

Pure Deid Brilliant

by Betty Hammond

See ma uncle Archie ...pure, deid brilliant so he is. You widnae think to look at him he wis a hero. He's a wee thin man wi' a limp. Me an' ma pals used tae follow behind him, an' when he wisnae lookin', we'd hop about copyin' his limp.

Wan day ma Da saw us an' that night he says tae me, 'Look son ah think it's time ah telt you sumthin' ...but mind it's a secret ...can you keep a secret?' Ah said aye, cos I'm good at keeping secrets. I'm only tellin' you, oh an ah hud tae tell ma mates, they hud tae know why we wurnae gonnae follow ma uncle any mair.

Well, anyhow, ma Da says forget a' that rubbish you've heard frae your Ma about Erchie's bad leg. A' that about him huvin' wan leg shorter than the other cos he'd hid a disease in his bone when he wis wee. Ah'll tell you the real reason, it's time you kent whit kind o' man your uncle really is.

Wan day he wis doon at the Cunyan, you ken where I mean, where the railway line runs. He wis walkin' yon whippet he used tae huv, whistlin' away and throwin' sticks fur the dug when he hears a train whistle. Hoddin' oan tae the dug he looks doon the track an' sees a wummin, two weans an' a pram tryin' tae cross the line. The wummin wis shoutin' and bawlin' an' pushin' away at the pram. Your Uncle Erchie saw in a flash whit wis wrang ...the pram wheels had goat stuck in the track. There wis nae time tae run tae the wummin, the train wis roarin' doon heidin' straight fur them. Quick as a flash Erchie jumped oan tae the track, hoddin' his erms oot like this, wavin' and shoutin'.

The engine driver saw him, said afterwards it wis a miracle a real miracle, and slammed oan his brakes. The hissinn' and screamin' oan the line wis somethin' awful tae hear.

The train screeched tae a halt but no soon enough tae miss your uncle. Wan leg wis caught by the front guard o' the train an' got a' manglet up.

There wis a right cairry oan. The polis came, the ambulance came an' he wis cairtet aff tae the hospital. They managed tae save his leg tho' it looks like a railway line noo, a' criss crossed wi scars. An' that son is how your uncle Erchie goat his limp.

Noo mind, nae shootin' your mooth aff about this, Erchie's a quiet kinda man an' it wid embarrass him tae hear a' this brote up again, but jist you remember, next time you see him, he's no' jist a wee man wi' a limp. He's a bloody hero.

Ah noddit, well impressed an' turnt away when he pit his haun oan ma shooder. Jist wan mair thing Jamesie, he says, there's lots o' folk oot there that huv bad legs, bad backs, short erms, seem different, know whit ah mean? But who knows, maybe at sometime in their lives they did somethin' really courageous an' never thot about themsells. Never know wi' folk son ...never know!

Ma Da's great at explainin' things, made me really proud tae huv somebody as brave as ma uncle Erchie in the family.

So, see no, see when ma pals are goin' oan at it wi "Ma Da can dae this an ma Da can dae that." Ah jis staun up, quiet like, an' say, "An ma Uncle Erchie."