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An extract from

The Winter Wolf

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"Snowing again…" Amelia stood up, looking around worriedly. It seemed even darker than it had done seconds before, and there was another snowflake, and another and another. And now they weren't just floating down out of those yellowish clouds, they were whirling and gusting all around her.

She would never be able to find her way back to the cabin in this blizzard. Amelia glanced down at Frost, who had laid his ears back, and looked just as worried as she did by the sudden storm. She didn't want to leave him out here on his own, either.

The pup let out a tiny whimper, and pressed himself against Amelia's legs. Even though she was frightened by the

storm, Amelia felt herself smiling. He trusted her. He was scared and he trusted her to help! She stared determinedly around at the clearing, squinting through the snowflakes as she tried to work out what to do. "I'm not going back to the stable," she murmured, rubbing Frost's ears gently. "I'm not leaving you behind. So it's the hollow tree or nothing. Come on. It'll be a bit of a squash, but at least we'll keep each other warm…"



She hurried him over to the tree and crouched down, trying not to think about what else might be sharing the hollow with them. It was too cold for spiders, she told herself firmly, as Frost wriggled in after her. Then he turned to peer out of the opening and whimpered.

"I know," Amelia whispered to him. "It's horrible, isn't it?" She loved snow, but she had never seen it like this. The snowflakes were falling so thickly that she could hardly see across the little clearing.

Frost stepped away from the jagged opening in the tree and whimpered again, curling himself against the back of the trunk. The wind had shifted, and now the snow was starting to blow into the hole, stinging his eyes.

Amelia sucked in an anxious breath. The hollow tree was a wonderful shelter, even though it was cramped with the two of them in there. But it would be no good at all if it filled up with snow. She looked doubtfully at the thick woollen blanket that Noah had given Frost to sleep on. She wasn't sure if it was much use against snow, but it was all they had. Wriggling it half out from under herself and Frost, she held it up against the opening, tucking the edge into a useful crack that went higher up the tree trunk. She wedged it with a couple of slivers of bark, too, so that the blanket hung down across the hole, shielding them from the worst of the snow. Then she edged back next to Frost and ran her hand gently over his twitchy ears.

THE WINTER WOLF

"You don't like it, do you? Maybe you've never seen a big snowstorm. Or if you have, you were huddled up in a nice cosy cave with your mum and you didn't mind."

Amelia unwound the green and red checked muffler that Noah had given her. He'd had to show her how to wind it crosswise over her chest and tie it at the back – Amelia had never worn anything like it before. She laid it out on her lap, and patted it hopefully. With the blanket hung up as a curtain, Frost was sitting on a cushion of dried leaves and pine needles. She was sure that snuggling up with the muffler wrapped round them would be more comfortable. And they needed to keep each other warm.

Frost lifted his nose from his paws and

looked up at her worriedly. She could see his eyes shining in the shadowy dimness of the hollow tree. The whirling madness of the snowstorm had clearly upset him. But at last he wriggled forward a little bit, and very gradually, he climbed half into Amelia's lap. There was too much of him to curl up like a cat, but he slumped across her knees, and sighed contentedly.



"We'll just have to stay here till it stops," Amelia whispered. "I wish I hadn't given you all the food, but I didn't know this was going to happen…" She wrapped her arms round Frost's neck, and he made a happy grumbling noise. "The snow's too heavy for Noah to come and find us," she murmured into his fur. "I hope he doesn't try. We'll be all right till morning. He'll come and find us then." She was trying to sound determined and hopeful, but her voice wavered a bit, and Frost nosed gently at her cheek.

It was eerie, in the dark. She could see the odd flake of snow settling on the edge of the blanket here and there, but that was all. The snow was silent, but that only seemed to make it more frightening. Amelia sat in their

hollow, peering out at the little smudge of snowy darkness, and stroking Frost's silvery fur over and over again.