. In her hert.

So Meggie had gone up tae her. Isobel had eyed her warily fae under her fringe.

'Waant a crisp?' said Meggie.

Isobel's fingers had been swift. In the packet an oot again wi a handfu.

Then in her mooth, an Isobel's cold black eyes searchin Meggie's face.

'Whit dae ye waant?' said Isobel.

'Naethin,' said Meggie, for she didnae waant onythin, an Isobel did.

Isobel waanted tae jine in. Isobel waanted pals. But she wis never goin tae

get them.

No till she chinged.

That wis why Meggie began tae staund wi her in the playground.

But, today, Isobel wisnae there. Meggie came intae the classroom an looked aroond. A'body wis findin their seats. William wis fiddlin wi the strap on his schulebag, Carol an Melanie were gigglin thegither, Leeanne wis coontin the pincils. Isobel wis missin.

Miss Buchanan said, 'Good Morning, Class,' an everywan said 'Good Mornin,' back.

Then she said, 'Isobel will not be coming back. She was only here for a short time, as you know, and she's moving again, to Aberdeen, and another school. I'm sure we'll all miss her. Meggie, could you clean out Isobel's table drawer?'

Each pupil had a drawer in which to keep books, pens and stuff.

Meggie opened Isobel's. She took oot her jotters an books, ruler an pen, and found at the bottom a grubby broon envelope wi 'Meggie' written on it. Inside wis a wine gum an a scrap o paper which said, 'To ma pal from Isobel.'

And for the first time since she had come tae the schule, Meggie waanted tae cry.

## Lost an Found by Elizabeth Cordiner

Meggie held up the chewed slipper. Ruby wid be in trouble again.

Fur it wisnae the first time.

The wee rid dug had chewed Mrs. MacCribbins' message bag, her purse, an the legs o her favourite chair. Forbye, the other day Mrs. MacCribbins had lost ain o her gloves, an fund it in Ruby's basket wi teeth marks a' ower it.

She hudnae been pleased. She'd sterted pittin stuff high up on tap o shelves an cupboards.

If Ruby could flee, she'd be straight up there, thought Meggie, gnawin awa tae her hert's content.

Meggie had asked LEEANNE Walker, wha sat beside her in class - an wha had a big Alsatian - aboot it, an LEEANNE hud said tae get Ruby a rubber toy.

Ruby had liked chewin her rubber toy richt enough, but she liked slippers better.

Meggie sighed. It had been awfy guid o her foster mither tae get her a puppy. She'd never had wan afore, an she loved Ruby so much, but maybe Mrs. McCribbins wid gie the pup back tae whaur she came fae, fur she wis awfy particular. An Ruby wisnae.

She couldnae bear tae think aboot that.

Onywey, it wis time tae go ootside fur Ruby's walk.

Meggie loved bein ootside fur Ruby's walk. Meggie loved bein ootside at ony time, seein the big sky an the wey the clouds chased themsels on a

windy day, swingin on the grey-broon branches o the trees an jumpin ower logs an boulders. She wid let Ruby aff the lead so that she could jine in the fun, rinnin roond, an gettin a' excited. She wid throw a stick and Ruby wid disappear fur a minute, then come back wi it in her mooth, grinnin, her een shinin wi delight, as if tae say, Look at me. Look at me. Am ah no great!

Meggie found her favourite spot, awa fae the road, an searched for a thick stick, wan that Ruby could gnaw, an she threw it as far as she could, wi a' her strength. It wis a guid throw. The stick sailed ower the bushes an disappeared.

'Run, Ruby!' she shouted. 'Run fur it!'

An Ruby did.

But she didnae come back. Meggie shouted an shouted for her, an then she sterted tae look. Hard.

Ruby wisnae behind the bushes, or the clump o trees ahead. Meggie went further, onto the bridge that went ower the stream. She looked richt an left. It wisnae till she looked doon that she saw her, a clump o rid fur in the water.

Her hert stopped. Withoot thinkin, she tore aff her shoes tae jump in.

'No,' said a voice, an a large haund held her still.

A boy with a fishing net was standin behind her.

'Stey there,' he said.

In no time at a' he had cast the net an plucked the puppy oot o the stream.

Ruby sat drippin on the bank.

'Oh.' Meggie could hardly speak.

'Oh, thank you.'



'Ye're welcome,' said the boy.

He pit his heid on wan side, an his blue eyes twinkled.

'Ah've never caught a dug afore. You're wi Mrs. MacCribbins, eh?

Meggie? Ah saw you the ither day. Ah'm Tam. Fae the ferm.

She's a braw wee dug, eh? Hoo are ye gettin on wi her?'

Meggie opened her mooth tae say, 'Fine,' but somehow whit came oot wis,

'She chews things a' the time. She poos in the hoose as weel, an disnae come when ye ca her.'

And her voice trembled.

'Oh, aye,' said Tam cheerfully.

'They're a' like that when they're wee. But she'll learn. Keep tryin, an gie her a treat when she does things richt. That eyeweys works.'

Meggie felt better right awa.

'Come oan, ah'll walk ye baith hame.'

The sun shone through the trees, makin golden patterns on the path. They walked in silence for a bit, a bedraggled Ruby at their heels.

Then Tam said, 'Why are ye steyin here? Huv ye no goat a mum?'

Meggie swallowed hard. 'Aye, ah huv. Ma mum needed a haund. She wisnae...' She stopped, then started again. 'She wisnae weel enough tae look efter us.'

She thocht back tae the wee flat whaur they had been livin, her mum an her.

Noo it seemed tae hae been a different warld, a warld o drawn curtains in the daytime, an bad dreams in the nicht, a warld whaur she had been no shair, no shair whit the day would bring, an no shair whit tae dae.

Noo she kent whit tae dae.

Every day.

‘O.K.’ said Tam. ‘There’s yer street noo, an Mrs. MacCribbins is lookin fur ye. See ye soon.’

An he winked.

When Meggie telt her story, Mrs. MacCribbins shook her heid.

Meggie knew that Ruby had dripped water on the tiles an left muddy pawprints on the carpet.

Her hert sank. Ruby wid hae tae go. She kent it.

But Mrs. MacCribbins wis wrappin Ruby in a towel, cain her darlin, dryin her aff an strokin her coat.

Meggie wis astounded.

Nae tellin aff fur Ruby? Mrs. MacCribbins didnae seem tae care. An she wis askin if she wis o.k., no feelin bad or onythin, an wid she like chips fur her tea?

‘He’s a nice lad, Tam,’ she said when they were at the table. ‘Fairmer Wilson’s son.’

‘Does he no go tae schule?’ asked Meggie. ‘Ah huvnae seen him.’

‘No the noo,’ said Mrs. MacCribbins, ‘he’s no been weel. Fairmer Wilson wis that worried about his boy. But he’s gettin better, oot o the hospital, an back wi his faimily.’

The next day, there wis a knock at the door. Tam wis staundin there. In his haund he had a label which he haunded tae Meggie.

‘It’s tae go on her collar,’ he said, ‘ wi her address on it. Noo, if she ever gets lost again, an disnae come back, whaever finds her will ken whaur she lives. Dinnae worry. She has a guid hame wi folk that care about her, an

that's a' that maitters.'

Meggie lay in bed that nicht, thinkin about Ruby. She'd been lost, but she had been found, an everythin wis fine. They were thegither again.

Ruby had her, she had Mrs. MacCribbins, an in her hert she had her mum. She turned ower tae fa' asleep.

Lost and Found.

She had found a guid hame. An so had Ruby.

Maybe she had found a guid freen as weel. Wan wi a wink.

## Medicine by Elizabeth Cordiner

Tam had been gettin worse. Meggie had seen it. He wis oot o breath when he heided the ba, then he hud tae rest when they went ower tae the secret place whaur the fox cubs lived. An soon he wisnae able tae play wi Ruby, teachin her new tricks, haudin her up high. He couldnae even run wi her.

He had been taken in tae hospital. Fur his operation.

‘When ah come oot,’ he’d said, ‘ah’ll be a lot better. Ah’ll be stronger, get back tae schule. An ah’ll play wi Ruby again. You’ll see.’

But he wisnae gettin oot o hospital. Meggie had made him a Get Well card an pit a photo o Ruby inside it, and she waanted tae visit, but she’d been telt, ‘No. No yet.’

An Meggie felt bad.

She kent that Tam had had tae go. It wis necessary. But for the first time she didnae want tae eat her foster-mither’s tea.

‘Whit’s wrang wi ye, Meggie?’ she had said, an Meggie had shook her heid. She didnae really ken, but she didnae feel richt, an she’d felt the same when her mum had had tae go awa.

Wan mornin when the sky wis the blue o a duck’s egg, an there were pussy willows on the trees, Meggie took Ruby oot fur her walk.

They ran an played as usual, but when they’d had their fun, instead o turnin an goin back hame, Meggie pit Ruby on the lead an set oot fur the toon.

She knew whaur she waanted tae go. It wis a long wey away, but she jist

kept walkin. Past the busy road, past the cluster o white hooses, under the tunnel, then oot tae whaur it stood, a long grey building wi a gravel drive leadin up tae a big broon door.

The hospital.

Standin in front o the door, she took a deep breath. There wis naebody aroond. She pushed hard. The door opened, and she wis in front o anither door, wan wi a sort o lever an a lock. She stretched up, but she couldnae reach the haundle. She made a face.

Maybes there wis another door? Roond the side?

When she turned the corner o the buildin, there wis a gairden wi benches an flower beds, an there were some big windaes, low doon, lookin ower it. She walked ower tae the first windae an pressed her nose against it, Ruby sittin quietly at her feet.

Inside she could see shiny white machines wi dials an numbers, trolleys wi equipment a' silvery an shinin. As she looked, a woman in a white coat came in the door at the back o the room. Meggie ducked doon, an moved quickly on tae the second windae.

She saw a room wi a bed. There wis a table ower the bed an on it a jug o waater and a gless. Propped up on some pillaes, lookin awfy sma, wis a boy. It wis Tam. He looked fair white an his een were shut.

She saw a kind o bandage strapped tae his chest. He had a tube comin oot o his airm an it wis attached tae a bottle on a stand.

She knocked hard on the windae.

Tam opened his een.

She bent doon, picked up Ruby and held her close tae the glass.

Tam sat straight up. He punched the air. Then he smiled, a great big smile that reached richt across his face, an waarmed his cheeks, an suddenly he looked much better. She took Ruby's paw an waved it back an forwards.

The wee dug's tail wis waggin fit tae burst.

An Meggie wis smilin tae.

See ye soon, pal, she said in her mind. See ye soon.

On the wey hame, she thocht about Tam an aboot feelin better.

Tam had had tae hae special treatment. He had tubes an dressins and a drip thing. An he needed them, she knew. Ye needed medicine sometimes. Wance, when she hud had a sair throat, her mum had gien her a teaspoon o thick broon stuff. That had done the trick.

But there wis anither kind o medicine that made ye feel better.

No in a bottle.

An she had got some that day as weel.

## The End o the Dream by Elizabeth Cordiner

Meggie opened her een. It wis mornin and she wis in her ain wee bed.

But the dream had been sae real.

She closed her een an remembered it again.

She had been walkin past the fields. It had been rainin hard, the waater runnin doon her neck an splashin aff her shooders. When she got tae the wuid, the rain suddenly stopped. The sky wis clear blue, an a' aboot there wis a cleanlike smell o wet gress, leaves an flooers.

A bird began tae sing. It wis like the world had waashed its face, a' new an fresh. She began tae smile an skip along the path.

Then, in front o her, she saw an arch o colours in the sky - rid, orange, yellow, blue, green, indigo, violet. It wis a rainbow, an sic a rainbow, huge, brilliant, stretchin ower the toon.

She could see clearly whaur it sterted an whaur it ended. She began tae run towards it, for she knew that whaurever it ended, there wis a treasure jist for her.

She ran an she ran, but no maitter hoo hard she tried, she couldnae reach the end of the rainbow, or get onywhere near it. She stretched oot her hauns, but the rainbow disappeared.

That wis when she had wakened up.

And noo, risin an dressin, she felt as if the dream wis the real thing instead o whit hid been happenin - Tam still in hospital, her mum no better yet.

'Will it rain the day?' she asked her foster-mother.

'Will it rain the day?' she asked her teacher.

It wis efter teatime that the sky began tae change. It got darker, an her foster mither pit on the lichts.

At first there wis jist a crash o thunder, then a fork o brightness swept across the sky. Lightnin. The heavens seemed tae open an the rain came doon. It ran fae the gutters on the roof, fillin up the rainbarrel at the back door, rushin across the path, soakin the grund in the gairden.

'My! It's heavy!' said her foster mother, and she went tae draw the curtains.

'No,' cried Meggie, 'Let me see the rainbow.'

When the rain cleared, an the rainbow came, she could hardly contain her excitement. She slipped on her shoes an pit Ruby on her lead. She packed a wee bag wi a torch an a blanket.

She nicht hae tae walk a' nicht.

As she walked, she thought o the treasure waitin for her at the end.

Meggie's heid wis fu' o pictures, maybe a diamond collar for Ruby, golden coins in a shiny pot.

She jist had tae keep walkin.

But the end o the rainbow wis a lang wey awa, nearly at the end o the sky, ower the river, ower the hills, an the rainbow wis gettin faint, as if the colours in its paintbox had a' been waatered doon. She screwed up her een tae see it. She began tae run, but even when she ran her hardest, she couldnae get nearer. An the rainbow wis sayin goodbye.

She sat doon on the gress. Time tae go hame.

Mrs. MacCribbins watched as she pit her bag doon on the flair.



As Meggie sat by the fire, her foster mother sat doon tae.

‘Ma mither telt me a story,’ she said, ‘It wis about a wee girl that chased the rainbow. She went oot tae find it, an she never returned. But sometimes, efter the rain, if ye look very hard, ye can see her little figure runnin, runnin, runnin, ayeweys tryin tae get tae the treasure at the end.’

It wis dark in the little kitchen.

Meggie sat silent.

‘Sometimes,’ said Mrs. MacCribbins gently, ‘ye find yer treasure richt in front o ye.’ An she took Meggie’s haunds.

Meggie looked roond.

The fire wis warm, her supper on the table, Ruby curled up in her basket.

‘Dinnae run awa tae the rainbow, Meggie,’ said Mrs. MacCribbins, ‘Ah wid miss ye.’

‘O.K.’ said Meggie, an she began tae eat her supper.

## Thinkin time by Elizabeth Cordiner

Meggie sat under a tree, thinkin.

It wis her favourite tree, a thick-trunked oak tree that seemed tae her tae be the auldest tree in the world.

She rested her back on it an looked aroond.

A' the things that had wance been new tae her she felt were hers noo.

The trees, the rocks, the paths that she walked each day wi Ruby – hers.

An she had seen their changes – leaves grown fae buds, blossoms comin oot. There were always changes here. No like when she had lived in the flats.

Naethin had changed there. Always jist the flats an the roads.

She had got a letter fae her mum, hopin she wis daein fine.

It had a present in it, a silver chain wi a star on it. She touched it as it hung aroond her neck.

Her foster mother had said it wis lovely. An it wis.

Her mum had said she'd be gettin big. An she wis. She needed a bigger shoe size noo. She wis taller. She wisnae the same wee lass that had come tae a strange new toon.

Tiffany Margaret Morrison wis growin up, whether she liked it or no.

She took an aipple fae her pocket an bit intae it.

Mrs. Mac wis awfy keen on fruit, so everyday she had an aipple or an orange or a banana. Mrs. Mac wis guid like that. She ate the aipple steadily, then stood up.

She balanced on one leg on the fallen tree that a big storm had blown doon. She could be a trapeze artist when she grew up, or a dancer.

Stretchin oot her airms, she birlled aroond.

She wis a ballet dancer on the stage, an everywan had come tae see her dance. They were throwin flooers at her an shoutin 'Bravo! Bravo!' She jumped doon fae the tree an shouted fur Ruby.

The wee dug came at wance.

She wis like that noo, no like she wis at first, when she had chewed everythin an no done whit she wis telt. Tam had shown her whit tae dae, an noo Ruby wis perfect.

A shadow came ower Meggie's face, then cleared. Tam.

Maybe he wid be better soon.

She looked up. The sky wis bright, an a line o geese were flyin high.

She pit Ruby on the lead an headed hame.

She didnae ken whit she wid be when she grew up, but she kent wan thing.

She wid be a star.