

DAYDREAMS AND MOONBEAMS

by Debbie Summers

Daydreams, Moonbeams and Wings Over The Common (From The Tail of a Magpie) is a part fantasy, part nature and part childhood memories book from Louisa Middleton-Blake. The book tells how she rescues a magpie fledgling called Maggie from being eaten by a couple of hungry crows, and how this magpie continues with his subsequent life with Louisa and her family. Maggie also gets to tell his side of the story with his own cheeky style.

Why did you decide to write this book?

“I just felt I had to write an amusing account about the magpie’s character. I decided to include anecdotes about my early childhood because it fitted in nicely with Maggie’s own reflections of his early days in the nest with his siblings, and relating stories about his ancestors. The myths and legends had to be told from a bird’s point of view of their ancestors, but I mixed it around a little, adding some of my own imagination and interpretation. I started to write this story mostly for older children, but it eventually ended up for both young and the not so young. My youngest reader to date is a boy of 12 and the oldest a lady of 78.”

Tell me about Maggie.

“Maggie has been an exceptional character who came into our lives and promptly took over. I think if he’d been a human, he wouldn’t have got away with so much, but because he gave us his ‘pathetic’ look, everyone took him to their hearts, which was sometimes to their peril. All of the events regarding Maggie in the story actually took place, but I had to change the human characters in the story so as not to embarrass them too much! When he decided to leave home, it left a great, blank space in our lives (but at least we could leave the windows and doors open!). All I can say is that he was not ordinary bird, and I have certainly learnt a lot about bird behaviour since knowing him.”

Is there a spiritual event in your life that stands out for you?

“Tricky! Just where do I start? I have had so many spooky encounters when I was young that eventually they didn’t even scare me. When I was very young, I used to be very frightened of sleeping on my own, and I remember on one particular occasion, when I was really scared, I heard a man’s voice telling me, ‘don’t be frightened, everything is going to be all right, there is nothing to be afraid of.’ That made me even more frightened and I couldn’t get in my parent’s bedroom fast enough, I can tell you!

“Also some strange incidents happened around the time of my dad’s death. On the morning that he died in hospital, we arrived home at about 8.30 am and obviously we were all shocked and numb. I remember going upstairs into the bathroom to have a quiet howl by myself. As I looked into the mirror, it was as though I was looking through dad’s eyes, and suddenly I heard a distinctive man’s voice say, ‘don’t worry, everything’s all right.’ I thought that it must have been either my brother, Derek, my son, Adam, or my husband, Iwan, talking to me through the door, trying to reassure

me, but later, when I asked them if they'd been upstairs at that time, they all told me they hadn't. It was much like the voice I'd heard all those years ago when I was a little girl afraid to sleep on my own.

“At around 9.00 am, I was looking out the bedroom window with Adam and Iwan, and we noticed different species of animals and birds entering the garden, two by two, and walking sedately along as though they had come to pay their respects. In the field, just the other side of the garden gate, two foxes walked slowly along the outskirts of the fence, looking towards the house, where they stopped and stared for a few moments, and then slowly walked on. At that time we hardly ever saw foxes, so this was very odd behaviour.

“A few nights later, there was an odd knocking sound at mum's bedroom window. There was a song thrush outside, acting as though it wanted to come in, and then it flew off. The next night, the same thing happened, only this time it was more persistent. When I opened the window, it flew straight in onto mum's arm. I picked it up to see if it was injured, but it wasn't, so I took it out to the shed, and put it into Maggie's old cage for the night. The next morning, I opened the cage door, and it flew straight off towards the woods. It didn't happen again.

“When dad was in hospital, we arrived one day and he seemed quite excited about the fact that he had had a visitor, a little goldfinch, which flew through an open window and settled on his arm, and as he told us this, he actually tapped on his arm where the bird landed. When one of the nurses came in, she confirmed that dad had told her the same story, and he even asked her to fetch some seed so that it could give it to the bird. The next day he told us the same story, so we assumed that he was hallucinating.”

You obviously have a strong interest in nature and I notice that you mention fairies in your book. Have you ever come across nature spirits, such as, fairies, elves, gnomes, etc?

“Yes, I am very interested in nature and all natural things, like stones, runes, crystals, elements of nature, yin and yang and many other similarly related things. I have never come across fairies, elves or any other of the little people, but I think it's a very healthy thing to believe in them. There's no reason to believe they never existed, perhaps many have become extinct, like so many other vulnerable species. There are so many stories about them across the world, so there must be something in it.”

What are your spiritual beliefs?

“Spiritual beliefs? I think I just go with the flow and accept every event in my life as part of a life-long learning curve, but I believe that we do have at least one guardian angel, if not several. I do know that my mum, myself and the dogs were saved by an angel when we had a terrible car accident on the way home from Sussex, and even the police, the ambulance man and one of the staff at the hospital told me, ‘somebody must have been watching over you!’”

Do you see yourself getting involved in other spiritual books?

“I think this is a great possibility. At the moment I am working on another novel, which is based on a true story that involves very sensitive issues, therefore I am spacing this one out very carefully. I have also written a short children’s story called, “The Little Red Rose and The Enchanted Garden,” which I have written in dedication to the children who were so brutally killed in Beslan. So far, this story has not been published, but when it is, the proceeds will go to the children who survived this terrible incident. I have also started on a children’s story about little dwarf-type creatures who live in the mountains and there will be many exciting adventures.”

Where is Maggie now?

“I don’t think Maggie is flying about this area now, but I do think some of his offspring are, and at least the nest he built is still opposite our house, high up in a beech tree. So who knows, there could be a Maggie II about somewhere!”