

by Dominic Stevenson

# Goblin

Ever Dundas, an author who I know is familiar with the stunning surrounds of Highgate Cemetery, brings all of life to the pages of her terrific novel *Goblin*.

The novel begins in a library in contemporary Edinburgh, but *Goblin*, the 81-year old reader-in-residence at the library, is forced to take us back in time to her childhood in Blitz London after she reads a newspaper article that relates to her past. Throughout the novel in fact, you flash back and forward in time as the ramifications of the newspaper article begin to unravel the life she has built for herself.

When the Police want to question her in relation to the newspaper article, you discover that some of her belongings were part of a gruesome discovery found in Kensal Green Cemetery, and you begin to learn about why *Goblin* wants to keep herself to herself.

*Goblin*, it turns out, began her life in London as a neglected child who soon finds herself alone in the world after a bombing raid.

She challenges the preconception that victims of emotional abuse struggle to love by showing immense kindness to animals who've been abandoned. *Goblin's* childhood is set against the backdrop of the pet massacre in London during the Blitz where over 40,000 animals were killed because their owners feared they'd not be able to feed them with food in such short supply.

As I read *Goblin*, I felt that I was looking at a painting as much as reading a book. The way Dundas created the landscapes that *Goblin* found herself in was sublime. From the crypt underneath Kensal Green Cemetery to the fields of England as *Goblin* walks, with her pet – Captain Pig – as she makes her way back

to London after running away from the house that she was evacuated to so that she could escape the bombing of London.

After this part of her life ends, we follow *Goblin* to the circus where she travels the world performing, building a family and forming romantic relationships, and caring for others. She lives, and loves, and always looks for her brother who went to war while she was an evacuee and whom she hasn't seen since.

It feels an intrusive read, because you're reading the memories of a person who is haunted by so many ghosts and just wants to be left alone. It is a compulsive read though, so you continue.

You fall for *Goblin* from the off, and you wait with bated breath to see what her next move is. She is intense, but at times she slows down to an almost stop, taking the reader on a fair ground ride of stop start excitement and trepidation. I invested heavily in *Goblin* as a person, and it made me mourn the loss of her when I got to the final page.

*Goblin* is life-affirming and beautiful, despite some of the horrors of war and

neglect that it depicts. It is exactly the kind of fiction that books were invented for. It's got a touch of the Mary Shelley and a dash of HG Wells, which complements the writing of Dundas magnificently. You need to own a copy of this book, and you should get that copy from a local independent bookshop.

