



The Thistle Princess

Vivian French

Elizabeth Harbour, Illustrator

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French, an experienced storyteller and re-teller of traditional tales, creates an original fairy tale with all the characteristics of a classic one. A childless, sad king and queen who lived so long ago that time was not yet “caught and kept in clocks” attract the attention of a thistle growing in their garden. Only the thistle suspects why the king and queen are unhappy and, being only a weed, has difficulty enlisting the assistance of the royal garden’s plants to remedy the situation. In time, the persistent thistle prevails and, with the necessary contributions from roses, lilies, poppies, daisies and a willow tree, transforms herself into a beautiful baby girl.

Naturally, the king and queen find the baby beneath the willow tree and love her instantly. Unfortunately, their love is so overly protective that it stifles the child. In their eagerness to protect the princess, the royal parents ignore her protests and build bigger and bigger walls around the garden to keep out the noisy children who could inadvertently bring harm to their daughter. When the king and queen finally realize their error and welcome the children to return to the garden, they are too late to save their daughter. The thistle princess simply floats away into the evening sky.

Watercolor illustrations as subdued as a misty morning fill the pages of this tender story. The text is blocked in the center of each page and surrounded by a slender border. Some scenes entirely cover double pages while on others a picture faces the bordered text. Linking the pages and describing the story’s setting more fully are smaller drawings across the bottom of the pages which give details of the garden or the increasingly larger walls built around it. Although the book is large enough for group sharing, the small, intricate images and pastel colors can be more fully appreciated during individual reading. For a fresh tale of love and loss add this title to your library’s garden of books for primary and elementary readers.

JANIS ANSELL (January / February 1999)

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