

She was in the only place she felt happy. Edie and Ben had walked beside the river together, marvelling at the sights and sounds. It had been Edie's first visit, but she'd soon understood why it attracted people from miles around. The gateway to the Peak, they called it.

Dovedale, of course. Edie had made her way to the place where she and Ben had spent their happiest hours together. As they'd walked, hand-in-hand, Ben had named each and every landmark in the dale. He'd explained how the river acted as the county boundary, meaning with a foot on each of the middle stepping stones across the Dove, you could be in two counties at once! A truly magical place, which Ben had desperately wanted her to see. He always wanted to show her things, to see the wonder on her face as she took in the breathtaking scenery. He'd got down on one knee beside Lovers' Leap, joking afterwards that if she'd said no, he would have jumped off.

She hadn't turned him down. Edie's answer had been an emphatic 'yes!' The couple had embraced next to the rocky precipice, not a care in the world; drawing many an amused glance from the dozens of people milling around, and even a loud "Errrgh" from a pre-pubescent boy. They giggled together, in love, and untouchable. They spent a happy day exploring the valley and crossing into the next, then heading down into Ilam village and buying ice-creams from the van by the side of the road. They'd eaten them as they wandered back along the road to the car park, chatting and laughing, content.

It looked so different in the dark. Edie stumbled and felt her way along the path from the car park, with only the weak light of the moon to guide her. As she approached the main part of the dale, she struggled to remember the names of the rocks and caves Ben had shown her. If only he was around. But then, if he was, Edie would not be wandering around in the dark. She'd be safely tucked up in bed with his strong arms surrounding her, keeping her safe.

But it had been keeping her safe that had got them into this mess in the first place. Though it was not only Edie that Ben was protecting, but the entire country. Ben had been in the army, fighting for what he believed in, serving Queen and country. He'd been killed in action. Just 24 years old, a tragic loss of life. Another name added to the list of young men and women bravely risking their lives to protect others.

But of course he was much more than a name to Edie. So much more than just 'Cpl. Ben Wright'. He was her soul mate, the one she thought she'd never find. After dozens of boyfriends, Edie had almost given up hope of finding 'The One.' But then Ben had come into her life and turned it upside down. His energy, his enthusiasm and his intelligence had taken her breath away. They had fun, but they could be serious too. They became best friends as well as lovers. And now he'd been taken from her.

That's why Edie was here. She was going back to the place where Ben had proposed to her. Unable to sleep, she had to do something to stop the questions whirling around in her mind, screaming to be answered – "Why? Why? Why?" 24 years old. A son. A brother. A friend. A colleague. A soul mate. In her grief, Edie genuinely believed she couldn't go on living without him, so she was here to end it all. She planned to throw herself off Lovers' Leap in a gesture to show the world that she would not be separated from her bookend. Death had parted them, so she would follow him into the darkness. It was as simple as that.

As Edie edged her way towards the edge of the precipice, she blinked. Then not believing what she was seeing, blinked again.

She accepted it wasn't going to be that simple, after all. Not because she was frightened. But because she'd just discovered another part of the Dovedale magic. Something spectacular.

Standing - or perhaps perching would be a more apt description - on the very edge of the rocks was an impenetrable barrier. Dozens of tiny faces stared up at Edie. Their expressions varied from sympathetic, to determined, to unhappy. The fairies – because despite Edie's disbelief, that's what they were – were standing in a row holding hands, to prevent Edie from plunging to her death. She could get no further because stepping over them would leave her foot with nothing to stand on, and she didn't want to tumble and end up broken and battered; she wanted to leap and end up in whatever was on 'the other side,' beside Ben.

"What are you doing?" she asked the row of little people.

They were very odd creatures indeed. They were all tiny and winged, but their clothing and looks were an assortment. Some were beautiful, their attire dresses and pointy-toed shoes, and others were scruffy-looking creatures that looked as though they wore rags.

"What are *we* doing," piped up one of the pretty ones at the front, "I could ask what *you're* doing here? In the dark too!"

"Please," Edie replied, her voice barely a whisper, "something happened, and I can't cope. I need – I want... I want to be with Ben." Tears sprung from her eyes and began to roll down her cheeks.

The fairy that had spoken broke away from the group, walked up to Edie and tugged her trouser leg, implying that she should sit down. Edie complied. They were now closer, but not equal in height, and the fairy began to talk.

"Edie, look. We know about what happened, and we're very sorry. But you mustn't do this. The way you're feeling is natural, but this won't help. You're hurting, and that's understandable. But do you really want your friends and family to feel the way you're feeling now? People you know have already been devastated by Ben's death, and then upset further because you're falling to pieces. They care about you and it will break their hearts to lose you both. Ben died doing something he loved. Something brave and honourable. Your death would be a pointless tragedy. Please don't do this. We will watch over you until you find your way back to the car. Will you go home before anybody notices you're missing?"

Edie was silent. The fairy's words were sinking in and it suddenly dawned on her how selfish she was being. Of course she was hurting. Ben was gone. It was to be expected. But she certainly didn't want her family and friends to feel the pain she was experiencing right now. And she knew Ben would be angry at her. She'd always hated it when he was angry. They hadn't argued often, but when they did, it cut Edie to the core because she loved her smiley happy man so much.

She stood up, not knowing what to say to the group of tiny people watching her. They were wary, unsure of her next move.

“Don’t worry,” she said, “I’m going home. But you haven’t seen the last of me. I’ll be back soon with a camera and a picnic. I may not have Ben, but I’ll always have the memories we made together. And he declared his undying love here. And I’m declaring mine now by being strong and doing what Ben would have wanted. He did his best to make me happy. He knew this place would make me happy, and it did. It still does, and always will.”

She smiled down at the little creatures, which all visibly relaxed.

“Thank you.”

And as Edie turned and slowly but determinedly made her way back to the car park, the fairy with which she had spoken whispered,

“That’s why we were here, Edie. Ben sent us.”