

The Road to Ever After

Davy David, an orphan, lives by his wits in the dead-end town of Brownvale. When a stray dog called George turns Davy's life upside down just days before Christmas, he sets in motion a chain of events which forces them to flee. A mischievous wind blows the two of them to a boarded-up museum on the outskirts of town where they meet the elderly recluse, Miss Flint. She has planned one last adventure before her time is up and hires the reluctant Davy and George to escort her.

A magical adventure about an unlikely friendship and an unforgettable journey.

Moira Young is from Vancouver on the west coast of Canada. She moved to the UK to attend drama school, and so began a performing career that took her from London's alternative comedy circuit to the West End as a tap-dancing chorus girl. After retraining in opera, she sang at venues in Canada, the UK and Europe before moving to Bath and becoming a full-time writer. She is the author of the Dustlands trilogy, now published in over 30 countries. Her debut novel, *Blood Red Road*, the first in the trilogy, won the 2011 Costa Children's Book Award and was optioned for film by Ridley Scott.

The Road to Ever After

Moira Young



First published 2016 by Macmillan Children's Books
an imprint of Pan Macmillan
20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR
Associated companies throughout the world
www.panmacmillan.com

ISBN 978-1-5098-3258-3

Copyright © Moira Young 2016

The right of Moira Young to be identified as the
author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance
with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means
(electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise),
without the prior written permission of the publisher.

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from
the British Library.

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not,
by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out,
or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent
in any form of binding or cover other than that in which
it is published and without a similar condition including this
condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

*For Roma,
wherever you are*

‘It is not down in any map; true places never are.’

Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*



There are times that are blind to such as angels. There are towns that are blind to them, too.

If – by some chance or high design – an angel had tumbled from the blue, it would have lain, unseen, in Brownvale’s dry gutters till its mighty wings parched into dust.

The times were, indeed, just such times. And Brownvale was just such a town.

Part One



Davy emptied the brooms from his bag. He laid them on the ground according to size. Made of twigs, grass and feathers, there were twelve in all. He used the largest for smoothing the earth in preparation and broadly sketching the outlines. The smaller grass and feather ones were for finer detail.

He made his angel pictures in the early dawn while people slept. He'd done a small one already that morning, in the patch behind the doctor's. He was setting up for his second in the front yard of the parsonage. It was risky. Parson Fall had a fearsome temper. But his yard was the largest, flattest space in town, with the earth raked daily by an odd-job man. It was so perfect for making pictures, it was irresistible. As was Davy's itch to make pictures in the dirt.

He didn't take this risk very often. Today he would.

The dog sat on the sidewalk outside the wire-mesh gate. He watched Davy's every move with lively interest.

'You can't come in,' Davy whispered.

The scruffy black-and-white terrier had begun to follow him the day before. Davy didn't recognize him from the pack of hardened Brownvale strays, and he wasn't confused, like a dog recently dumped. No. He had a hopeful air about him, an apparently confident expectation that someone – Davy, for instance – would soon adopt him. He gave a sharp little bark.

'Shh!' Davy cast an anxious glance at the parsonage. But the window blinds remained down.

Parson Fall's iron heart held great sway in Brownvale. His large congregation lived under his rule. Liquor and dancing were forbidden. The only hymns they sang were those that he himself composed. His black-clad figure was a familiar sight, striding Brownvale streets with zealous energy, sharp-eyed for the smallest transgression. He sat on every board and committee, from the court right down to rubbish collection, and would always turn the business to his way of thinking. If a man could be said to be a looming dark cloud, the Parson was the cloud that darkened Brownvale.

But he did have the best yard for making pictures.

And Davy lived below the Parson's radar. Davy lived below the notice of most of Brownvale. A mousy-haired, dark-eyed boy of medium height without home

or family was not memorable in any way. And Davy took particular care to move around the edges of town, so as not to draw attention to himself.

No one knew he was Brownvale's angel maker.

He made his pictures everywhere, on any flat bare patch of ground. Not benign, smiling angels though. No. Davy drew the mighty archangels. Heaven's high warriors of awe. The Archangel Michael overthrowing Lucifer, for instance. The twisting power of their bodies. The vengeful fury of Michael's sword raised high to strike. His pictures splashed like riots upon the ordered streets of the town.

Turn a corner, take a stroll, dash out for milk, you just never knew. Where there had been none the day before, there one would be. An avenging angel. Judgement. Revenge from above. How people took them depended on how uneasy their conscience was that day. They might halt dead in their tracks. They might look up in alarm at the sky above or avert their eyes and scuttle past like a nervous crab. Parson Fall had made Brownvale that kind of place. So, despite their beauty, the angels were widely disliked. It might be thought a parson would approve of fiery angels, but Parson Fall did not. His conscience was uneasy, like all the rest.

Davy didn't mean to poke at anyone's conscience. He simply copied paintings from the reference book in the library. *Renaissance Angels*, that was its title. Had there been a selection of painting books Davy would have ranged more widely, but there was just the one. As it was, he preferred the archangels to any other. Their warrior fierceness gave him heart.

He rubbed warmth into his hands. So close to Christmas, the mornings were chill. Then, with quick strokes, working quietly, he used his largest twig broom to smooth the ground.

The dog whined. Davy dashed to open the gate and pick him up. 'You have to be quiet,' he told it. The dog took that as his cue to lick Davy everywhere.

Then Davy heard it. A rumbling on the road, headed his way. White lights raked back and forth across the dawn grey sky. His heart slammed and he ducked back into the yard to hide. He crouched under the laurel bushes, clutching the dog to his chest, his hand gently clamped over its muzzle. 'Shh,' he whispered.

Davy waited and waited, holding his breath. Then a battered, filthy truck rolled slowly past. Roaming searchlights mounted on a rack on top of the cab scoured the sky and the ground. Davy cringed back from their scraping brightness, pushed himself deep into the waxy

stiffness of the laurel leaves.

Mr Kite, the gangmaster, was behind the wheel of the truck. Day or night, you never knew when he might be roaming Brownvale on the hunt. Vagrants and homeless down-and-outs were his quarry. Young or old, it didn't matter. So long as they could work, Mr Kite would snatch them and sell them on. The Town Council, well pleased to be rid of these vexing problems, slept easier in their beds thanks to Mr Kite.

He steered with one hand, oh so casual. His jaws churned a plug of tobacco as his head turned from side to side, following the track of the searchlights. A bloodhound drooled next to him on the seat. Behind them was a rack of tranquillizer guns. In the cage on the truck bed several figures crouched, clinging to the bars. They'd been too slow or unwise or just plain unlucky. A cold shiver ran over Davy's skin.

He held his breath till the rumble of the engine disappeared and the lights faded once more into dark, then he crawled out from the bushes with the dog. Dodging Mr Kite was a regular challenge.

Davy returned to his picture. He'd planned which one he would sweep at the parsonage today. No archangels. No, he would sweep something gentler. Something more suited to Christmas. Tolmeo's *Angels*

Among the Magi, from page 52 of *Renaissance Angels*.

But he wanted to try another painting first.

He'd seen it only once, the day before.