
'Little Spirit was amazing!
A thread of mystery from start to finish kept me hooked.'
Holly, age 10
Little Spirit
A lost treasure. A dangerous man. A boy alone.
AJ Freer

‘Little Spirit was amazing! A thread of mystery from start to finish kept me hooked and even the very last paragraph had a small, intriguing twist.’

Holly, age 10

‘I really enjoyed this book and think that it is brilliant. I also enjoyed the suspense and I would recommend this book for lots of other children.’

Bethany, age 8



‘It was brilliant! It was really well written and I loved Little Spirit. It was really gripping and I couldn't wait to find out what happened at the end.’
Sebastian, age 10

‘I loved Little Spirit! I would recommend it to ages 8 to 12 as it’s not too complicated or too babyish. Overall I would go give it a…10/10!’
Eliza, age 9

‘A dramatic and epic adventure!’
Ellie, age 9

‘When I finished reading the book I wanted to know more about how Little Spirit lost his family. I would like you to make a sequel to this book and I would love to read it, as well as any other book you write.’
Ethan, age 9

Little Spirit

A J Freer

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For Mark, Rocco and Cristabel, my little family.

And for all the lost sons and daughters, while you are far from home, may you live in safety and find peace.

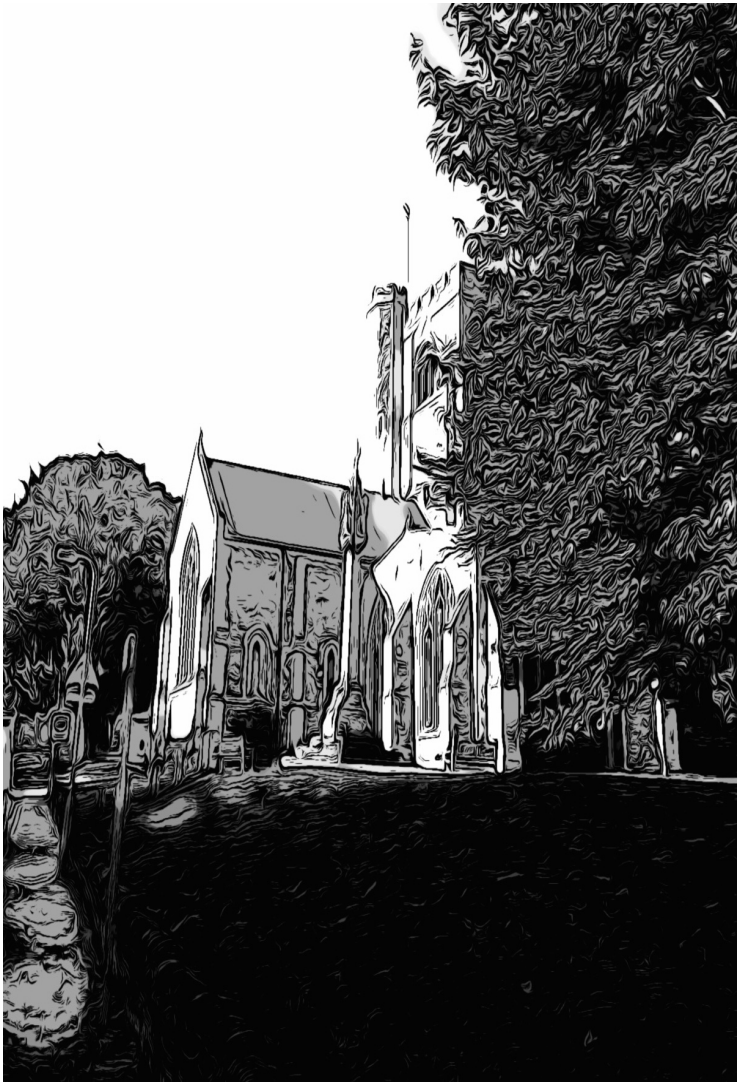
Books by A J Freer

Little Spirit

Little Spirit at the Castle

Coming 2023

Little Spirit and the Shadow Soldier



1 - An Unusual Fog

An unusual fog fell that night, it billowed around and came down over town like the flick of a cloth over a table. And lost in the middle of that thick, swirling cloud were a double-decker bus and a boy.

'Wretched fog!' snapped the bus driver, suddenly not able to see the road. He pressed the brake, slowing the bus down to a trundle, and flicked on the fog-lights. Leaning forwards over the steering wheel he squinted through his glasses at the misty fronds twisting and twining in the headlights. 'Don't like the fog,' he grumbled, 'brings out the–'

He stopped.

'Wassat?' He shook his head and blinked. 'Never seen a green one!' he croaked, watching a shadowy lump hurtle towards him.

CRUNCH!

The bus stopped and the driver sat for a moment staring at the blanket of leaves pressed against the window. ‘Hedge,’ he muttered, smiling faintly with relief. With another shake of his head and a roar of the engine, he reversed back onto the road.

‘But I still ‘ate the fog. Brings out them ghosts, makes everythin’ act…strange, but, no one on board, so NO stoppin’! Won’t be letting them ghouls inside,’ he announced to the apparently empty vehicle.

Only the bus wasn’t empty. In fact, someone was listening. Someone very small. Someone very alone. Someone sat in the corner seat of the very back row, curled up tight like a cat.

His name was Little Spirit.

He was thin and pale like the rain, but with hair as dark as cocoa. He wore a ragged coat and shorts, and carried nothing. Not a thing. Not even a

little rucksack, or an apple for emergencies, not even a picture of his family – despite being a very long way from home.

He had hidden on the first bus he'd seen at the huge depot and travelled alone for a whole day and a night. He desperately needed a warm place to rest and although he loved the low rumbling of the engine and the squashy seats, at night-time, when all was quiet, the cold would tiptoe into the bus and turn his bones to ice.

And after nearly being thrown off his seat, he decided it was time to get off.

Little Spirit unfurled and, careful not to been seen over the seats in front, he stretched a spidery finger up to the stop button.

DING!

The driver wrenched his head around. ''OO'S THERE?' he yelled and careered off the road for the second time that evening.

The brakes shook and then shrieked. And so did the driver. While he battled with the steering wheel, Little Spirit crawled under the seats, hiding behind the panel next to the back doors. A last wail from the engine and the driver finally bumped the bus back onto the road.

'What did I say! Ghosts on me bus!' he muttered, racing to the next stop and screeching to a halt. 'SHOW ye-self!' he bellowed and pressed a button on the dashboard.

Swoosh! The doors flew open.

Little Spirit knew he had only a moment before the driver would turn and peer behind him, so he jumped out of the bus diving straight into a small fir-tree. He wriggled to a standing position, the sharp wood scratching his skin.

Gently parting the feathery leaves he looked out onto the road. A few seconds later, he watched his friend, the bus, disappear into the fog. His head

dropped and he pressed his eyelids together. Squeezing the branches, he clung tightly to the world fearing if he let go he'd drop right off. *Hang on*, he thought, *hang on and don't cry*. But the harder he squeezed his eyelids the more they overflowed like the slopping water buckets he used to carry up the steep hill to his house.

His lip trembled and his stomach whirled like a hurricane. Perhaps he should have stayed on the bus. Little Spirit looked out into the darkness, and although he knew in the swirl and furl of the misty night he could move safely, he didn't know which way to go. Should he turn left or right? He wished his family was there so they could hold hands and find their way together. He could hardly believe he had lost them, it had been only a few days but it felt like months.

Little Spirit swallowed and brushed the tears from his face. Legs quaking, he wiggled out of the

hedge and dashed across the road, hesitating a little, before walking straight into the dark underbelly of a bridge.

There were no lights in the short tunnel and in a few nervous steps he emerged out of the other side. Peering through small breaks in the fog, Little Spirit saw a road leading off to the left and, since it was the only path he could see, he decided to follow it.

One cautious footstep at a time, he weaved his way up the street, passing a row of narrow houses, one snuggled tightly to another. Dull light pushed out around the curtains of each window and through one set, left half-open, he saw the flicker of a fire. He stopped for a moment, longing to hold his hands up to the warm flames. The soft light drew him nearer until he pressed his nose against the glass and closed his eyes.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

He snapped open his eyes and jumped. On the inside of the window, another nose was pressed against his. Through a jumble of dark curls, two large eyes stared at him. Little Spirit hesitated for a moment before leaping back into the fog.

Worried he might be caught he ran across the road and crouched behind a brick wall. After a few seconds, he stood up and peeked over the top. Through a gap in the fog, he could see a girl pointing out of the window. She pointed again and started to cry.

Little Spirit ducked down, hoping he hadn't scared her. He looked down at his hands, so pale they could belong to a ghost. Sometimes he almost believed he had become one. Hiding here and there. Keeping out of sight. Slipping left-over food from tables and silently eating sandwich crusts whilst hidden behind large suitcases – the journey from the docks had taught him the craft of

invisibility.

He peeked over the top again, but the fog had thickened and he couldn't see across the road. The girl had such kind eyes and he was sorry he had frightened her. But perhaps her mother was comforting her, gently brushing the tears from her cheeks. He didn't like the pain of crying but he longed for the fall of tears that at home would instantly conjure up the loving arms of his mother.

Instead, the cold pinched his bare legs and made him shiver.

Teeth rattling, he stood for a moment wondering what to do next. He couldn't see very far ahead and decided to follow the wall hoping it would lead to a building. At first, the red bricks scraped his hands, but they soon turned into a smooth handrail running upwards above a set of stone steps.

He was about to walk up them when he stopped. Ears pricked, he thought he could hear the

tip-tapping of footsteps. Was the girl following him?

Little Spirit didn't want to be followed or found, all he wanted was a warm place to rest. So he leapt up the steps to the top, stumbling onwards over graves and around trees until–

'Owww!' He quickly clapped his hand over his mouth, sweeping his eyes this way and that. Had anyone heard?

The wind whistled softly and the fog swirled but otherwise the night was silent. Perhaps he hadn't heard footsteps after all.

Peering up, he saw what he had bumped into, another wall but this one was much taller and built of jagged grey stones. Again, he followed the wall, stumbling alongside it, shivering and shaking until finally, he found a door.

A huge wooden door.

Through chattering teeth, he managed a

grateful smile; it wasn't any old door, it was a door to be opened – someone had left the key in the lock!

He raised a shaking hand, trying to grip the key. But then he froze. This time he was absolutely certain.

The tap, tap, tap of footsteps hurried towards him.

With one hand steadying the other, Little Spirit grabbed the key and wrenched it as hard as he could. Stuck. He tried again but it wouldn't budge.

The footsteps grew louder.

In desperation, he leant on the door with his shoulder and to his surprise it flew open. He stumbled into the darkness, scrambling under a wooden bench as the door slammed behind him.

Outside, a young man reached the church just after it closed. He stood for a moment, panting,

and watched in amazement as the fog lifted as fast as it had arrived; billowing upwards, a cloth snatched away in a flash.

'Astonishing,' he whispered, staring cross-eyed down his nose as the last foggy wisp disintegrated under his nostrils. Still perplexed by the changeable weather, he shrugged his shoulders and dug his hand into his pocket pulling out a crumpled piece of tinfoil. He carefully opened it and scooped up a slippery wedge of butter. Trying not to drop it, he pushed it around the key and into the lock.

'There'll be no more nonsense from you!' he said to the key. He bent his knees and braced himself. 'One. Two. Three!'

Finally, the key turned.

'Gotcha!' said the curate, nodding in triumph and holding up the greasy lump of iron between his finger and thumb.

Inside, Little Spirit listened to the fading footsteps and let out a sigh. He hadn't been discovered. Even better, he was safely locked inside.

He looked quickly around and realised he was in a church. In the faint light streaming down from the glass windows, he crawled out of his hiding place and tiptoed across the stone floor. Something caught his foot and he stumbled. He tried to walk forwards but a strange weight twisted around his ankles and pulled him down.

'Ahhh' he yelled, kicking and flailing on the floor until a gentle flump of material landed on top of him. Lying on his back, he lifted his legs into the air and saw his attacker – a pair of old curtains!

Tears of relief welled in his eyes. He jumped up, threw one curtain around his shoulders and hugged the other.

Looking down he noticed they had been

hiding a pile of cushions. With a smile, he picked them up and, in a dark corner, made himself a nest with cushions. He pulled both curtains tightly around him and closed his eyes.

Safe and warm, Little Spirit fell asleep.

Outside the locked doors, another set of footsteps stopped. A man looked left and right and pulled his hat low over his face. He raised his palm and pushed the door.