



WILDSMITH

MAGICAL MOUNTAIN RESCUE





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‘A lush, rich, page-turning adventure from
one of the most versatile writers we have.

There’s no genre Liz can’t write in.’

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cast her storytelling spell with utter charm and
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I can’t wait for the next adventure!’

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kind of magic – I want to be a wildsmith!'

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characters – brimming with magic and wonder,
yet wonderfully warm and familiar. The lush
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animations of Studio Ghibli.'

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'Sneak inside the wonderful world of the wildsmith,
and take a peek at the secrets and magic that lay
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This is a fantastic first chapter book which will delight
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*This book is about friends old and new, so it's for those
dear friends I've known since school – Sian, Helen,
Jennie, Angela, Kirsty – with lots of love*





CHAPTER ONE



ROWAN WAS DREAMING.

She was lost in a blizzard, scared and alone. A horse came thundering towards her through the trees; huge, fast and terrifying. She couldn't see the rider's face, but she heard their words.

'The prince has been kidnapped. The Estrians did it! You were wrong about them. You were wrong about everything!'

Rowan woke in the early morning, gasping, her heart pounding. She rushed downstairs to get a drink





of water. Then she stood at the kitchen window of Grandpa's house in the Dark Forest.

The snow had stopped. The world outside was dazzling white: the sky, trees and stable roofs. Even when she closed her eyes, she could tell how deep the snow was. Everything sounded different. Noise was quieter, softer, more muffled.

Rowan felt different too – sad and worried, as if everything good was hidden beneath a blanket of snow.

Something furry nuzzled her hand, then licked it.

'Thanks, Arto,' she said, stroking the white wolf's domed head. She felt comforted by his warm weight leaning against her. 'You're right,' she whispered. 'I don't want to leave either. I've only just got home.'

She'd arrived back in Gallren the previous evening, after a long and dangerous journey. Last night, everything had been perfect – the midwinter feast with her parents and Grandpa. And then the messenger had arrived from Queen Silvana, with terrible news.

Prince David had been kidnapped. Now Rowan's dad was needed, back in the city of Holderby.





‘Morning, love.’ Rowan’s mother padded into the kitchen, yawning, and came to stand with her arm round her daughter, gazing out at the wintry forest. ‘Are you sure you want to go with your father?’ she asked gently.

‘I have to,’ Rowan said. ‘It’s not what I want, but I must.’ She knew Prince David: they’d played together in the palace gardens. What a long time ago that



seemed now! Still, she knew she had to help bring him home again.

‘Then we’ll all go,’ Mum said.

Rowan spun round. ‘Really?’

She’d been dreading saying goodbye to Mum and Grandpa. But then her relief was chased away by new worries. Would it be dangerous? What if someone got hurt?

‘Hurry, though,’ Mum said. ‘There’s lots to do, if we’re to get there today.’

For a while, there was no time for worrying. They rushed around, grabbing a quick breakfast, then putting on their warmest things – layers of woollen clothes, thick socks and boots – everyone trying to find their winter coats or cloaks, hats and gloves.

‘At least you’ll be warm, with your thick fur,’ Rowan panted to Arto, feeling overdressed in all her layers before they left the house. ‘But how will I see you against the snow? Stay close, won’t you?’

Arto yipped and licked her cheek.

First they went to their neighbours’ farm, where





Rowan's friends Cam and Will lived. Will opened the door, his large spotted cat, Sable, curling her tail round his knees.

He looked tired, and Rowan wondered if he'd stayed up all night telling his family about their adventures in Estria. She hoped he'd told them how brave he'd been. Yes, Will had betrayed Rowan once, but he'd also rescued her. She counted him as a true friend now.

Cam nudged her brother aside and hugged Rowan, her long dark hair flowing down her back.

'Morning!' she said. 'You're early. We were going to come and find you after breakfast and show Leo the forest.' Cam led Rowan into the warmth.

Rowan saw the table with its pile of bread rolls and a dish of eggs, Will and Cam's parents drinking coffee and waving hello.

'After that, we can go to Appledore,' Cam was saying, 'and have some spiced apple juice and biscuits, and then we can—'

'No, Cam. Stop.' Rowan hated to bring bad news, knowing she was about to wipe away all their smiles.





Her gaze moved past Cam and landed on Leo, her friend from Estria.

With his light-brown eyes and curly brown hair, Leo looked just like his mother, Elena Ravenwood. Elena was the brand new leader of Estria. She had finally taken charge of her country, with help from Leo, Will, Rowan, Isla the selkie and Leaf the green dragon.

‘What’s wrong?’ Leo asked.

Rowan took a deep breath. She couldn’t protect him from the news. What she was about to tell him might change both of their lives for ever.



CHAPTER TWO



OWAN LOOKED STEADILY AT HER ESTRIAN friend, Leo.

‘A messenger came last night,’ she began.

She’d wanted to come and tell him immediately, but her parents had persuaded her to wait till morning while they questioned the messenger for the full story.

‘The prince of Gallren, Prince David, has been kidnapped,’ she explained. ‘The queen thinks the Estrian leaders are responsible.’ Rowan heard the others gasp at her words.





‘Not my mum. She would never do that!’ Leo sounded shocked and hurt.

‘I know,’ Rowan told him quickly. ‘So I’m going to Holderby, with my family, right now, to tell the queen the truth.’ She gestured at the open doorway, where her family still waited. ‘I know your mum. I know Elena couldn’t have done this.’

‘Let me come too!’ Leo burst out.

‘No, Leo. It would be dangerous for any Estrian, but especially for you. Don’t you see?’ Rowan told him. ‘If you go straight home, you can still be safe.’

The children had travelled here with a man called





Johannes. Leo's mum had told them that he worked in the stables, but Rowan had seen his hidden weapons and thought Johannes was really a soldier. He spoke up now.

'Come, Leo, we must hurry. I need to get you home to your mother and tell her what's happened.' Johannes stood swiftly.

'No.' Leo's bottom lip stuck out stubbornly. His face showed a mixture of fear and determination. 'You tell her. I'm going with Rowan. Don't you see?' he said, repeating Rowan's words back to her.

Hearing that Rowan had shared the news, the rest of her family came inside now to join them all.

'If I go too and talk to their queen, Silvana, it will prove it's not my mum who did this. It doesn't make sense for me to walk into your city, if we are enemies.' Leo spoke urgently, his hands flying around.

'That's why I'll do it. To prove we are friends. Mum would want me to do the right thing.' He waited a moment. 'I know her better than you!'

There was silence in the crowded kitchen.





‘The boy has a point,’ Grandpa said at last.

He was tall, with thick white hair, a snowy beard and sparkling brown eyes. People listened when Wildsmith Webster spoke.

Rowan quickly introduced everyone who hadn’t met before.

‘Leo’s got courage, all right,’ Grandpa went on. ‘And it will take all our efforts to get both sides to listen. We don’t want them to rush back to war. If Leo wants to come with us, we’ll look after him, I promise,’ he told Johannes. ‘And in return, will you ask Elena to be patient and wait for more news?’

‘Are you sure, Leo?’ Johannes asked.

Leo had folded his arms across his chest, looking more determined than ever. ‘I’m certain.’

The Estrian man let out a long sigh and said, ‘All right, Leo, if you insist. Only sit down and write me a note for your mother, so she knows this is your choice, not mine. And not theirs.’

Johannes went to get his things, and left soon after with Leo’s note.





After another round of talking and planning, it was decided. Rowan and Leo would ride the horses which had brought them from Estria. Her parents borrowed two more from Will and Cam's parents. Grandpa was on Star, his black horse.

Soon they were all saddled up and ready, the horses shifting restlessly as they waited in the farmyard.

'Good luck!' Cam hugged Rowan.

'I wish I was coming too,' Will said quietly, 'but I've been away so long . . .' His gaze slid away to his family.

Rowan could see the way his parents were watching him. They'd only just got Will back. 'No, Will. Your place is here,' Rowan said.

Then the five riders were setting off in the snowy morning: Rowan, her parents, Grandpa and Leo. Arto circled ahead, keeping watch, almost invisible against the snow.

It was a long day of riding, the air bitterly cold, though the snow turned slushy and damp as they got near Holderby. Rowan noticed that Leo grew quieter and quieter as they rode. She and her mum took it in





turns to ask him questions about Estria, till they'd run out of ideas.

Then they rode in silence.

The walls of the city looked tall, grey and forbidding as they approached. This was Rowan's home, the city she'd missed so desperately all last year. But when she looked at Holderby now, it seemed unwelcoming and unfamiliar. A place of danger and risk.