

The Incredible Shrinking Bogey Bear

A Bogey Bear story

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www.clivegilson.com.com

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The first rays of sunshine poked their bright little fingers around the curtains in Morgan's bedroom. She yawned once and snuffled before she opened her eyes. Morgan looked at the clock on her bedside table. The time was eight-fifteen. Morgan opened her eyes wide. She was going to be late for school.

Morgan sat bolt upright in the bed and yanked the duvet back. She could feel her heart racing in her chest. Then, as suddenly as the panic had struck, Morgan

realised that it was Saturday, which, of course, meant no school. She sank back onto the bed and rested her head on the pillow. It was far too early to be awake, she told herself, and she closed her eyes again.

There was a slight movement underneath the duvet, right next to where Morgan was laying down. If she really listened hard she could hear a faint whine like a robot in a science fiction film. A shape started to crawl up the bed, the alien lump under the bed covers moving ever closer to Morgan's head. From underneath the duvet she could hear the odd grunt. Morgan rolled over onto her side and sleepily lifted the duvet cover.

"Good morning, Bogy", she mumbled, and she reached down and picked up a bright green teddy bear. Morgan hugged the bear, snuggling him into the soft skin and hair at her neck. Amazingly, the teddy bear nuzzled down into Morgan's warm pyjamas without anyone's help. Morgan smiled contentedly to herself as she listened to the sound of tiny electric motors whirring as the little green bear moved about the bed.

The sound of spoons rattling in cereal bowls drifted up the stairs. Water splashed from a tap. A chair scraped across a wooden floor. Morgan could hear footsteps at the bottom of the stairs.

"Morgan, love, are you awake?"

It was mum. It took Morgan a couple of seconds to focus on her mother's voice. 'Of course', thought Morgan, 'she's going to work'.

"Wakey, wakey, Morgie, I'm off now."

Still holding Bogy Bear tight, Morgan jumped out of bed, ran out of her bedroom and stood at the top of the stairs.

"There you are", said her mum. "Don't forget to ask your Dad for breakfast. He's in the shed... again!"

Morgan wiped some sleepy dust from her eyes, smiled and waved from the top of the stairs as her mother put on her coat. She worked in an Estate Agent's office in town and every other Saturday she had to show people around houses.

As Morgan's Mum walked out of the front door she called out one more time. "Be good, love. See you later".

The front door slammed shut.

"Bye, Mum", Morgan called out, "Have a good day. Love you."

From under Morgan's chin Bogy Bear lifted a furry green paw and waved bye-bye too.

Dressed in a pair of old and frayed blue jeans, a baggy pink tee-shirt and red socks with a hole where the big toe should be, Dad poured milk onto Morgan's cornflakes and yawned. He had been hard at work in the shed since seven o'clock and he needed a nice cup of tea.

"Feeling alright?" he asked as he filled the kettle.

Bogy Bear nodded. He was sitting on the kitchen work top next to the toaster, where he was plugged into an old mobile phone charger. His little black eyes,

which were made from old camera lenses, flashed on and off with bright yellow pin pricks of light as his batteries recharged.

“What about my favourite little girl?” Dad asked as he opened the fridge to get the milk, “How are you this fine and sunny morning?”

Morgan slurped the milk off her spoon before she answered. “I’m okay, Dad. It’s a lovely day out there.”

The switch on the kettle flicked up and Dad poured hot water into his mug. “Mmmm”, he said, “it is, but it’s still a bit chilly out in the shed. Make sure you wrap up if you come outside.”

For a man with a brain the size of a small planet Dad could be incredibly stupid. He wasn’t really paying attention and he overfilled his mug. The boiling water spilled all over the kitchen work top and some of it splashed onto his foot and, of course, straight onto his big toe, which was sticking out of the hole in his sock. Dad clattered the kettle back onto its base and hopped up and down, rubbing his toe and yelling, “Ouch!” Morgan and Bogey Bear both burst out laughing. In their own special ways they both loved Dad to bits but he was a bit of a plonker!

Eventually Dad calmed down and wrapped his throbbing toe in a tea towel. He was leaning against the fridge sipping his hot tea. He looked like one of those old Victorian gentlemen with a bad case of gout from one of Morgan’s history books.

“So, what are you two going to do today?” he asked.

There was never any doubt that Morgan and Bogey Bear would be together. Ever since Dad had cobbled together the bits, ever since he had wired and soldered and invented her favourite little green ball of fun, Morgan and Bogey Bear had been inseparable.

“I don’t know yet”, replied Morgan. “Maybe we’ll watch a bit of telly this morning or play a game.”

What Morgan really wanted to do was spend the morning in the shed with her Dad. She was fascinated by his machines and tools. Morgan knew that her Dad was an engineer and he worked for a computer company, but that was during the week and terribly boring. The stuff that she really loved was in the Shed. Dad was an inventor, a mad professor, and that was cool.

“Can I come to the shed?” she asked.

Dad shook his head slowly. “Too dangerous today, darling. Remember I told you about the miniaturiser thingy? Well, I’m going to be testing it this morning and that means I’ve got to be very, very careful. It’s not a place for a little girl, I’m afraid. Imagine what Mum would say if I made you six inches tall. It’d be like that silly film.”

Morgan pulled a long, glum face.

Dad walked over and put his hand on her shoulder. “I’m sorry, love, I just think it’s best. I’m sure you and Bogey can get up to more than enough mischief.”

“When he’s recharged” said Morgan grumpily.

“Well, it won’t take long”, replied Dad, “and anyway you’ve got to get dressed yet. I bet by the time you get back down here Bogey will be running on full steam.”

“S’pose so”, grumbled Morgan as she finished her last spoonful of cornflakes. She wiped her pyjama sleeve across her mouth and pushed her chair away from the table.

Dad squatted down so that he was at Morgan’s eye level. “You know I don’t like it when you act all spoiled. It makes you look like a troll. So, spit-spot up those stairs, wash away the grumps and come back down like the happy little star I know you really are.”

Morgan felt hot and bothered. She knew that Dad was right but she didn’t want to admit it. He continued to squat down in front of her, smiling his big, silly smile, and Morgan’s heart melted just a little bit. She couldn’t stop herself smiling back.

“Alright” she said, pretending to sound even grumpier despite her grin.

Morgan broke free from her Dad’s light embrace, skipped up the stairs and skidded to a halt by the wash basin in the bathroom.

Morgan washed, dressed and brushed her hair. By the time that she skidded to another sliding halt on the kitchen floor, Bogey Bear’s eyes were perfect circles of blackness. The flashing yellow lights had stopped, which meant that his battery was fully charged.

Morgan unplugged her cuddly companion, lifted him down from the kitchen worktop and carried him by the paw into the front room. She had decided, while brushing her teeth that they were going to play Splat the Rat and Bogey would need a new download.

When Dad had first built Bogey nearly a year ago when Morgan was nine, the two foot tall green furry bear had just been fitted with motors and simple eyes made out of camera lenses so that he could walk about the house without bumping into things. It was great for a while, but eventually even Morgan got a bit bored.

During the summer holidays Dad had taken a week off from work to help look after Morgan. During that sunny week in August he had taken the computer stuff out of a personal music player, added in a few other chips and some extra memory and created a weird seeing, hearing and thinking brain for Bogey. It wasn’t like a real brain, like a human brain, but it did mean that you could download different programs onto Bogey’s memory chip and then he could do different things.

At the moment he was running his ‘Cuddly Night Time’ program. Dad had written a load of other programs for him as well. One of these computer programs was the ‘Game Player’ program, which meant that Bogey could understand the rules of Snakes and Ladders, Draughts, Dominoes and Splat the Rat.

Morgan was always asking for new games to be added and Dad tried his best, but they didn’t always work. The Monopoly program had, unfortunately, been a bit of a mess. For some reason Bogey always started throwing the dice under the sofa, which made the game impossible to play.

Morgan carried Bogey into the front room and climbed onto her father’s computer seat. She pressed the space bar on the keyboard on the desk and typed in her password. It was, of course, B-O-G-E-Y. The computer whirred into life and Morgan selected an icon named ‘Bogey Brain’. A cartoon picture of Bogey Bear

flashed up on the big screen on the desk. Around the cartoon picture of Morgan's special friend she could see lots of little brains all with different names. There was the one called 'Cuddly Night Time', another called 'Hide n Seek' and there, by his left paw, was a brain called 'Game Player'.

Morgan plugged a USB cable into another socket right next to the connector that recharged Bogey's battery. Then she clicked on the 'Game Player' brain and watched a light bulb above the screen bear's head fill up with bright yellow light. As soon as the light bulb was full the real Bogey Bear's eyes flashed once and he sat up.

"Ready to splat the rat?" Morgan asked.

Bogey nodded vigorously, jumped to his feet and launched himself off the desk and into Morgan's waiting arms.

Morgan loved playing Splat the Rat. Her Dad had tied a length of drainpipe to an old blackboard easel. At the top of the easel there was a bucket full of home made furry sock rats. Bogey stood in the bucket and dropped each ratty sock into the top of the tube and Morgan tried to bash them with a pink foam rounders bat before they hit the ground. A special mathematical part of Bogey's computer brain kept the score. Morgan got a point for every bashed rat and Bogey got a point each time Morgan missed. By lunch time the score was pretty even at thirty-two points for Morgan and thirty-seven for Bogey. If you've ever played Splat the Rat at a school fete, you'll understand just how good Morgan was at smashing vermin on the bonce!

Just as Bogey started to slide the next rat into the top of the tube Morgan heard a high pitched voice call out from the direction of the kitchen.

"Only me".

Morgan recognised the unmistakeable sound of Mrs. McGonagall. It must be lunch time already. Morgan slung her pink foam bat on to the living room carpet, reached up to grab Bogey, and then ran at full pelt into the kitchen. As she slid to a halt on the kitchen tiles Morgan tangled herself into the folds of Mrs. McGonagall's long and flowing paisley patterned skirt.

"Yippee" yelled Morgan from under all that material. She loved Mrs. McGonagall. The old lady was like a favourite aunt. Mrs. McGonagall lived next door but two and ever since Mum had started to work full-time, especially with Dad being so absent-mindedly busy, Mrs. McGonagall had volunteered to look after Morgan whenever she was needed. Sometimes when both Mum and Dad had to work after Morgan finished school Mrs. McGonagall could always be relied on to meet Morgan at the school gates and take her home for tea. She also baby-sat on those odd nights when Mum and Dad actually went out together for a meal or to a party. On the Saturdays when Mum worked at the estate agents Mrs. McGonagall always popped round to cook lunch.

"My word", said Mrs. McGonagall as she gave Morgan a big hug, "you look very hot and bothered".

Morgan unravelled herself from Mrs. McGonagall's skirts and looked up at her favourite neighbour. Morgan glowed. "Yes, I am", she said, panting. "Bogey and me... Splat the Rat... brilliant fun... got thirty something rats...brilliant."

Bogey turned his head towards Mrs. McGonagall and his little jaws moved up and down as his cell phone speaker squeaked, “Thirty-two”.

Mrs. McGonagall shook her head. “I dare say you did, little madam. It’s not right, though, spending all your time with that thing. You should have little girl friends to play with.”

The one thing that Mrs. McGonagall could never quite understand was why Morgan loved Bogey so much. Dad explained it like this; Mrs. McGonagall was from a time before computers and she didn’t really understand cyber-thingsies. It was best if Morgan let her have her little moments of disapproval. Morgan was a child of the twenty-first century. It was just grown-up stuff and nonsense. Anyway, Mrs. McGonagall was lovely in so many other ways.

Morgan hugged the old lady’s skirts one more time before skipping out of the kitchen with Bogey in her arms. As she reached the door to the living room she turned and said, “Just going to re-charge Bogey’s battery. Won’t be a tick. What’s for lunch, anyway?”

“Macaroni cheese”, replied Mrs. McGonagall, taking a plastic food box out of her shopping bag. She put the container into the microwave and set the timer to eight minutes. “When you’ve done whatever it is with that green thing you can run and tell your Dad to come and wash his hands”, which is exactly what Morgan did.

Morgan, her Dad and Mrs. McGonagall sat at the kitchen table after their lunch. The now empty bowls of macaroni cheese were stacked in the sink and the adults were sipping from steaming hot mugs of tea. Morgan had a glass of orange juice.

Dad was off in one of his own little worlds again. He kept writing figures down on the back of an unopened envelope from the bank. Every so often he muttered something to himself. Morgan and Mrs. McGonagall knew that it was best to keep quiet for a while. Every time Dad muttered something they just looked at each other, raised their eye-brows and smiled.

After five minutes of hushed tea and orange juice drinking, Morgan and Mrs. McGonagall watched as Dad put down his pen, pushed his chair back from the table, stretched out his legs and clasped his hands behind his head. He grinned smugly.

“Thought so”, he said. “All makes sense now. Just need to tweak the frequency of the beam up to seventy-five.”

Morgan looked at Mrs. McGonagall, who was shaking her head again. She turned to Morgan and said, “Haven’t got a clue what he’s talking about. Anyway, none of that beam nonsense gets the plates washed. Fetch the tea towel, Morgan.”

“Okey-dokey”, replied Morgan. She got up from the table, opened one of the kitchen drawers and took out a blue and white checked tea towel. She turned round and started to walk over to the kitchen sink so that she could dry while Mrs. McGonagall washed, but Morgan skidded to an abrupt halt before she even got half way across the kitchen. Mrs. McGonagall was standing over the kitchen sink with her arms locked against her sides. Her shoulders were heaving back and forth. Morgan could hear the old lady taking huge gulps of air and she made a rising, sizzling noise

with every breath. Even Dad broke off from calculating his weird techno-stuff and turned round to look.

At the end of one huge last intake of breath Mrs. McGonagall threw back her head, arched her body and there was a sudden ripping sound. This was followed immediately by the biggest sneeze Morgan had ever heard. It echoed off the tiles, bounced back off the pots and pans, and filled the house with a sound like an aeroplane engine at take-off. Mrs. McGonagall was thrown forward so violently that her nose cracked against the kitchen sink taps. She sank down onto her knees, twisted round and fell back against the kitchen cupboard doors.

Dad was still sitting in his chair with his mouth open wide in amazement. As soon as Morgan got over the initial shock of Mrs. McGonagall's mammoth sneeze, she noticed something very worrying. Morgan rushed forward and pushed her tea towel under Mrs. McGonagall's nose. In an instant the tea towel was covered in blood. When Mrs. McGonagall cracked her nose on the kitchen taps it caused a gargantuan nose-bleed. Morgan yelled at her Dad.

"Help! Come on, Dad, help me!"

Everything seemed to happen in slow motion. Dad shook his head, like he was coming out of a wicked spell. Mrs. McGonagall's body slid down the cabinet door and slumped on the floor. Then, everything speeded back up and Dad was kneeling next to Morgan. He took the tea towel from her and said, "Get the rest of the tea towels from the drawer, love. Quickly!"

Dad and Morgan spent the next five minutes desperately trying to staunch the flow of blood from Mrs. McGonagall's nose, but nothing they could do seemed to work. The floor was littered with bloody cloths and Morgan was starting to feel very unwell. She was extremely worried now and by the look on his face she could tell that Dad was as well.

"Should we call an ambulance, Dad?" Morgan asked in a small and frightened voice.

Her Dad thought about this for a moment and said, "Don't think there's time. If her nose keeps bleeding like this it could be curtains."

Morgan was shocked. She started to sob as she asked, "You mean... you mean she might die?"

"What?" replied Dad. "No, I meant we might have to use the curtains to mop up the mess."

Mrs. McGonagall was starting to moan softly, but nothing that Dad and Morgan could do seemed to stop her nose-bleed. They used nearly all of the clean tea towels and most of a brand new packet of kitchen roll. Dad too was starting to look very worried. He turned to Morgan and looked into her eyes.

"I've got an idea", he said. "You know I've been working on the miniaturiser. It might just work. That and the laser glue gun. If we could make someone small enough to climb into Mrs. M's nose and glue the blood vessel back together we could save her."

There was a moment of silence. Mrs. McGonagall twitched slightly. Dad shook his head.

“No”, he said. “It wouldn’t work. I’m the only person who can operate the miniaturiser and the laser glue gun. Botheration!”

Morgan thought for a moment and then reached across Mrs. McGonagall’s tummy and took her Dad’s hand in hers.

“What about Bogey?” she asked.

“Don’t be ridiculous”, replied Dad. “Bogey’s just a toy. He couldn’t...”

Dad stopped talking in the middle of the sentence. He suddenly had that far-away inventing look in his eyes and he started to sketch out numbers and equations on the cupboard door. He mumbled a few figures and then turned back to Morgan.

“He could, you know, he flippin’ well could. Right. You hold this towel under Mrs. M’s nose. I’ll be right back.”

With that Dad jumped to his feet and rushed out into the back garden. From where Morgan was kneeling she heard the back door slam shut followed by sounds of banging and crashing from the shed. Then Morgan heard the sound of something heavy and metallic being dragged across the garden patio. All the while she kept the last clean tea towel pressed firmly against Mrs. McGonagall’s nose, but still the poor old lady’s blood flowed and flowed. Mrs. McGonagall was starting to look very pale and ill.

“Hurry up, Dad, please hurry up”, Morgan whispered to herself.

Just then the back door crashed open and Dad reappeared. He pushed and shoved at a tangle of metal and wires mounted on top of a shopping trolley. Eventually he managed to haul the whole contraption in and over the door sill. There was a big metal plate at the bottom of the trolley basket. At the end by the trolley handlebar there was a metal scaffold about three feet high and on top of the scaffold was a round ball with wires coming out of it and a pointy bit that was aimed at the metal plate. Dad pulled the trolley over to the table, yanked at a length of wire and rammed a plug into one of the kitchen sockets. Then he reached down into the shopping trolley basket and fished out two more things. First he put the laser glue gun onto the metal plate. Then he held up what looked like a plastic space suit, complete with a round, see-through helmet.

“Techno-suit”, he said. “I designed it so Bogey can go out in the rain. It might just do the trick.”

Dad turned and started to run towards the living room but stopped half way across the kitchen. He turned round and looked at Morgan very seriously.

“Whatever you do”, he said to her, “don’t touch anything.”

Morgan stared at her Dad. She kept the tea towel pressed firmly against Mrs. McGonagall’s nose. Both the old lady and Morgan were by now stained a rosy hue of pink.

“Dad, I don’t understand”, she cried. “And please hurry up. I’m going to run out of things to soak up all this blood and stuff!”

“Look”, said Dad in what he hoped was a reassuring voice. “I’ve just got to program Bogey with a new download and then get him into the techno-suit. It’ll take two minutes. I’ve been working on a special program for a few weeks now. It’s called the Freewill program. Sort of lets Bogey behave like you and me, you know, thinking and the like. Just hold on.”

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