

The Boy with Wings

A traveller came to a village of cold grey huts, where a boy wept bitter silent tears. Gently, the traveller asked the boy what troubled him. But when the boy turned, the traveller stepped back. For he saw that the boy had no mouth at all, while along his arms there grew rows of feathers, like a bird's. Then the boy's parents came, saying, 'Ah! You see our misfortune. For how will our son speak? How can he kiss? And how can he sing?' And the traveller went away sorrowing, for he knew the boy would surely die.

Many years later the traveller came to the village again. To his surprise he saw how green grew the grass, and how colourful were the huts. And all at once there came a beating of mighty wings; then the most beautiful creature landed gracefully before him. The traveller cried out in astonishment, for this was the selfsame boy, who still had no mouth but whose arms had grown into great golden wings. And the boy's eyes sparkled as he took to the air, swooping and soaring. Once more the boy's parents came, and the traveller knew what was in their hearts. 'See,' he said, 'Your son speaks more wisdom with his eyes than many who have mouths. With the joy of his great wings he spreads his love, and his swooping and soaring is like singing.'

And they nodded, and smiled, and invited the traveller home for tea and honey-cakes.