

## The Quest for The Raindrop of Life

The sun dazzled in the sky above the Burrow on yet another splendid summer day. Slumped against a tree, ten-year-old Kian flicked lazily through his favourite book. His brown curls flopped down over his crystal blue eyes and he blew them away with a half-hearted puff.

In the distance, faint sounds of village life could be heard. The local children played happily on their bicycles while their parents bustled about their daily chores of cleaning, cooking and mending. Out in the farmers' fields, workers were dutifully harvesting fresh crops and loading up their carts ready for market. The Burrow was a picture of perfection and Kian was contently enjoying another day in paradise, completely unaware of what was about to happen.

Suddenly, Kian heard the approaching clip-clopping of a horse's hooves. He looked up and saw a man wearing a tall, pointy hat and flowing cloak riding towards him. It was Irwin! Kian leapt to his feet and rushed towards the wizard. For years, Irwin had been coming to the Burrow and telling them all stories of his great adventures. As Kian skipped through the long grass towards the special visitor he wondered what daring adventure Irwin would tell him about today. Irwin slowed his horse, jumped down and swept Kian into a tight embrace. Kian pushed the wizard away and laughed.

"Hey, I'm not a baby anymore!"

"I know, I know," Irwin replied. "It's just so good to see you." It was at that moment that Kian noticed Irwin wasn't smiling like he usually was. In fact, he looked rather grim.

"What's the matter?" Kian asked in concern. He held his breath as he waited for the answer.

"I have bad news, child..." Irwin paused, "the Burrow is doomed!" "Doomed?" Kian looked puzzled and his heart began to race.

"I need your help Kian. Let's talk."

Irwin placed his hand on Kian's shoulder and sat him down on

a nearby rock.

"I received a message yesterday from your village elder. The raindrop of life has been stolen from his home."

"Stolen?" Kian gasped, beginning to feel light-headed.

The raindrop of life was an ancient and very important object that ensured that rain fell each year over the Burrow. Without it, the rain would not come and the crops would die. Without crops there would be no food to eat and without any food the villagers would be forced to leave their homes.

"I believe that the Gryffdragon is responsible," Irwin went on. "It is a terrifying beast with extreme strength that lives in a cave deep in the forest."

Kian shuddered in fear but he felt confused.

"How can I help? I'm only a small boy," he asked nervously. Irwin explained that only a descendant of the famous King Oraf could find and return the important object. Kian's mouth gaped open in surprise. King Oraf was a brave leader who had brought the raindrop of life to the Burrow hundreds of years ago to preserve the village's future.

"I'm a descendent..." he started to ask but Irwin was already nodding in answer to the unfinished question.

"Yes Kian, this difficult and dangerous task falls to you as the last surviving descendent of King Oraf."

After a sleepless night, Kian was all packed and ready to set off on his quest by sunrise. He left a note for his old aunt (she would try to stop him going if she knew what he was going to do) and began his long journey to the Gryffdragon's cave. Over hills and mountains, fields and dry, dirt roads, Kian trudged onwards, thinking only about what could happen if he failed. As the sun began to set, he finally reached the cave.

With the beast's peculiar stench as his guide, Kian tiptoed into the cave. It did not take him long to find the disgusting creature. Without warning, it appeared in front of him, snarling menacingly. The beast was unlike anything Kian had ever seen before. It had huge fanged teeth and a thick spiked tail. Its eyes were like pools of fire and it breathed green smoke from

three enormous nostrils. Folded neatly onto its back were spiky, leathery wings and nestled atop these Kian caught a glimpse of the shimmering raindrop of life.

The beast stalked slowly around the boy, examining the easy prey. It was smirking and clawing at the earth, confident that it could kill the intruder with one swipe of its sharp, shiny claws. Kian froze. He was petrified. He tried to think back to what Irwin had told him. 'Use its weakness against it. Aim for the heart!' The beast gave a huge snort and lunged towards Kian with its mouth open wide and it was then that Kian saw it. The beast's thumping heart was located at the back of its throat and down that throat was where Kian was about to be beheaded! Kian whipped his dagger from his belt and crouched down with the weapon held above his head. The beast's eyes widened in horror when it realised its fate but it was too late. As the gryffdragon's mouth closed around him, Kian's dagger split the heart in two and the wicked beast exploded in a blast of glittering sparks. It was about a minute later when Kian eventually opened his eyes. The beast was gone and right there in front of him was the raindrop of life. Kian scrambled to his feet and grabbed the raindrop, worrying that it too may disappear.

Not daring to stop or even glance behind, Kian ran until he reached the Burrow. The sun was beginning to rise and tears welled in Kian's eyes as he saw his beautiful village glowing in the light of a new day. Irwin and the village elder were waiting to greet the brave young adventurer as he arrived.

"Well done Kian!" they chorused.

"I knew you could do it," Irwin smiled. "Perhaps I should ask for your autograph!" he added winking

Suddenly, an almighty crash of thunder sounded over the Burrow and rain began to pour from the sky. Kian knew his aunt would be grumbling about not being able to hang out her washing but he didn't care. The Burrow's future was secure. While everyone else took cover, three joyous figures could be seen dancing and laughing for hours in the rain.