

Shadows of Winterspell

Praise for Amy Wilson:

‘A story of wild winds and bitter frosts with the warmth of friendship at its heart’ Abi Elphinstone, author of *Sky Song* on *A Girl Called Owl*

‘A sparkling, frosty read, full of feisty characters, myth and mystery’ *Daily Mail* on *A Girl Called Owl*

‘Original and compelling . . . an unexpected tale of grief, magic and monsters’ Kiran Millwood Hargrave, author of *The Girl of Ink and Stars* on *A Faraway Magic*

‘Wilson is such an exciting author . . . her stories blend the real and the fantastical with seamless fluency, and her writing has a stunning lyrical and emotional quality which brings extra depth and resonance to the action’ *Lancashire Evening Post* on *A Faraway Magic*

‘Amy Wilson is the rising star of children’s fantasy . . . her prose, like the star-studded landscape, never loses its shine’ *Telegraph*, Best Children’s Books of 2018, on *Snowglobe*

‘I don’t know what Amy Wilson has running through her veins as she writes but I think it might really be magic – *Snowglobe* is one of the most purely original and imaginative children’s books I have read this year. Literally spellbinding’ Piers Torday, author of *The Last Wild* trilogy on *Snowglobe*

Also by Amy Wilson

A Girl Called Owl

A Far Away Magic

Snowglobe

AMY WILSON

Shadows of Winterspell



Illustrated by Helen Crawford-White

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For Aviva



Daybreak

In the moment of dawn, the song of the centauride: a full-blown horn that rolls over misted grass. The forest is new, the first reaches of sunlight barely caught in the beads of dew that hang from every leaf and every blade. The centauride is down upon her knees in the deepest glen, still dark, and she pounds her fists against the ground to wake the trees, who wake the birds, who wake the world. Morning does not come easy; it does not come free. It comes with a fight – especially in the forests where the moon and her children like to dwell.



1

‘Estelle!’

‘Yes, Nan?’ I try to sound calm, but her voice often sends a little wire of shock through me. She has a knack for catching me just when I’m doing something I know she wouldn’t approve of, like using ancient words of magic to make strawberries come in October. I pull a dishcloth over their growing red hearts and turn from the sink as she billows out through the fireplace and swirls in front of me, slowly gathering into her usual shape.

‘This house is a mess. When was the last time you dusted?’ she asks, brushing at the front of her dress. ‘The whole place needs a thorough going-over.’

‘I think it’s OK,’ I say, looking around, fingering the silver acorn at my neck. I mean, it’s a bit cluttered, and actually I really can’t remember the last time I dusted, but I don’t mind, and I’m the one *living* here, after all:

3

Nan's a ghost, and my parents are only distant memories.

Nan was the one who brought me up – with books and gardening, with forest explorations, and adventures through the trees. We spent so many days on the outskirts of the forest, watching the creatures from afar, while she told me their secret ways and warned me never to go beyond our well-trodden paths without her. We tended our orchard and played hopscotch on the crumbling patio by the back door. She made jam sandwiches and told me tricky tales of fae children and enchanted treasures, of goblins and of the palace locked deep in Winterspell Forest, lost to all, and she taught me how to look after our home. Nan is pretty awesome, but she's been a ghost since before I was born, and it's hard for her to do much these days.

When I was younger, she was a little more solid; she could cook, and she could hold me. But as I got older, she got thinner, and now she mainly hovers over me, making sure I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing: keeping the herb garden going, harvesting the vegetables, making the jam with the damsons and gooseberries, feeding the chickens. Oh, and learning the old spells that keep us safe here, hidden between the realms of fae and humanity.

She says we belong with neither, not while the Shadow King reigns in Winterspell.

‘How’s the spell-work coming?’ she asks now, hovering over the kitchen table, where the books are heaped in a pile. ‘Oh, darling, you should look after these better – some of them are centuries old! Irreplaceable!’

‘I know,’ I say, shoving them to one side, away from the breakfast honey spill. ‘I am doing my best. But it’s lonely.’ There’s a long silence. Her grey eyes stare into mine, unblinking. ‘So I wondered if you’d had the chance to think about, um, if it would be OK if I . . . you know . . .’ I pull out one of the chairs and drop into it, putting my chin in my hands and staring at Nan, making my eyes as wide as they can go.

‘Oh no you don’t,’ she says with a firm shake of her head, coalescing into the chair opposite mine. ‘That trick won’t work on me, my dear. The answer is no.’

‘Please, Nan.’ My eyes start to prickle.

‘It’s just not a good idea, Stella,’ she says. ‘I’m sorry, but don’t you have enough on your plate with looking after this place and your lessons?’

She smiles, but it doesn’t reach her eyes – she’s afraid for me. We don’t go far from the house any more. The forest is forbidden now that she’s weaker, and we hide

as much as we can from the real world too. I get it – or at least part of it. The world of magic is not a sparkly love-fest; it's a dark, fickle wilderness. And we know that better than most. Nan's taught me the spells to keep our house protected from the fae, and we have a whole library full of texts on fae and magic, so it is a fairly full-time job, keeping the boundary live and looking after everything else.

But I'm lonely, and I'm tired of hiding. The chores keep me busy, and books keep me company, but it isn't enough. I need people. Friends. The feeling keeps growing, no matter what I do. And so that's at the crux of the campaign I've been waging for the last few weeks. Since I'll never be welcome in the world of the fae, I've decided – I need to be part of the human world. I need human friends.

I want to go to school.