

“An arnvash,” repeated her father. “You can think of him like an elf.”

“An elf? Your main character is an elf?” Does he have pointy ears and wings and dress in robes woven from spider webs?” Rosie had recently been reading a book like that in her literature class and she thought it all sounded pretty ridiculous. For one thing, Rosie couldn’t imagine how clothes could be woven from spider webs. After all, webs were sticky. For another thing, she thought it unlikely that anything that looked like a small human would have multi-colored dragonfly wings coming out of its back.

“No, he’s not an elf!” responded Roger testily. “I just said you could think of him like that. Easier than going into the details.”

“Well, if he’s not an elf then what is he?” persisted Rosie. “Give me all the details.” Anything that put off having to eat tofu was a good thing as far as Rosie was concerned.

“Well, okay, since you insist. In this world – which is called Liandra, by the way – in Liandra the dinosaurs didn’t all die out. Some kept evolving.”

“So? That’s the same as in *our* world,” Rosie cut in. “That’s where the birds came from. Everybody knows that. You can Google it.”

Roger simply raised his eyebrows and stared at his daughter meaningfully.

“Oh,” said Rosie, slightly abashed. “I guess you knew that, huh?”

“Yeah,” confirmed Roger. “Anyway, to continue. In Liandra some of the smaller dinosaurs kept changing. Over time their feathers developed into fur and they invented language and tools and what-have-you.”

“Dinosaurs had scales, not feathers,” Rosie shot back, pleased to have scored a point off of her father.

“Nooo, lots of dinosaurs actually had feathers well before there were any birds,” said Roger. “You can look it up.”

Rosie glanced toward the family computer, visible through

the doorway to the family room.

“In a book!” continued her father, opening his eyes wide in mock amazement. “Imagine that – facts in a book!”

“Okay dad, I get it,” said Rosie with a roll of her eyes. Roger was continually trying to get Rosie to read more books rather than just surfing the web.

“You see it now, right?” continued her father. “The smaller dinosaurs were already warm-blooded and over time they grew to be, well, kind of like elves, like I said before.”

“That’s totally awesome,” interjected Rosie.

“Thank you,” Roger answered, pleased with the compliment. “So, there are a couple of related species and the arnvashé are one of them.”

“I thought you said arnvash before, not arnvashé,” questioned Rosie.

“That’s just the plural,” responded Roger. “One arnvash, two arnvashé.”

Rosie made an ‘oh’ with her mouth and nodded.

“Anyway, Cedrik is one of the hunter-warrior types. But he’s pretty much an under-achiever. Doesn’t do well at all the things most other arnvashé excel at. And he’s a bit small. For an arnvash, that is,” he added. “They’re all pretty small, of course. About so high.” He raised his hand about a foot above the tabletop. “That’s why I thought it would be interesting to have him be the one to get the lamp, rather than one of the others. But like I said, it isn’t really working out.”

“Can’t anybody help him?” Rosie found herself feeling sorry for Cedrik.

“I did have someone helping him, actually. A little owl.”

“A little owl?” questioned Rosie’s mother. “Aren’t owls big? Wouldn’t it just try to eat Cedrik?”

“The owl that flies around our neighborhood is pretty big, sure,” agreed Roger. But this is a Liandran Pygmy Owl. And she’s not interested in eating Cedrik. Grasshoppers, maybe.” Rosie suppressed a grimace at this.

“But not arnvashé,” continued Roger. “Anyhow, Annie

has problems as well. Her wing's out of commission and she can't fly. And she's about to get chopped into little bitty pieces by the bad guys."

"Annie?" interrupted Rosie.

"The owl," her dad answered. "I named her after your dog. She's always seemed to be a big birdbrain to me."

"She is not," declared Rosie stoutly, defending her pet. "She's just more, umm, thoughtful than the average dog."

"Uh-huh," said Roger with a disbelieving look. "Well, it's not that big a deal if they don't make it anyway, I suppose. I've got other characters who are also going for the lamp. Cedrik and Annie can just be a story thread that comes to an end," he concluded as he pushed his chair back from the table, anxious to get back to his writing.

"Well, that definitely doesn't sound very good to me," stated Rosie forcefully, strangely upset at the fate of these characters. "You've worked all this time on Cedrik and Annie and now you're just going to drop them? It doesn't seem very fair." Rosie was so perturbed that she actually shoved a spoonful of tofu into her mouth before she realized what she'd done.

"Well, life isn't always fair you know," answered Roger with a shrug. "And why are you so worried about them? Tonight's the first you've ever even heard about them."

"I don't know. But I still think you should do something else besides kill them off."

"Maybe," her father allowed, nodding his head. "If I come up with something tonight maybe I'll write it out differently. But if I can't think of something reasonable then I'll just have to bid a fond farewell to Cedrik and Annie."