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By *AndreaMReece*

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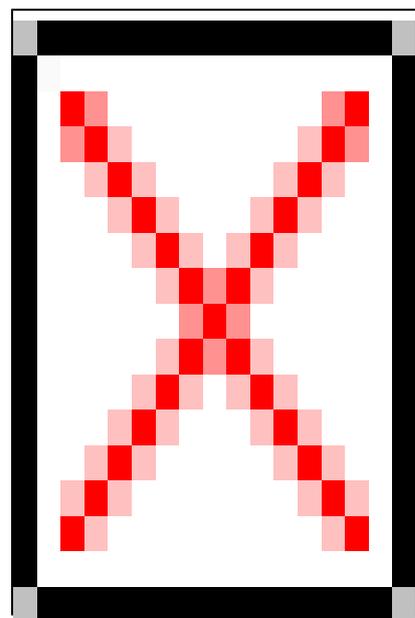
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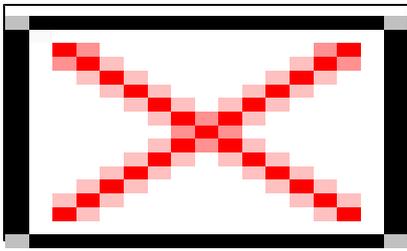
Ian Beck on **The Haunting of Charity Delafield**

You have illustrated many fairy stories, and now, with *The Haunting of Charity Delafield*, have written your own. What makes fairy stories so special to you, and what inspired you to write your own?



I have indeed enjoyed illustrating many classic fairy stories. I have also enjoyed the process of retelling them, adding little embellishments and tweaking things to suit etc. My **Tom Trueheart** novels took the notion of the Fairy Tale World and played happily and innocently inside its walls as if in a kind of Garden of Eden. I am however also aware of the darker undercurrents, the deeper truths, and beauty that run through the stories too. The idea and setting of *Charity Delafield* enabled me to tap into that other side, and explore the deeper undercurrent. I think that these are things that we all recognize in our own lives, such as parental loss, love of, and fears for your own children, and the need to allow them to grow and go out into the world. These things came naturally into the story as I wrote it, they were not consciously shoe-horned in, they were just there under the surface waiting to be used.

Charity is very distinctive looking, with her red hair, and long red buttoned coat. As an illustrator and author, do your stories come to you in pictures originally?



In the case of Charity there were very direct visual beginnings. I had originally intended to make a picture book. I made some rough drawings and wrote little bits of it too, but in an almost random and scattered way. Charity was called Rose Huffington Marzipaine De La Touche, and she went out on her walk in the snow in her red coat, after her maid, then named Charity, had brushed out her tangled red gold hair. I drew several pictures of that and then it all petered out, went nowhere, as ideas sometimes do and I put her away. My Editor, Annie Eaton would mention her to me wistfully and say, 'we ought to do something with that red haired girl in the snow?'. I made several stabs at it but only really got going after I had written the three **Tom Trueheart** books and I felt able to tackle the longer form. As it is she went through three very different drafts. It was a long process, years from initial drawing to the final text. Charity does also have a precursor in real life my niece Daisy, who is physically like Charity with the red gold hair, which is why I dedicated the book to her.

The book features motifs from many classic children's books. Did you set out deliberately to echo authors such as Frances Hodgson Burnett

Not at all, but obviously those scenes and images are lodged there somewhere in the brain. I was not consciously trying to echo them but given the setting and the period, which I particularly love, it was I suppose inevitable that certain tropes would crop up. I hope however that there is some originality there too.

Which part of the story did you most enjoy writing?

I very much enjoyed writing all of it, in all of its three guises. I suppose I really enjoyed the scene where the diary is first opened and the later consequences with the discovery by the sweep's boy. It was one of those moments where I trusted my imagination and followed where it led and I surprised myself which is one of the great pleasures of constructing a story.

What about the book, are you most proud of?

I suppose the shift towards the end of the story, I am reluctant to give anything away, into a whole new area which I hadn't seen coming at the beginning but which seemed inevitable in the end and I hope right. I am also delighted by the high production values of the book. It is a pleasure to hold and open, the margins are right, the mise en page, and the use of the illustrations, and even the gold blocking on the wrapper is exactly the right tone, for that I must give credit to design and production at Random House Children's Books. In the age of the Kindle it is more important than ever that actual printed books should be beautiful to look at and to read.

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