

Riding the Storm

Susan Holliday



The fairy tale is like a good angel, given us at birth to go with us from our home to our earthly path through life, to be our trusted comrade throughout the journey and to give us angelic companionship, so that our life itself can become a truly heart- and soul-enlivened fairy tale.

Ludwig Laistner (1848-1896)

Preface: A story

THE LADY OF LLYN Y FAN FACH

Many years ago, some people say in the twelfth century, there lived a poor widow, near Llanddeusant, in Carmarthenshire. She had an only son who was well built and good looking. Every day he drove his mother's cows up the side of the Black Mountain, to graze. One day he came to the edge of a deep lake called Llyn y Fan Fach. Imagine his surprise when he saw a beautiful young girl standing on the calm surface of the water. She was singing softly to herself and arranging her golden, curling locks. Shyly he held out a piece of his barley bread, hoping that she would take it from him. She came to the edge of the lake but no further, saying as she came:

*Cras dy fara
Nid hawdd fy nala!*
(Hard baked is thy bread,
Hard it is to catch me!)

With these words she dived away out of sight.

The young man was instantly overcome with love for her. That night when he had brought his cattle safely home and he was sitting by the fireside with his mother, he told her all about the beautiful young girl.

‘She must be one of the *Tylwyth Teg* (the fairies), my boy,’ said his mother. ‘Take with you some unbaked dough tomorrow and see if that will tempt her.’

Early on the following morning her son once more drove the cows up to the lake. All day long he waited but the young girl did not appear. However, just as he was giving up all hope, one of the cows strayed rather too close to the edge. It slipped into some soft mud and fell. The young man rushed to help the cow, and as he did so, the beautiful young girl once more rose out of the lake. With shining eyes he held out his bread, unbaked this time. But again she refused it, saying:

Llaith dy fara
Ti ni fynna!
(Too moist is thy bread,
I will not come to thee!)

With these words she plunged back into the lake.

Early next morning the cowherd went back to the lake once more, this time bringing bread that was neither too moist nor too hard. The young girl appeared again and she seemed to be very pleased with the moderately baked bread. There and then she took it and agreed to be his wife.

‘Before we are married there is one thing I must tell you,’ she said. ‘You must never on any account whatsoever strike me three blows without cause. If you do I shall go and never return.’

She plunged back into the waters and within a few minutes, a grey-bearded old man arose from the lake. With him were his three daughters who were all exactly alike!

‘These are my daughters,’ he said. ‘If you can pick out the one you asked to be your wife, then you shall have her.’

The young man was puzzled. He really couldn’t tell one daughter from the other. Then he remembered his lover had worn fine, laced sandals so he looked down at their feet. To his joy one of the girls was wearing sandals while the others were barefoot! What was more, the one with the sandals thrust out one of her feet as if to catch his attention.

‘That is the girl I want to marry,’ he said.

‘You’ve made the right guess,’ said the old man, ‘Take her, and with her I will give you plenty of cattle so you will never want for anything. But remember this: never strike her without cause. If you strike her three times for nothing, on the third time she will leave you.’

As the young couple went down the slope of the hill they were followed by herds of

cattle who came out of the lake and walked five by five.

For a long time all went well. Then one day the young couple were invited to attend a christening, some distance away. The husband fetched a horse so they could ride, and as he helped his wife on to the horse's back, he tapped her with his glove, playfully on her shoulder, crying out, '*Dere! Brysia!*' which means 'Hurry.' She gazed at him with sadness in her eyes. That was the first of the three blows!

As time passed three sons were born to them. They were very handsome and very clever too. The eldest who was the most handsome and the most clever was called Rhiwallon.

One day the man and his wife went to a wedding. While everyone was celebrating the wife began to cry loudly. Her husband tapped her gently on the shoulder and said: 'Why are you crying?'

'That is the second time you have given me a blow without cause,' she sighed. 'The third time, remember, I shall leave you.'

Her husband felt very cross with himself for having been so thoughtless, but as time wore on, he almost forgot about it.

Then one day, years afterwards, he and his wife were present at a funeral in the

house of another neighbour. Without a word of warning, his wife burst out laughing. ‘Why do you laugh when everyone else is crying?’ asked her husband. But she didn’t stop laughing so he patted her on the shoulder, and asked her again what was the matter.

This was the third blow! ‘When people die they leave their troubles behind,’ said his wife, ‘and so do I.’

As suddenly as she had entered his life, she left him. She chanted the following rhyme so that her cows would follow her:

*Brindled cow, white speckled,
Spotted cow, bold freckled,
with the White Bull
From the court of the King,
And the little black calf
That is hanging on the hook,
Come thou also, quite well home!*

And the little black calf that *had* just been killed, and was hanging from a hook, became alive and well and followed the rest of the herd. They went back into the waters of Llyn y Fan Fach and disappeared, never to be seen again.

They say the husband died soon afterwards of a broken heart. As for the sons, they used to walk by night round the edge of the lake in

the hope of seeing their mother again. One night she appeared to them near what is now called Llidiad-y-Meddygon, the Doctors' Gate. She told her eldest son Rhiwallon that he and his brothers must learn how to heal the sick. Later on, she appeared again, this time at Pant-y-Meddygon, the Doctors' Dingle, and showed her sons plants and herbs that were well-known for their powers of healing. Rhiwallon and his brothers became renowned physicians and their fame spread through the length and breadth of the land. The graves of the Physicians of Myddfai can still be seen in the little churchyard in the village of Myddfai that nestles at the foot of the Black Mountain.

Chapter One

WAKING UP

At first Alun didn't know who he was. He struggled up from some dark prison, deaf, blind, bars over his legs and ankles. Then he heard muffled sounds and a sharp anxious voice he recognised. It was Mam's voice pulling him up and up as if its sharpness cut cords and sent him floating above the prison. 'Alun, Alun, I can't wait much longer!'

He opened his eyes and knew immediately he was Alun Roberts. But he didn't know where he was or why he was there. Mam smiled and he felt happy, because for some reason he had been expecting her to frown. She stood beside his bed, holding her handbag tightly, upright in her close-fitting black dress. Her hair was fairer than he expected, her mouth thinner.

'I just had to make sure you were . . .' She paused. 'You look a right sight with all those bandages and no hair to speak of and so pale. But at least your eyes are open and that's the main thing. Tony will be in next. Before I go, is there anything you want?'

He watched her move to the end of the bed. His steel padlock floated into his mind, his little key. At least he remembered they were safe in his bedroom in the second drawer

down, under the tee-shirts they had bought at the car rally in Cardiff. His secret drawer.

Where did it come from, this sudden clear flash of memory? Mostly he remembered nothing.

His voice came out in a whisper: 'My padlock.'

Mam nodded. 'I'll tell Tony to bring it in. It's all that's left, I can tell you that.'

What did she mean, *all*? He struggled to remember, but she was going, and he couldn't find words.

'I must get going,' she said stiffly, waving goodbye.

He shut his eyes again and felt he was drifting back to the prison, where pain tapped like a stick in the dark.

'Don't go to sleep,' said a cheerful voice.

The young boy in the next bed was holding out a doughnut.

'For tea. Don't you want any?' His friendly voice cut away more of the mystery. 'The food's good in this hospital.'

Alun lifted his head. It felt heavy. A bandage stopped just above his eyes. His right arm was in a sling. His legs were held down by weights. His voice scraped like an old man's.

'How long have I been here?'

The boy shrugged his shoulders. 'Mrs Parry told me you had your op yesterday

morning. But you've only been next to me since last night.'

Alun watched the boy eat his doughnut and drink his milk. He wore a red rugby shirt decorated with a giant leek. He was sitting on the bed with an exercise book on his lap.

'What's your name?' asked the boy.

'Alun. What's yours?'

'Huw. Huw Gwynne. I broke my left leg playing rugby. Now they've found something wrong with the other one.'

Alun tried to sort himself out though it was not like him to ask questions. 'I know I'm coming up fourteen,' he said slowly, 'but I don't know where I am.'

'Glan Tywi – the hospital school ward. You know, near Carmarthen –'

Alun looked at the green pipes along the ceiling and the red flowered curtains drawn back at the bottom of his bed. Beyond there was a row of beds and beyond that the sound of babies crying. With difficulty he turned his head to the right. He saw a tall chest of drawers by the window and a big old cupboard with a glinting mirror against the far wall. A small thin lady bustled among a group of children, collecting books and putting them into brown bags. One girl with fair hair was in a wheelchair with her legs covered. She looked familiar. Others were sitting round a table, talking loudly.

‘You got off school today,’ said Huw grudgingly.

The thin lady looked up and came across, all smiles.

‘Not for long,’ she said, leaning over Alun. ‘In a day or two you’ll feel up to it . . .’ She had a fine tiny face and a kind smile. ‘I’m Mrs Parry. Mrs Williams helps me run the smallest school you’ve ever been in. At the moment we have two girls, Sara and Olwen – both from your old school. Then there’s Morgan, our memory man; Huw is next to you and Bryn the redhead is over there. He tells me he’s going to be a farmer. Not an easy life these days, as my husband would say, but Bryn is quite certain that is what he wants to be.’

Alun felt confused. He looked at the bed opposite where the ginger-haired boy was eating and reading. Then he found himself lifting his gaze above the boy to a small dusty pane that might never have been opened. It reminded him of the window in the kitchen larder where – but his mind was in a muddle and all he could see was Mam with her back to the larder, warding off Dad, and Tony hiding inside, unable to get out.

He forced himself to watch Mrs Parry again. She had moved over to the next bed and was putting Huw’s exercise book into a

brown bag. Huw lay back with a comic. ‘Aberflyarff,’ he said, ‘talk about a laugh-a-minute rugby club.’

Alun couldn’t understand. He painfully lifted himself up on one elbow and watched Mrs Parry disappear from sight.

The afternoon sun lay across the beds. Its rays collided and crumpled on the cupboard mirror, shining like silver foil. Above the cupboard a cobweb networked up to the ceiling. A spider was sitting up there, a tiny black blob. Alun winced with pain and collapsed back. He shut his eyes: Tony was the spider in the web and Dad was the fly.

‘Looking better,’ said Tony cheerfully. He was too big for the chair. His leather jacket strained over his stomach and he undid the buttons. He pushed his greased black hair away from his red face and rubbed his blunt shiny nose.

‘Thought I wasn’t going to make it,’ he said. ‘Road-works everywhere. Can’t move for orange cones.’

‘Did you bring it?’

Tony clapped his thick hand over his mouth then stuck his finger in the air.

‘Here we go.’ He stood up and shoved his hands into his pockets. He pulled out the padlock and put it on the locker.

‘It’s no use to you now,’ he said looking doubtfully at Alun. ‘I’ll put the key in the drawer so it’s safe and sound.’

‘I can’t reach the padlock up there,’ said Alun. ‘Can you tie it to my wrist?’

‘You must be joking,’ said Tony. ‘You haven’t much of a wrist left.’

‘Please.’

It was important to have it close to him so no one could take it away.

‘Here we go then.’ Tony reached down in his pocket and came up with a handful of string and elastic bands. ‘Always come in handy.’ He threaded two elastic bands through the steel loop of the padlock and circled Alun’s left wrist.

‘Won’t it pull on these bruises?’

Alun drew in his breath. The touch of the padlock brought back a vivid image of his mountain bike. Shining handlebars, blue crossbar, silver mudguards. ‘What happened to my bike?’ he asked, trying hard to remember.

‘Scrapped,’ said the coarse, cheerful voice. ‘It came but of the accident worse than you. Mangled up. October 20, a bike. October 21, scrap yard material.’

Alun’s mind slumped. ‘I want to go to sleep,’ he whispered.

He closed his eyes and put his bike together again. It gleamed; the spokes of its

wheels were sharp and silver. It was chained to the railings, a leashed animal ready to go.

He moved his wrist so that the padlock flopped into the palm of his hand. He tightened his fingers round it. He wouldn't let it go, not for anything. There was nothing else left of the bike. Or of Dad, for that matter.

'You were lucky to come out of that little packet alive,' Tony said, helping himself to the green grapes on the locker. 'Cheer up. You're going to get better.'

Alun hated the way Tony sat there eating, his red hands on his thighs, his brown eyes darting.

He didn't want to talk, least of all about the blank that surrounded the pictures in his mind, the blackness he couldn't escape. After another long silence, Tony stood up.

'I'll come again when you've got more to say for yourself.' He looked at his watch. 'I got a removals early tomorrow. Got to plan the route, with all that traffic. Have a good rest, Alun. They say there's nothing like sleep.'

Alun sank back. He was in a prison at the foot of a black mountain, so tall it cut off all possibility of light. The prison windows were blocked with bars of pain; the bed was covered with thistles. Tony had gone where he belonged – back to Bath, and Dad was

standing there with a sad, lopsided look on his pale face. He was speaking very slowly in Welsh but Alun couldn't hear the words.

He woke in the middle of the night. A baby was crying in the next ward and busy footsteps passed his bed. He lifted his head but the pain slumped him back on the pillow. He tried to remember what had happened but nothing much came into his mind. Perhaps he had lost his memory forever. Then he remembered a great wind rushing in his ears as he whizzed down the hill to the station. The sound hung in his mind without any rhyme or reason.

He turned towards the cupboard where the mirror gleamed in the lamplight – or was it moonlight that came through the flimsy blue curtains? He groped for the name of the hospital. Glan Tywi, that was it. And Tony had come. But not Mam. Not this time. His eyes filled with tears. For some reason he thought Mam might never come again.

His thoughts were interrupted by Huw in the next bed who suddenly sat up and stared intently at the cupboard. He turned to Alun and whispered excitedly:

‘You awake?’

‘Yes.’

The night light caught the top of Huw's black spiky hair and the shoulders of his bright red pyjamas.

‘He’s there!’ whispered Huw, putting his fingers to his lips.

‘Who?’

‘Rhiwallon. In the cupboard mirror over there . . .’

Alun looked as if he didn’t understand and Huw went on urgently. ‘In class Mrs Parry was reading us “The Lady of Llyn y Fan Fach”. Rhiwallon was one of her sons. He was a physician. You know, from up in the Black Mountain. He became a ghost.’

‘I don’t know and I don’t believe in ghosts,’ said Alun under his breath, but he was intrigued and when Huw leaned further and further forward he said, ‘Move back then. You’re in the way, aren’t you?’

Huw flopped against his pillows and Alun stared at the mirror. All he could see was the reflection of the moonlight crunched into a silver nugget. Behind, there were shadows that reminded him of the prison in which he lay. And behind them other shadows that led his imagination deeper and deeper into that night when the wind had blown him off his bike. He still couldn’t remember why he was going down Castle Hill at such a speed but he could see himself whizzing down, the wind in his hair, its strange high boom inside his head as if it was the sound of his own voice.

He brushed his cheek with his good hand and the padlock grazed his skin.

Huw's voice seemed far away. '. . . Rhiwallon became a healer and his sons after him. You must have heard of the physicians of Myddfai. Believe me Alun, that's his ghost in the cupboard. I know it's him because he's holding a black calf. Don't you understand, he's come to heal *us!*'

Alun stared at the nugget of light, the shooting rays. He wasn't sure what Huw was talking about. 'Don't be thick, it's moonlight,' he said, flatly.

Huw pushed himself up slowly, easing his plastered leg. 'I'm not thick. He's still there. Can't you see his face?'

But the pain was in the way and Alun groaned; he couldn't help himself.

'I'm sorry,' said Huw, 'I forgot. Do you want anything?'

I want the pain to stop, thought Alun, I want to know why my head is blank and black. I want to know where my Dad is. But he said nothing – for in a funny way Huw was cheering him up and he wanted him to go on.

'How old are you?' he asked Huw.

'Ten. Why?'

'That's it then,' said Alun. 'I'm older, see. It's different. When I was ten I believed in –'
What did he believe in?

‘Father Christmas?’ asked Huw.

‘Of course not.’

‘God?’

‘Don’t be daft. Well, my dad did, so –’

‘I do. God I mean, not Father Christmas. We all do in my family. Mam has a lot to do with the church. But only my little sister believes in Father Christmas. She’s five. She’s called Ffion –’

‘Does she believe in ghosts like you?’

‘I don’t know,’ said Huw, looking back at the mirror. ‘Anyway, it’s not just believing. I’ve seen Rhiwallon with my own eyes.’ He stared at the mirror. ‘He’s gone now, though.’

‘It’s your imagination,’ said Alun irritably. He had enough on his plate without a ghost story. But Huw smiled. ‘Mrs Parry will get you to read the story tomorrow then you’ll understand more. We’re going to do our own projects on it. You must join in.’

‘Hate school,’ said Alun half to himself.

‘You won’t hate this one,’ whispered Huw. ‘It’s more like – well – it’s hard to describe. We have to work and everything but it’s so small.’

‘I’ll never like school,’ said Alun.

They fell silent as the nurse’s footsteps came back from the babies’ ward. She stopped by Alun and smiled and patted his head as he told her about the pain.

‘I’ve got something for that,’ she said quietly. ‘You’ll soon be asleep.’

Next morning a lady stood over Alun. She had long fair hair and wore a white lacy blouse and a soft long brown skirt Mam wouldn’t be seen dead in. She wasn’t his idea of a teacher and it threw him. Out of the darkness in his head he had a sudden flash, as he did nowadays, of the art teacher at his real school, a middle-aged man with an old grey pullover. The only teacher he liked.

The lady was holding a bunch of ferns and a basket full of small stones.

‘I’m Mrs Williams, come to help Mrs Parry. This afternoon we’re going to look at the patterns of nature in the Black Mountain.’

‘That’s where the lake is,’ whispered Huw. Alun stared dumbly at the teacher and the other children listened, waiting for him to speak. But he had nothing to say.

‘Think of those scattered treeless peaks soaring northwards from Ammanford. Do you know which is the highest peak?’

‘Fan Brycheiniog,’ said Morgan quickly. ‘I’ve been up there. You can see Exmoor from there, and Cader Idris.’

Mrs Williams laughed. ‘Your photographic memory serves you in good stead.’

‘Mamgu and Tadcu live in Llanddeusant,’ said Sara. ‘It’s on the way to the lake. I’m going for their Ruby Wedding.’

Mrs Williams came up to Alun. ‘What about you?’

‘Kids’ stuff,’ he said, testing her.

‘You’re right,’ she replied smoothly. ‘All art is kids’ stuff. Seeing with eyes that aren’t spoilt.’

He didn’t know what that meant either and pointed to his right hand. ‘What am I meant to do with this?’

‘Try your left,’ she said, and meant it. She swung round his table and adjusted it so that it sloped away from him. She clipped a large white piece of paper to the sloping surface then gave him some ferns. They clung stickily to each other but she prised them apart.

‘Do you like drawing?’

Alun shrugged his shoulders.

‘I dunno.’

The teacher walked away and he felt strangely disappointed. He closed his eyes. Once again the blackness prowled inside him like an animal he could neither see nor hear. Sleep was the way out. Not this drawing stuff. But Huw’s voice pulled him back.

‘I’m doing a pattern of stones.’

‘Why’s that?’ Alun found himself asking.

Huw was sitting up with a large paint brush poised over his paper. 'Before we climbed the Black Mountain we went to the Dan-yr-Ogof caves. I found this really great fossil nearby. And then there are all the stone outcrops on the mountain.'

Alun watched the yoghurt pot swerve as Huw stuck his brush into it and pulled it out laden with thick grey paint. Then Mrs Williams put the music on, the sort Dad liked and Mam hated. Fiddles and a high-pitched little pipe, with a harp somewhere in the background, being stroked hard as though someone were giving it a good combing. 'These are traditional folk songs from the area,' said Mrs Williams. But there was no singing, only waves of instrumental music as they painted on. The music somehow reminded Alun of the bluebell wood picture that his father had brought home.

'Wasting your money again,' Mam had said, as he put it up. By the time Dad had fixed the picture above the table there had been so much shouting Alun could hardly bear to look at the bluebells and the white ghost that marked the end of the wood. Mam never changed her mind, and when Dad had gone and Tony moved in she made him take it down and put it in the shed. A white oblong blank marked the place where the bluebell

wood had been, like a picture of nothing at all. Like the sheet of paper before him.

Alun screwed up his eyes tightly to try and forget.

‘Still one blank page,’ said Mrs Williams when she passed. ‘We’ll have to get Mrs Parry on to you.’

Alun kept his eyes tightly shut. They weren’t going to get anyone on to him. Not today. Not ever.

The next thing he heard was Mrs Parry’s voice. He kept his eyes shut. He was used to listening to voices in the dark and trying not to understand. At home Mam’s voice grumbled up through the floorboards like a mouse until it grew louder, angrier. Then the mouse turned into a tiger and he had to stuff his ears. But Mrs Parry’s voice was different. It was bright and clear and near at hand. In the end he had to listen. The names she listed seemed familiar. Didn’t he remember Olwen from school – the girl with long brown hair? And come to think of it, didn’t he remember Sara as well, the one in the wheelchair with the high laugh? Bryn was the boy opposite with bright orange hair and Morgan was the one with a sharp voice who was always butting in with an answer.

‘Is that cupboard really old?’ he was asking now.

‘Very old indeed.’ Mrs Parry replied, ‘And rather special. Isn’t that so, Sara?’

Sara nodded. ‘That’s what Mamgu says. That’s why she gave it to the hospital. It was a thank you for keeping me going when I was a baby.’

‘There *is* something special about that cupboard,’ said Huw.

Alun opened his eyes. There was Sara in her wheelchair wearing a bright red dress over her small legs that curled beneath. Her hair was cropped and silky as if it belonged to another body. Olwen was sitting on a chair with her brown hair loose and her leg propped up on a stool. Mrs Parry was standing by his bed holding a book. It didn’t look like school at all. And here they all were, going on about a cupboard!

Mrs Parry was smiling at Huw. ‘You might be right! The cupboard’s been locked up for some time. It doesn’t officially belong to the school, you know. It belongs to the hospital, and no one else has bothered with it.’

‘It’s spooky,’ said Huw, ‘in a nice sort of way.’

Mrs Parry turned to Alun. ‘Here we are: THE LADY OF LLYN Y FAN FACH. You must read the story for yourself so that you can catch up with the rest. It’s not too long.’

She opened a book with large print and propped it up on the wooden stand that was attached to his bed.

His eyes were not like they used to be but he could just read the big print. Half way through he recognised the legend. Of course, Dad had often told it to him as a bedside story. Then one day he took him up to see the lake. In one of those flashes that lit up corners of his blank mind, Alun remembered the walk from Blaenau farm. They went down to the riverside and crossed a bridge and went along a stony track. They came across a building and two gates and one or two dams across the river. They went round the corner and there it was.

‘The highest Carmarthen Fan,’ Dad said. ‘It’s a great thing to see.’

From the top of the track they followed a plain grassy path. There was another building, another small dam and then the lake. It gleamed darkly, mysteriously and he remembered looking at the water, certain the Lady would appear. He waited and waited but she didn’t come and now the lake merged into the darkness of his mind.

‘Are legends ever true?’ Huw was asking.

Mrs Parry stood up. ‘There’s usually a truth in them. One of you might like to find out more about this one.’

‘I will,’ said Sara. ‘Mamgu knows everything about local legends. I’ll ask her when I go to Myddfai for the

Ruby Wedding.’ Huw rolled his eyes. He’d obviously heard enough about this family celebration.

Mrs Parry looked down at Alun. ‘Perhaps you could find out more about the healing.’

Morgan shovelled in his school bag and brought out a tatty old book. ‘Here we are – everything you need. Listen to this –’ he looked knowingly at Alun.

*‘For an injury in the elbow,
knee or legs.*

*Take lard, or pig’s fat once melted,
spread on a cloth or flannel, and apply
to the swellings. If to the elbow or
knee, mix some juice of rue therewith,
and it will cure an injury of the joint. It
is proved.’*

He looked up and laughed. ‘It’s a recipe from the Physicians of Myddfai. And I’ve got it in Welsh.’

Mrs Parry smiled. ‘We can turn it into a Welsh lesson as well. Will you read it to us, Morgan?’

Morgan cleared his throat: ‘*Mêl gloyw . . .*’

Alun switched off. Strange that a book of instructions still existed; he half wondered

if there *could* be anything in Rhiwallon's healing power. If only he could heal the blackness in his head.

That night the flimsy curtains let in a pool of light that lay across Alun's and Huw's bed. Bryn was snoring and somewhere in the next ward there were footsteps and low voices and a baby crying. The pool of light lit up the folds on his white blanket and Alun turned them into the country track that led to the lake. Now he was floating above the track; the moon lit up the barren smooth-humped peaks and rocky escarpments of Bannau Sir Gaer and Fan Brycheiniog. And there was the lake, gleaming silver-black. He swooped down but no one was there so he flew over a landscape of hedgerows, furrowed fields, sheep and cattle. Now he was running down the stony track, leaning over the bridge that crossed the river. Rhiwallon was looking up at him from the water. And there was Dad, crying so hard he filled the river with his tears. In the dream Alun struck the water angrily with a stick, so the ripples broke up the image and he did not have to see his father crying like a child. But Rhiwallon did not go away. He held out his hand and offered Alun something that he could not see.