



The Madonna Lily

A Children's Novel
by Norman King Lloyd

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2. Dogs	5	<i>Julie</i> meets <i>Ben</i> , a small boy from the nearby Council Estate. He tells that <i>Farmer Winstanley's</i> dog has been killed. At home she tells her Dad that she will do some detective work to find out who killed the dog.
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5 Meet the Mud-Spirit	14	<i>Julie</i> apologises to <i>Cado</i> (a boy two years older than her) for not seeing him the previous evening and promises another meeting. Father and daughter arrange to go to see the theatre group soon. Before meeting <i>Cado</i> , <i>Julie</i> has a dream. She meets him in the churchyard and they see a ghoul. After the dream <i>Julie</i> (in her Mother's dress) walks to the sea shore to meet <i>Cado</i> and the <i>Mud Flat Spirit</i> first appears.
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		it is dark. A small misty apparition appears outside and enters the room when it explodes into many stars. <i>Julie</i> picks up the surviving ones.
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END OF PART 1		
1. Return to Mud Flat Land	93	Everyone returns home and <i>Cado</i> often visits <i>Robert</i> to talk about <i>Julie</i> . The policeman (Constable Hales) also visits <i>Robert</i> and they discuss the crime on a logical way and try to understand the psychology of the crime.
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		window of the locked room and finds <i>Julie</i> inside. <i>Julie</i> tells him she has died and he does not believe her and the whole episode is weird and dreamlike and in a daze he is back on the ladder and falls off.
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16. The Wood Again	156	Parting. The <i>Princess</i> (now returned to her frightened anxious state) asks <i>Cado</i> to shoot an arrow at her retreating form and tells him that <i>Julietta</i> will return.
THE END		

Norman King Lloyd

A very basic summary of my Children's Novel: 'The Madonna Lily'

Robert and his daughter **Julie** aged twelve, live in a log cabin on the edge of the Bristol Channel. **Robert** had brought up and educated his daughter since his young wife, **Julietta** was committed to an asylum about twelve years previously. **Julie** longs for her mother and occasionally shows signs of disturbed behaviour. Her fear is that she might go mad like her mother. **Julie** is friendly with a local boy **Cado**, who is two years older than her. **Julie** is determined to do some detective work to solve the recent problems in the village, ie a murdered dog and a missing baby. She is friendly with an old woman called, **Granny**. There is also a rather stupid **Mud Spirit** who grants wishes.

One day, **Julie** and her father have a bad row and **Robert** goes off in a huff leaving **Julie** alone. **Julie** is soon joined by **Granny** and a new friend **Reg** (a sacked actor). Meanwhile, **Robert** reads a letter from his wife informing him that she is on new medication and will leave the hospital shortly and return to him and life in the cabin. This shocks him as he and **Julie** suffered terribly under **Julietta's** illness. **Julie** unbeknown to her father, reads a letter from the hospital informing her father that his wife has escaped and is still a danger to herself and others.

The rest of the novel concerns the various individuals and groups who go looking for **Julietta**. We meet **Katha** a patient at the hospital who claims to know where **Julietta** is hiding. **Robert** visits the hospital and falls in love with **Leah**, the acting Director.

Julie herself suddenly disappears and the various parties turn their attention to finding her instead of **Julietta**. **Cado** in particular is very upset over **Julie's** disappearance. Later **Julietta** is found but disappears again when traveling in a car back to the village with some of the others.

Julie writes a letter to her father explaining her disappearance. **Cado** returning to the village on his bike has a minor accident in a road through the same wood that **Julietta** escaped into and meets a strange girl that has some resemblance to **Julietta**. He takes the girl back to his **Mum and Dad** and later sees her dancing ballet in the front room.

The novel ends with a street party where the girl from the woods does magical things and grants an important wish to **Ben** (**Cado's** baby brother and dying of leukemia). At the end the mysterious girl returns to the woods and hints that when she goes, **Julietta** will reappear.

1. STORMY NIGHT

I counted four seconds from the flash of lightning to the crash of thunder – just under a mile away and getting closer.

To take my mind off the storm, Dad was telling me a story I'd heard many times before. When he told stories he always put on his Australian Bush hat, which oddly enough he only wore indoors.

'... I used to love visiting my aunt's cabin just above the muddy waters of the Channel and when the wind was up, the lanterns hanging from the ceiling used to creak and swing about quite crazily... My aunt Jack said that it was because the spirits who lived on the mudflats were angry.'

'What were they angry about, Dad?'

'Don't know, Widgin. When the wind got up the spirits just went mad.'

'But mud! If the trees were being blown about because of the wind, that would make sense. If I was a tree spirit, twisted this way and that, I'd be angry.'

'You're too old for this story.'

'Sorry... last night you started telling me the stories of invisible ghosts.'

'There used to be nasty old tales in these parts of *things* that bumped into you but you couldn't see.'

'How stupid! The whole point of being a silly ghost is that *they* want you to see them and *scare* you crazy!'

There was another loud clap of thunder and a vicious squall of rain lashed against the cabin. Widgin curled up on the sofa, her favourite cushion clutched against her; her long delicate face drained with fear.

'Perhaps you're just a daughter spirit and don't really exist! Oh, I shouldn't tease. Hey! I'll show you something. Don't go away.'

Upstairs, the storm was even louder. He decided to make a bed up for Widgin on the sofa downstairs and wondered yet again if it was really being responsible bringing up a child in a large, two deck, ramshackle old log cabin. He remembered how nearly fifteen years ago, after his aunt's death he suddenly had the idea of moving her cabin back, bit by bit, to a spot on a slight hill about half-a-mile inland. Everyone said he was crazy and it cost an awful lot of money. The trouble was that his aunt's cabin was on soggy ground almost at the water's edge. But eventually it was done, minus the stilts. It had been a present for his new wife, Julietta. Widgin was born there and had always loved it.

Suddenly there was a loud thump against the side of the cabin. Robert ran downstairs. 'I'm sure it's nothing Widgin but I'll have a look around.'

'It's one of those *invisibles*!'

He pushed open the kitchen door and it slammed behind him. The wind was so strong he had to skirt around doubled up like an animal. The glass frames in the garden were smashed and the trellis for the honeysuckle was looking more than a bit ramshackle; but the winter logs were still resting snugly against the front steps. He had to cup his hands over his eyes as the sand and grit and sand blown off the pathway stung like mad. The outhouse looked safe and the barrels of apples seemed secure. As he straightened himself up to go back into the kitchen, something hard hit him on the back of the neck. He reached down and picked up a large pebble. He doubted that even a strong gust of wind had the power to throw such a stone. Luckily, it was only a glancing blow. The rain was now really heavy; the late seedlings would be destroyed and it was too late to plant again.

Back inside, he used a tea towel to dry himself and called out: 'The ducks are loving it!' The joke was they had no ducks, although he thought Widgin always wanted some.

'Widgin? Fancy a mug of soup? And *what* were *you* doing earlier on to get your clothes so wet? Or is that a secret?'

But Widgin had gone. He climbed the stairs and knocked on the door to her room. No answer. He called out. 'You must be frightened but I think the storm's abating.' He noticed a door ajar at the far end of the landing. It was his wife's room during her last

month's there before being taken away. Widgin was lying face down on the bed, sobbing quietly.

'Oh, pet, I wish I could send the storm away and make everything right again.'

'I don't care about the stupid storm!' she turned on him in fury, twisting her black stretch bracelet round and round on her wrist. 'I want her back! I want Mummy back!'

Then as he gradually calmed her down, she told him to look on top of the wardrobe.

'This?'

'Unwrap the cloth.'

He wondered what musty smelly old thing he would find. It was a lantern from his aunt's old cabin.

'Mummy took it. For you, Dad!'

'She never said anything.'

He realised that his daughter had a secret life and that she still missed the mother that had treated her so cruelly. The sound of creaking lanterns came back to him. As a boy, he used to imagine that he was on board Nelson's ship, 'Victory'. He must have told his wife and she, in the days when they loved each other, must have rescued it. He had tried to save some of his aunt's belongings but it was such a stressful time moving the cabin that he could not watch over everything.

'Let's go down and continue the story.'

He fetched a flannel from the bathroom and wiped her face. 'You were pretty upset last time we got to the scary part.'

'I was only nine!'

He'd almost finished doing the soup and some fresh rolls and butter when Widgin came rushing into the kitchen. 'Its calming down outside, Dad. Definitely.'

Then she sneezed four times. In their *magical book* this was not too bad, not brilliant but quite auspicious. Seven was the best and five was not good at all. 'I'm always lucky with four,' he said. 'I won a lot of money in Australia backing four and seven at the local dog track.'

'Yes, I know and you put money on any dog that wasn't wagging its tail.'

'A happy dog...'

'...is a slow dog. Yes, Dad, so you've said a thousand times.'

They started eating their snack and Robert holding a glass of whisky in a rather unsteady hand, told Widgin about the tales his aunt remembered about people dying on the mudflats. 'My aunt Jack had a strange way of speaking – I mean she made up sentences that were odd and when she stared at you her eyes seemed to change colour. He tried to imitate his aunt's piercing voice: "What is in everyone's minds is that old silliness that you can be sucked under by quicksand's. Tomfoolery plus! The danger, don't you know, is that you will see, especially on a hotty sort of day, miles of harmless sandy mud, but crusted hard. Crusted! So you think, hunky-dory, let's walk on it, and without a care in the world you get bolder and bolder..." Here my aunt brought her face close to mine, her eyes turning from blue to green: "But you see my little Roberty-boy, you are being *lulled* by evil, some call it the mud devil and all the while the sea is coming in..."

Widgin finished his sentence... 'and the in-tide is slowly slipping in, like a snake underneath the crust of sand and you don't know it until suddenly the crust breaks and you are stranded in the middle of nowhere mud, already up to your knee-caps... and terrible gurgling sounds come from underneath your feet... a long way from help...'

'A slight exaggeration, perhaps. But enough, it's not the night for one of aunt Jack's tales.'

Widgin started to read and he half dozed off. Someone had definitely thrown that stone at him. The obvious culprit was Farmer Winstanley, who for some reason that he had never worked out, hated him. In this part of the Channel there were not many tourists and then there was the wind. But Winstanley was used to being out in all weathers. Who else hated him? His wife, Julietta? But she hated the wet on account of it mucking up her hair, or shoes, or jacket, or dress... the list of complaints were

endless and of course she had been, for many years, securely locked up 100 miles away.

2. DOGS

'Bob the Dog's a dead'n!'

I was confronted by little, shrilly Ben, a *dapper* from the Council Estate. And what a morning! There was destruction everywhere and poor Dad was just pottering about not really knowing what to do. I sometimes meet Ben for a walk along the ridge of rock just above the narrow ribbon of sand that was our beach.

'He shouldn't have been allowed out at all in the storm.'

'Tis Bob couldn't be stopped.' Ben gave a yelp like Bob did when he was upset. 'Farmer Winstanley's going off his luddy pole.'

'He loved his dog so,' I said, sitting down.

Ben was collecting pebbles and called back: 'Bob the dog was done in!'

'How d'you mean?' Little Ben often exaggerated.

'Ear to ear!'

'You mean... Bob was murdered?'

But Ben was chasing a Parakeet. We get all manner of strange birds in these parts.

It was a beautiful morning, calm and sunny. I was feeling angry with myself for letting Dad see me upset last night. All that fuss about my mother! As if I cared! I needed something to take my mind off things. 'Ben? Your brother – does he talk about me at all?'

'All the time. Everyone's fed up's with him being so lovesicky.'

'Can you give him a message? It's important you don't get it mixed up.'

Ben nodded, taking a sweet out of my pocket.

'Well, say to him... that's your brother, Cado... say that I need to see him *urgently* and won't take no for an answer. I'll meet him in the normal spot by the church at about eight o'clock tonight.'

After Ben had left, I walked aimlessly around, went as far as the Motorway bridge then went back to the local shop and bought some pies.

Dad was somewhat recovered and was cleaning the lantern I'd found, but he seemed nervous and said that it might be a good idea if we got a dog. This really surprised me as he didn't like dogs much at all.

As I popped the pies in the oven, I called back: 'Dogs die. Loved one's go away.'

'I'm just thinking that we're a bit isolated here... it's just a thought. This afternoon, I'll try putting in seed again but I think it's too late in the year.'

'Did Mummy help you with planting, Dad?' I could have bitten my tongue off. I hated it when I asked about her. He looked shocked. Then there was a knock on the door.

It was Farmer Winstanley. 'Just about to eat are you? Can't do normal proprieties. You heard 'bout Bob, then?'

Dad said that no, he had not heard anything about his barmy Bob.

'Done in!'

Dad laughed, rudely. 'Some public spirited soul *wackum*, then?'

To stop any row, I joined in with: 'Dad...poor Bob really is dead!'

'Oh, I knew you heard the news, Julie. You know most things goin' on round here. I see you coloured your hair, again. Very fetching, makes you look quite grown up. What colour do you call it?'

'Copper-red.'

‘Well, I’d better get back. I’m not accusing anyone but I got my suspicions. We’ve had our differences, Robert, but I do see that you’re innocent. I’d like you to keep ears and eyes open.’

As we were eating our pies I could see that Dad was out of sorts. I couldn’t fathom why, especially as Farmer had been very polite to Dad. I was surprised he had even bothered to visit us.

‘Some people say he always took a bath with his dog.’

Dad laughed. ‘Imagine that. But he loved the mangy mutt. Worrying though, him being so nice to me. And what did he mean by saying: “I do see you’re innocent.” How does he know I’m innocent?’

‘I could find out who did it, Dad.’

‘No, you don’t pet. Best leave well alone.’

I could not understand how Dad had suddenly become so cheerful again. ‘I got to be off to my class, then.’

‘Do you want a lift?’

Now he was being helpful just like the farmer. Something was definitely going on.

‘And no playing: *Little Miss Detective!* Promise? Remember how it got you into trouble last year.’

I pumped up the front tyre on my bike. I had a slow puncture but it usually lasted me a couple of days. Down the lane with the two barns, I waved to the schoolteacher. I knew Dad fancied her and she was all right but a bit skinny and dowdy. I asked myself for the hundredth time: Did I want him to marry, again? Then I thought of the awful memories of when Mum went crazy. Of course, I was not much more than an infant so it was all a bit of a bad dream. A van driver shouted something at me as he whooshed by. My fault, I was wobbling about, not concentrating. It was five o’clock when I padlocked my bike and opened the gate of a small bungalow. On the small piece of unkempt lawn, garden gnomes faced North, South, East and West. I could swear the gnomes had moved since my last visit. I glanced around – the chances of

someone seeing me were small. The bungalow was at least two miles from the village. My secret was still safe. The door opened and a dog ran out to greet me.

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3. SCARECROW

What with the upsets of yesterday, Robert needed to get on with his work. When a few years back, he'd told Widgin that he'd been made redundant, she came up with the idea, that because he knew so much about certain famous artists, he should write a book of *imaginary* conversations between them; but using modern technology. They would contact one another by letter, phone, e-mail - even a bit of texting. So, he wrote out on slips of paper the names of every writer, composer, painter, philosopher, he felt sympathy with – and more importantly *knew* something about. In fact, Widgin helped him write the names. He came up with seventeen altogether. He told Widgin to round it up to twenty with her own names. She could come up with anybody she liked. He half suspected that he would get three detective writers. So they eventually popped the twenty names into Aunt Jack's urn (his wife, in a fit of temper had long ago emptied the contents - over the rhubarb, to be precise) and gave it a good shake.

Well, he let Widgin turn it upside down and empty the bits of paper out. They had decided that the two winners would be the bits of paper that landed nearest Widgin's big toe. He picked one up. '*Tchaikovsky*,' and told her that he was a famous Russian composer who had written the music to three great ballets. 'Oh, you mean that silly old 'Swan Lake,' she had said, rather dismissively. Then Widgin read from her scrap: '*Van Gogh*.' 'One's a man who has silly little swans dancing about and the other was crazy and cut off his nose!'

'Ear!' he shouted at her. 'There's a lot of difference between an ear and a nose.'

How proud Julietta would be of their daughter. He suddenly felt an intense longing for his absent wife. So much so that he needed to get some air and decided to walk to the inlet. He waved to little Ben as he passed St Mary's – Ben was limping quite badly, the rumour was that he had some awful blood disease. When he reached the water there were no fisherman about. Where they lived could be a depressing place, especially when it was dark and cloudy. He remembered Julietta's constant refrain: 'Everyday, I'm getting older and uglier stuck in this damp, God-forsaken dump. Don't you understand: I'm not *seen*! I'm not seen by *anybody*!'

But something unsettling happened that afternoon as he walked along the narrow strip of sand towards the motorway bridge. About a hundred yards from the bridge, he was startled to see a scarecrow. Now he had done this walk often enough and

knew every field and ditch and had never seen a scarecrow here before. As he got closer, he was aware that there were more birds about than usual. He didn't know why he looked around just at that moment but he did... and saw a movement like someone ducking down behind a hedge. He called out but there was no answer. He was now close to the scarecrow – it was wearing a woman's fur coat and he reached out to touch it... as he did so there was a horrible wailing sound of someone in pain. The fur coat was pretty mangy – how long it has been on the scarecrow he had no idea. Then without thinking he put my hand in one of its pockets and felt something firm. It was a mobile phone, rather large and heavy, like they were ten years back. It looked slightly familiar. In the other pocket were several large pebbles. Robert put the phone in his pocket and walked briskly back to the cabin.

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4. GRANNY

I can't help it but I always shout at old people. But as far as I knew Granny was not deaf.

'Why would anyone want to kill Bob the Dog? He was not a particularly nice dog and has been known to attack strangers. On the farm he enjoyed himself catching rats.' But the dog I was stroking now was quite different. Beth was an ex greyhound racer and very affectionate.

'Julie, what do you want to do when you grow up?' My secret friend brought the lemonade and cakes in from the kitchen.

'I keep changing my mind. One day, it's to be a female detective, then another day I'll say I'm really really cut out for something to do with animals... and another time I believe I'd make a great dancer, then who knows... maybe I'll do something creative like Dad does...'

'I'd strongly advise against that! Why don't you go up to London and seek your fortune. Marry a man with money. Perhaps you could try modelling.

'I'm tall even now! So goodness knows what sort of beanpole I'll be by twenty. And there's my limp.'

'We'll you'll be a very attractive bean-pole!'

'Ha, ha.'

'What do you want to know, Julie?'

'Has the farmer's dog ever been attacked before?'

'Not that I'm aware. Strange question.'

'Any strangers hanging about lately?'

'Oh, there was one... he was supposed to be a King.'

'Don't follow.'

'He was acting in a play.'

'I think the dog's only the start of something. Something bad.'

'Oh, do you think Beth's safe?'

'The danger is not to another dog.'

On the walk home, I felt worse and worse. I had left the bungalow in a hurry because I suddenly thought of something terrible. I used to love walking below the row of trees just past Sandy Lane but today the trees seemed oppressive. The pain of being alone took over completely. Everyone has someone. A mother, an aunt, a girl cousin or sister and I had no one, apart from Dad. Also, Dad taught me from home so I did not mix with girls my own age. Not that I wanted to really, they were all so flappy and ignorant.

I leant against a gate and watched a horse chomping away at the grass. For a moment, I hated that peaceful contented horse. I wished it would drop down dead. I concentrated like mad that its legs would give way and that the animal would collapse, writhing in agony. I imagined its final moments... a pathetic last raising of its head and as I stood over it, the poor beast seemed to look me full in the eyes. Even now, imaging the scene my skin felt flushed and tingly. What was wrong with me? Would the same thing happen to me as my mother? Would I go crazy, batty, bananas, mental, right peculiar? I despised her for ruining us as a family but I missed her more and more. Then I realised I had left my bike behind. That was too much. I burst into tears.

Dad waved to me as he crossed the field at the back of the cabin. But by then, I had recovered.

As we ate, I told him: 'There's a theatre group performing in the town and some are accommodated in this village. They could be suspects... and why was Bob the Dog out and about at all in the awful weather.'

Dad covered my hand with his large hand. 'Widgin! Do give it a rest. Nothing good will come of this prying.'

‘But don’t you see, I’m not worried about the dog but where it might lead. And what do you think of people who have gnomes in their garden.’

‘I’d say they were a bit constipated in the head.’

At that moment, just as he handed me some prunes and custard, there was a whiney sound then an explosion in the distance.

‘It’s a while yet to Guy Fawkes. Now Widgin pet, your ‘homework’ if you please.’

Funny thing is that I did everything I could to avoid it – I think that’s why I started the silly talk about the dog – but once I was sitting down with my books in front of me, I enjoyed myself. Later Dad came up and looked at what I was doing. Why that poem, ‘Goblin Market’? he asked. ‘Because it’s frightening and wonderful all at the same time. It sort of *skips* along!’

‘You’re not as tough as Julietta,’ he said out of the blue. ‘I love you and am so proud of you considering the past. There’s no girl quite like you in the whole wide world...’ he started looking uncomfortable: ‘But... don’t live too much in your head.’

Later, as I woke up just after midnight and I usually wake at this time and go straight back to sleep again – but this time I was wide awake. For the first time in my life, I felt as if the village, the fields, the mud, the sea and sky, the shrieking birds, the people I knew – they were all suffocating me, trying to get into my brain. I willed myself to concentrate on my breathing and the feeling gradually passed. Then I laughed out loud. I had completely forgotten about Cado and meeting with him in the churchyard. That would make him even more ogling. After this I went back into a proper sleep and as I came too in the early morning, Dad was standing by the bed, breakfast tray in hand. He does not often do this now. I could not have wished for a kinder father; but I saw his weaknesses as well.

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