



NORTH WALES TALES

Branwen and the Brave Little Starling: A Story from Anglesey

Anglesey (Branwen), North Wales

Long ago, on the green island of Anglesey, there lived a kind princess named Branwen.

Branwen was the daughter of Llŷr and Penarddun. She had a soft voice and a warm laugh, and the birds of Anglesey loved her best of all. Every morning they sang at her window, and every evening they sat on her shoulders while she watched the sea.

One day, Branwen married Matholwch, the King of Ireland. She sailed away across the grey water to live in his castle far over the sea.

But the marriage did not bring peace. In Ireland, Branwen felt lonely. The halls were cold, and nobody sang to her. She missed the green hills of Anglesey, and she missed her family most of all.

One rainy morning, a tiny starling flew in through the window. Its feathers were wet, and it was shivering.

"Oh, you poor little thing," said Branwen.

She dried the starling by the fire and shared her bread with it. The starling hopped onto her hand and looked up at her with bright, clever eyes.

Every day after that, Branwen fed the starling and talked to it. And the starling, who was cleverer than any bird in Ireland, began to understand her words.

"If only you could fly home to Anglesey," Branwen whispered one evening, "and tell my family that I miss them."

The starling tilted its head. Then it gave a little chirp, as if to say, *I can*.

So Branwen taught the starling. She spoke slowly and kindly, telling it about the white walls of home, about the sea birds, and about her dear brother who would help her if only

he knew.

When the starling had learned every word, Branwen wrote a tiny note and tied it gently beneath its wing. She carried the little bird to the highest window.

"Be brave," she said. "Fly true. And come back safe."

The starling flew out into the wide grey sky.

It flew over the rooftops. It flew over the dark green fields. It flew out across the wild sea, beating its small wings against the wind. The waves rolled below, but the starling did not give up. It thought of Branwen, and it flew on.

At last, far away, it saw a green island shining in the sun. Anglesey! Home.

The starling swooped down to Branwen's family and chattered out every word she had taught it. When they read her note, they knew at once that Branwen was sad and lonely far away.

"Then we shall bring her home," said her brother. "Nobody should be lonely forever."

Boats were made ready, and kind plans were laid. And before long, with the brave little starling leading the way, Branwen came sailing back across the sea to Anglesey.

The birds sang at her window once more. The green hills welcomed her. And the brave little starling sat happily on her shoulder, where it stayed for the rest of its days.

And if you visit Anglesey today and hear a starling chattering away, you might just wonder. Is it telling someone, somewhere, that they are loved and not forgotten?

The end.

What's real?

- Branwen, whose legend is celebrated on Anglesey, is a major character in the medieval Welsh story known as the Second Branch of the Mabinogi.
- The Anglesey legend of Branwen comes from a tale sometimes called the 'Mabinogi of Branwen' after her.
- In the Anglesey legend, Branwen is the daughter of Llyr and Penarddun.
- In the story linked to Anglesey, Branwen married Matholwch, King of Ireland, but the marriage did not bring peace.

Now colour it in!



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