

CAN A YOUNG GIRL'S NEWFOUND POWERS
SAVE THE ANCIENT FOREST?



EYES OF DEVILLA

LEN RAYNE

Eyes of Devilla

Len Rayne hails from the charming town of Arbroath in Scotland but currently calls Dunblane home. Married to Elizabeth and proud father of two grown-up boys, Len's journey has been intertwined with words from his professional days.

However, it was during his sons' formative years that Len's creative flair began to flourish. Regular woodland walks with his boys heard Len making up tales of talking trees and mystical creatures to captivate their imaginations.

In “Eyes of Devilla,” Len invites readers into a world of imagination, nurtured during these woodland escapades with his young sons. The Eyes of Devilla promises to offer you a glimpse into a world where magic and reality intertwine in the most unexpected ways.

Eyes of Devilla

A Bonnie Banks Adventure Story

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First published in the UK 2024

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Chapter 1

Watched

Present Day

Bonnie Banks was lost in the forest. She wasn't afraid. Yet. This was her local forest, and she knew it well. But, through a lack of attention, she found herself in a less familiar part. Her walk had taken her much deeper into the trees than usual. It wasn't long before it would start to get dark, and inside the forest it had already become gloomy. And it had started to rain. Bonnie wished she'd brought her head torch – for comfort, if nothing else.

She loved the peace and quiet of the forest, and spent many hours walking, sitting and observing. But today, Bonnie was on her own, lost and missing David, her dog with the human name. Her schoolmate Rachel Parker was

not on her list of people she was missing. She would be the last person to go on the list. Bonnie was thinking of lots of ways to hurt Rachel. Make her feel pain and humiliation. Bonnie knew she wouldn't actually do anything. That wasn't her way. But dreaming about it made her feel better.

She could hear Rachel's voice in her head. It said, 'I know hundreds of people. And I know even more on social. And out of them all, you're the ugliest.'

When Rachel had spoken these words, earlier on in the day, it was through gritted teeth. *I wish I could get David to bite her*, thought Bonnie. *And then pretend it was an accident. But no. I couldn't ask him to do that.*

Bonnie was even more annoyed because, when she thought about it, it hadn't even been the cleverest of insults.

'And out of them all, you're the ugliest,' she mimicked, in a slow, sarcastic manner, wiggling her shoulders and tightening her chin as she said it. She could have coped with the insult alone. But *everybody* had laughed. Even Molly – her best friend. Not that Molly wasn't on her side. The truth was, everyone was afraid of Rachel. And Molly wouldn't say or do anything to single her out for Rachel's attention.

Bonnie knew standing up to Rachel was the right thing to do, but it hadn't worked out as planned. Her responses to just such an event had been rehearsed in her head so many times. What she would say and do. And what was the best reply on the day? The reply that would

humiliate Rachel? The reply that would make everyone laugh and turn Bonnie into an instant hero?

‘Shut up.’

That was it: ‘Shut up’. And she hadn’t prepared herself for the almighty push Rachel had dished out, a split second after saying, ‘Who are *you* telling to shut up?’ Bonnie had landed on her backside. It wasn’t a big shove, and Bonnie was bigger, stronger and older than Rachel, but it had caught her off guard and caused her to fall over, hurting more ego and pride than anything else. But it had smashed the screen on her phone. As she looked at her reflection on the cracked screen, Bonnie was devastated. And this wasn’t helped by the laughter from those around her. Bonnie hated Rachel. She *really* hated her.

At least I don’t have to look at her horrible comments on my phone, thought Bonnie, alone and lost in the woods. Her attention was brought back to her current situation by an almighty flash. The whole sky and forest lit up for the briefest of moments, then a few seconds passed before there was a loud rumble of thunder. Fear wasn’t far away now. Bonnie knew it was time to find her way onto a familiar path and get home. Lost in the forest overnight, or explaining to her mum about the broken phone? She wasn’t sure which would be worse.

Bonnie kept on walking, hoping she was heading in the right direction. Her mind drifted off again as she marched along the unfamiliar path. She thought about her birthday and becoming a teenager – although it was still a

few months away yet. Her age frustrated her. She wanted to be older and wiser.

As the rain got heavier, she pulled up her hood and zipped her coat. Bonnie wasn't one for the latest fashionable clothes. She preferred outdoor wear to designer names. Her Berghaus jacket was hard-wearing and practical, and she loved it. It gave her a sense of invincibility, being out in all weathers but staying warm and dry.

Her pace quickened. The exertion in her legs became more difficult to bear as they carried her faster. Not running ... but getting close to a jog. It made her think of school sports – which was not her favourite class. In her view, there was no sense in running as fast as you could or jumping the height of yourself. Bonnie liked walking. A good, brisk walk every day – just her and David.

Is that a familiar clearing ahead? she wondered. Her pace quickened again. Now she *was* jogging. Bonnie wished her mum was here right now. Or David. Not that he would be much use. He wouldn't exactly show her the way home. But he would be company and he would make her feel more at ease. It was becoming darker by the minute. Her thoughts moved on to her relationship with her mum. Anything, other than thinking about being lost – she didn't want to start panicking. Bonnie got along OK with her mum, but they didn't communicate well. Something wasn't right. But, whatever it was, they didn't talk about it. Probably something to do with her dad, Bonnie guessed.

But whatever was behind their lack of communication, she wished again that her mum was with her right now.

Her pace quickened again. It had now become a fast jog. The heat was building uncomfortably inside her jacket. And now there was another thing. An uneasy feeling. It felt like something out there was watching every move she made.

Chapter 2

Lost

The forest had a varied landscape dominated by tall Scots pine trees. There were lots of other trees around, but this was mainly a pine forest. There were lochs – but no monsters that Bonnie knew of. The paths around and through the forest were wide enough for a tractor or forestry truck to drive along. These were the easiest paths to walk, but there were also the ‘well-trodden’ paths. These had been worn into the landscape by thousands of pairs of feet over hundreds of years. There were mountain bike trails, too, which had begun to appear over the past few years.

The path Bonnie found herself on was a barely visible one. Only those with a bit of familiarity with the forest would take these paths. They were great for exploring in the better, drier weather. But the needles of the pine trees covered everything in a dull beige carpet. The less worn paths had become more difficult to see, particularly as the day drew darker.

As Bonnie walked along the path, it opened out into a clearing. Forests are funny like that, she thought. One minute it's dark and gloomy, a tiny narrow path through the trees. Then, the next minute, a clearing. Daylight and a feeling of safety. Bonnie knew the rain wasn't far away. There had been another couple of lightning flashes but it took her a little longer to hear the thunder rolls each time. Hopefully the worst of the weather would pass before she found her way home.

Walking past the puddles of muddy water, Bonnie kept a brisk jogging pace. She wasn't running flat out, but she definitely wasn't taking her time. The wild grass and ferns at the side of the path had died off for winter. The forest had lost its autumnal beauty of a few weeks ago.

Bonnie stopped to try and get her bearings, knowing she had to get back onto a familiar path. It was mid-afternoon, in January, and it would be dark soon. There was no sound – in fact, it was deathly quiet, the way it gets before the heavens open. There was no movement. Not even the trees were swaying. But Bonnie knew she was being watched. She could sense it.

Her eyes darted all around. Nothing. She thought of the scary movies – the ones a group of them watched at Molly's house – where the evil red eyes watch you from the darkness. She was not one to scare easily, but her heart rate had quickened. She shook off the thought that Rachel could be hiding in the trees like an evil witch. Bonnie

found herself thinking, *that's exactly what she is. An evil witch.* A gentle smile appeared in response to her own joke.

It was at that point that the eyes appeared. Large and piercing. Staring and silent. But, somehow, not threatening. Comforting? She moved a fraction towards them, and they blinked. They were too close together and too big to be human. Then wings flapped, as the owl sensed her discomfort and aimed to put her a little more at ease.

Why am I so spooked? Bonnie wondered. The path led towards the owl, and she was drawn towards it. Now only ten meters away, then eight, then five. But the owl flew away again, settling just close enough for Bonnie to see it. She followed and the owl flew on again. This was repeated a few times and, each time, Bonnie instinctively followed, still on the same path. After a few minutes, her distance from the owl became so small that she was almost underneath it. The forest was as dense as she had ever known it. Time was marching on, and the darkness had started to eat into the last light of the day. There was a little bit of fear starting to creep in. Bonnie looked at the owl and wished again that her mum or David was with her. Then, she looked at the tree in front of her. It seemed to have a face.

Bonnie closed her eyes for a second and shook her head. When she reopened them, the 'tree face' was even more pronounced. It was like the tree was staring at her. Not in a scary, threatening, 'Rachel' kind of way, more of

a ‘Mrs Bell’ kind of way. Mrs Bell was her English teacher – firm, friendly, but a little bit scary. Bonnie’s legs felt heavy, like she was walking through a big bowl of syrup. She stared and felt drawn towards the tree. Small steps, getting closer. The tree held her gaze. This was an almighty Scots pine tree. Not the tallest, but one with an odd kind of presence. It had an aura which dominated the surrounding trees.

Bonnie figured it was an old tree, perhaps hundreds of years old. Raising her right hand slowly, she reached towards the tree as the owl watched on. But something strange was happening – this wasn’t Bonnie choosing to move forwards and reach out. She couldn’t help it and had no control over her movements. Her hands touched the tree on what she imagined was its face. The stumpy eyes – which felt nothing like eyes. The wonky nose. Her hand touched what she saw as the tree’s toothless mouth. What was happening? Then, suddenly, and as nimbly as a pickpocket, the tree’s lower branch grabbed her by the hand.

Bonnie got such a fright; it all happened so fast. Her hand was now trapped – but she was not in pain. She was afraid ... yet calm. She looked up and saw the owl, which continued to watch. Did it wink at her?

I’m going totally mad now, she thought.

As she calmed a bit more, there was the sound of a voice. Weak, distant, but ... yes. A voice. Was it coming from the tree?

‘What are you saying?’ she asked the tree. She looked at the owl, who was praying Bonnie would understand what was happening. The faintest of voices could be heard inside her head. The voice said, ‘Help. Help us, Bonnie.’ There were no two ways about it. The tree was speaking to her. It was asking *Bonnie* for help.

Bonnie looked into what she saw as the tree’s eyes. Her hand was gripped firmly by the branch of the tree. Bonnie repeated the word: ‘Help’. And, in that split second, the tree released her. She stepped back and the face had gone.

Bonnie had received a message. She knew something was wrong and she knew the tree had asked her for help. The owl opened its great wings and flew further down the path. It sat watching her from a short distance away. Bonnie followed and, within five minutes, she was back on a path she knew. Her legs carried her home as quickly as they could.

Her heart was racing when she arrived home, still trying to process everything. It was now dark outside. Bonnie breezed past her mum and felt glad to be back home, in the safety of her room. It was when she was shutting the curtains that she saw another pair of eyes outside. The dark creature stared at her for a few moments before disappearing into the darkness.