

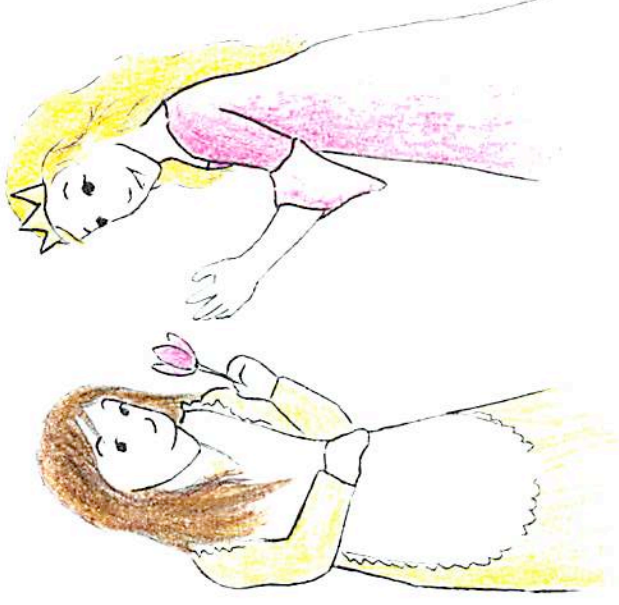
*The Prince,  
the Princess,  
and the Baker's Daughter*

*Written by Sara Wilson*

*Illustrated by Alina Larson*

The tiny, but beautiful, kingdom of Beldeiral was ruled by a king and queen who had a daughter named Arianna and a son named Jacob. Princess Arianna loved her home. When she went out into the town the people all called to her, "Princess Arianna, come try our berries! Princess Arianna, come and see our new kittens!"

Princess Arianna went through the village nearly every day to visit her friend Lillian, the baker's daughter. Lillian and Arianna liked to have adventures. Some days they went into the woods where they explored old ruins and looked for fairies in tree hollows. Other days they spent in the castle trying to sneak into the throne room or slip into royal balls. This rarely worked, however, because Prince Jacob always told on them and the nursemaid would drag them out and scold them.



“All you two ever do is make mischief,” she would grumble.

Once, Lillian and Princess Arianna climbed out a tower window and walked along the roof, but the Queen saw them and made them come down and promise never ever to do it again.

“You could have broken your necks!” the Queen had cried.

One day Princess Arianna and Lillian were going into the woods to see if they could find Hobnail Lake where the Hobnail elves made very fine shoes.

“My mother always says to be careful around Hobnail Lake,” said Lillian.

“How come?” Arianna asked. “I thought the Hobnail elves just made shoes.”

“Well,” said Lillian, “there’s a wood witch who lives near by and, of course, wood witches don’t like children. I think she lives just beyond the Hobnail village and if she catches you, she locks you up with her hens and never lets you go.”

“So we won’t go beyond the Hobnail village,” said Princess Arianna resolutely, and they set off into the woods. A little ways down the trail Arianna thought that she heard the sound of someone running behind them.

“Do you hear footsteps?” asked Lillian.

“Wait for me!” called a familiar voice.

“Oh no,” Arianna groaned. “It’s Jacob.”

Sure enough, there was Prince Jacob, running down the path.

“You can’t come with us!” Arianna said.

“Why not?” Jacob wanted to know.



“Because we’re going to see the Hobnail elves,” said Lillian.

“So?” he said.

“So, you aren’t invited,” said Arianna. “Just go home and leave us alone.”

A frown spread across Prince Jacob’s face. Princess Arianna started walking and pulled Lillian along behind her.

A ways down the trail Lillian said, “We shouldn’t have left Prince Jacob all alone in the woods. Maybe we should go look for him.”

“He knows where he is,” said Princess Arianna. “He’ll just go home and tell on us.” And with that, Princess Arianna flounced off into the woods, dragging Lillian behind her.

After an hour or so Lillian and Arianna came upon a fork in the road.

“Which way do we go?” asked Lillian.

“I thought you knew where we were going,” said Princess Arianna.

“I’ve only been there once,” said Lillian. “I think we take the right fork.”

So, they continued on the right fork in the road. After a while, Lillian said “This doesn’t look familiar. I think we should turn around.”

“Let’s go a little farther just to see what’s here,” said Princess Arianna.

“But what about the Wood Witch?” said Lillian. “I bet this is the trail my mother doesn’t want us to take.”

“Come on Lillian,” said Princess Arianna.

“We’ll be careful.”

No sooner had she said this than they heard a loud cackle. The Wood Witch appeared in the

tree above them and shouted, “I have captured

Prince Jacob. I shall raise him and one day he will take over the kingdom for me.” And with another piercing cackle, she disappeared into the trees.

Lillian tugged on Arianna’s arm.

“We have to tell someone,” she said.

“He followed us,” said Arianna, ignoring Lillian. “Lillian we have to save him!”

“How?” asked Lillian. “We should go home and tell somebody what happened.”

“No,” said Princess Arianna. “It’s my fault that he followed us. I have to save him. Let’s make a plan.”

So Arianna and Lillian sat down and

hatched a plan. They snuck back into town to pack a bag full of odds and ends that they might need and set out to find the Wood Witch. They packed

ribbons, silk flowers of all colors, a shiny silver mirror, needles and thread, and sandwiches.

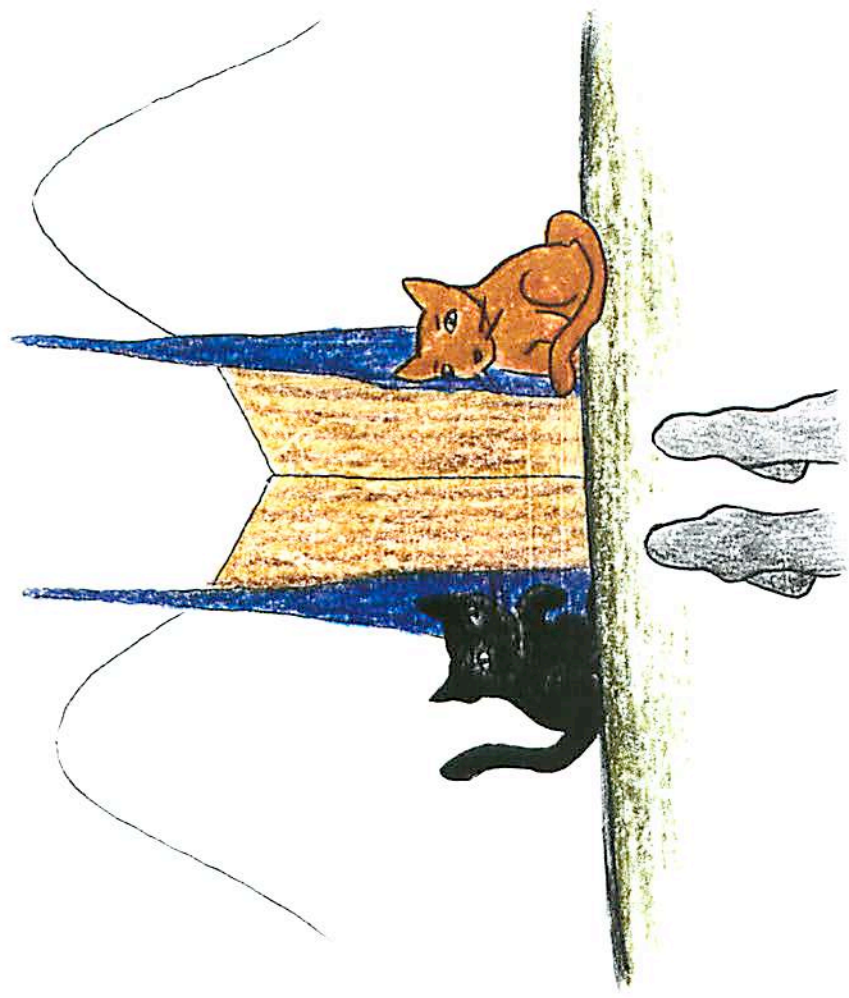
With their bags packed, they slipped out into the woods. Then they reached a gate that was guarded by two large cats. The first cat was black and the other was orange. They glared at Arianna and Lillian.

“May we come in?” asked Princess Arianna.

The cats hissed.

“Would you like a pretty ribbon?” asked Lillian.

The cats stopped hissing to look at the ribbons that the girls pulled out. Arianna tied a blue ribbon around the black cat’s neck and Lillian tied a green ribbon around the orange cat’s neck. The cats purred and let Princess Arianna and Lillian pass.



The Witch's garden was filled with vines, thorns, and thorny vines. As they walked, the vines slithered up behind them. Lillian gasped as a vine grabbed ankle. She grabbed Princess Arianna's hand. Arianna pulled silk flowers out of her bag and began to decorate the thorny vines. The vine let go of Lillian and preened.

"See, you can be beautiful," said Arianna.

The vine took the rest of the flowers from her hands and began to decorate the other thorns and vines.

At the witch's door Princess Arianna tried to push open the door. It didn't budge.

"I'm sorry," said the door politely. "I can only let you in if you look like the Witch, and I'm afraid you're too young.

"But you see, Door," said Lillian, "This is very important."

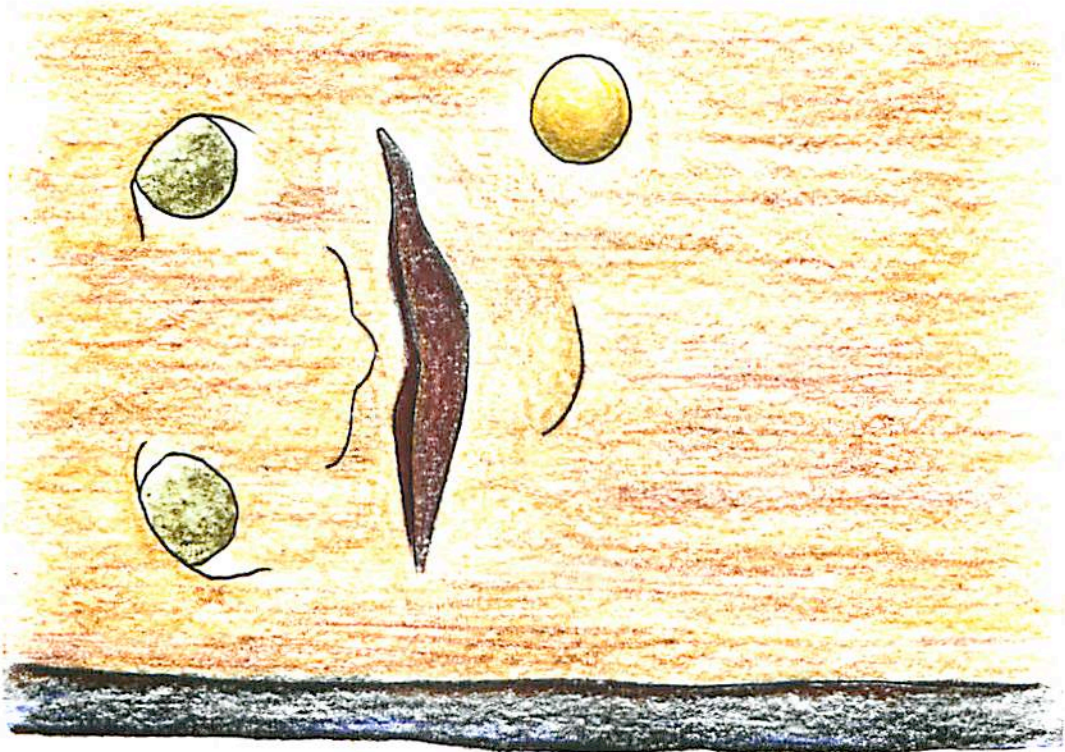
"Are you here to save the little boy?" the door asked. "Oh you don't need to worry about me. I don't like the witch. She stole me from a charming little cottage in a meadow and enchanted me so that I can only let her in."

"How so?" asked Arianna.

"Well, I have to see her face, or I can't open," it said. "It's very frustrating."

As the door was speaking, an old face appeared at the window. The Wood Witch had leathery grey skin and straw-like grey hair, and on her long nose was not one hairy wart, but two.

"What do you two think you're doing at my door," she shouted through the window. Arianna pulled the mirror out of her bag and held it up so that the door could see the Witch's reflection. The door swung open.



“Excuse me, madam,” said Princess Arianna. “But I’d like my brother back. Is there something that we can do in exchange for him?”

“Absolutely not,” said the Witch. “If you really wanted him, he would have been walking with you on the trail, not sneaking along behind you.”

“If we can prove that we want him, then can we get him back?” asked Lillian.

The Witch grinned, showing a row of crooked yellow teeth. “Certainly.”

“Lillian, how on earth will we prove that?” demanded Princess Arianna.

“I shall put Prince Jacob in the tallest tree in the forest,” said the Witch. “If you can find him and get him down by tomorrow night, then you may take him home. For now though, you will stay with

me.” The Witch dragged the girls inside and locked them in the broom closet.

The next morning the Witch let Princess Arianna and Lillian out of the closet.

“Go find the little brat,” cackled the Witch.

“I don’t even know where to start,” cried Princess Arianna. But just as she said this, the orange cat and the black cat appeared from behind a tree, still wearing their ribbons.

The orange cat walked ahead and the black cat nudged their heels.

“They want us to follow them,” said Lillian.

So they followed the cats into the woods to the tallest tree.

“Jacob?” called Arianna into the tree. “Are you there?”

“Arianna, it’s too high,” she heard a small voice say above.

“Jacob, don’t move,” said Lillian.

“How will we get him down?” asked

Arianna. No sooner had she said that than flower covered vines came slithering over. Arianna and Lillian watched as the vines grew up to the top of the tree, wrapped themselves around a terrified Prince Jacob, and brought him gently down beside them. The vines shook hands with Lillian and Princess Arianna and patted Prince Jacob on the head.

“Thank you vines,” said Princess Arianna.

The cats led the three children out of the woods, far away from the Wood Witch’s cottage. The cats left them at the edge of the woods.



“Thank you cats,” said Lillian. The cats purred and rubbed her legs. As they were walking home the King rode up behind them on his horse.

“Where have you children been?” he demanded, dismounting and gathering Arianna, Jacob and Lillian in an enormous hug. “Your mother and I have been worried sick. And Lillian, your parents too!”

“I was in a tree Papa!” said Prince Jacob.

“Were you now?” said the King as he hoisted Prince Jacob onto the saddle. “Well, you’ll have to tell me all about it on the way home.”