

## The Night Fairy

That morning they awoke to snow. It stretched for miles, in a wash of white. Charlie and Lawrence crowded the windowsill and stared out.

Half an hour later, they were trudging up the lane to get a loaf of bread from the corner shop. It was so cold that the hand railing was covered in a thin layer of ice. Their boots crunched as they walked. Inside the shop, the warmth and heavenly smells of the bakery hugged them closely, banishing the cold. Clutching the loaf of bread, they wound their way back down the hill, careful not to slip. It was just as they got to the door of Codger's Barn that they heard it. The soft mewling sound seemed to scream in the silence of the snow. Charlie and Lawrence both stopped. Still.

Peering in through the wooden slats, they could just make out huge stacks of straw bales, rusted iron water butts and an ancient tractor whose headlamps seemed to glare suspiciously at them. They crept forward to the straw bales, guided by the desperate, weak cries.

Then they saw it. The night fairy. Curled in a ball, quite still, it could have been dead except for the occasional flutter of its delicate wings and the faint sound of sorrowful wailing. It turned and looked at them with glistening turquoise eyes that begged them to help.

Picking it up gently between finger and thumb, Charlie nestled the tiny creature in the palm of his hand. A minute later, the two boys were making their way back down the lane as fast as they could, skidding and giggling in excitement. When they reached home, they found an old pipette in Dad's bits and bobs box and drop-by-drop they fed it sweet honey water. With every miniscule mouthful the night fairy seemed to revive until, after a few minutes, it stood up and they could see it properly for the first time. As it unfurled its tiny transparent wings, they caught sight of nut-brown skin, hair as black as the velvety night sky and thin but muscular limbs.

It glanced at them, then turned and waved the short wooden wand in its hand. To their amazement, shimmering, wispy words appeared as the wand swept back and forth ...

*Those who find the night fairy shall join with him as fellow warriors.*

In the slightest of seconds, both boys found stout wands in their hands, carved with the word WARRIOR. They stared at one another, knowing that their lives would never be the same again.