

# Silver Apricots

While everyone in the Kingdom of Kindness rejoiced, Meevillain celebrated her ominous Cloud of Chaos that began shadowing the entire kingdom the moment Princess Shayna was born.

“My Cloud of Chaos will create mistrust and misunderstanding in each village of the kingdom,” she promised. “The king and queen will attempt to help the villagers, the Royal Advisors will worry about the source of the Cloud of Chaos, and Sigmund the Royal Wizard will ponder solutions to solve the shadowing, but all their efforts will fail!”

Meevillain’s Cloud of Chaos continued to drench the kingdom with discomfort. Even Princess Shayna, who Queen Sylvia said was born happy, felt discomfort whenever a mysterious chill would shiver across her tiny body.

Princess Shayna was safe and happy within the Royal Castle. She felt unquestionable love, understanding, and respect for her feelings and ideas. The king and queen cherished Princess Shayna and her Praiseworthy Gifts that brought joy and laughter to the entire Kingdom of Kindness.

Following her fifth birthday celebration, Princess Shayna became gravely ill. “I am bewildered and frightened,” Queen Sylvia told King Alexander. “Please summon Sigmund. He will know how to wisely care for Shayna, for he loves her as if she were his own daughter.”

Sigmund was summoned to the princess’ Royal Bed Chamber where White Falcon and Princess Shayna’s parents watched over her. Sigmund felt a sense of despair when he saw the princess. For five years he dreaded the thought of this moment. Now he would have to reveal the truth about his agreement with Meevillain.

“I hoped this time would never come,” Sigmund said to the king and queen. “I will no longer have to carry the secret of Princess Shayna’s future within my heart. Your daughter has become gravely ill because Meevillain has cast a Sinister Sleeping Spell on our unsuspecting princess. I could not diminish your joy by revealing there was only enough antidote for one pregnancy and that the baby princess would only be healthy until her fifth birthday. Then she would become gravely ill, each day sleeping longer and longer,

until she falls into a never-ending sleep. By yielding to Meevillain, I obtained the antidote to her Nuptial Nectar, which made Queen Sylvia childless!"

The king hugged the queen close to his heart upon hearing Sigmund's confession. "Sigmund, we understand," Queen Sylvia said. "It was your love for and devotion to us that encouraged your compliance with Meevillain's conditions. If you had not, we would not have our Precious Gift. We have confidence that you will help our Princess Shayna!"

"Yes, I did comply with the conditions Meevillain requested or she would never have told me which ingredients I needed to make the antidote for her Nuptial Nectar. I did so knowing I would have five years to find a cure for the princess' never-ending sleeping sickness," Sigmund said. "But all of my experiments have failed."

Sigmund kept a vigil at Princess Shayna's bedside when he was not in his Royal Laboratory experimenting with numerous magic potions to combat Meevillain's Sinister Sleeping Spell.

"I will taste the magic potion first," Sigmund reassured the princess whenever he returned to her beside with a new experiment to cure her. "Shayna, I am doing my best to make you well. You know I love you as if you were my own child. I would give my life for you."

"I know, Sigi. Thank you," Princess Shayna replied planting a kiss on his cheek. "I love you more than tongue can tell!"

As Princess Shayna continued to sleep longer each day, Sigmund's discouragement increased. Disheartened, he decided to walk off his worry in the Forest of Friendship. There he could contemplate his theories and why his cures had failed.

After leaving the ivy-covered wall that circled the Royal Castle, the Royal Wizard stopped to rest at a grove of ancient Ginkgo trees that King Alexander's grandfather had planted when he built the Royal Castle. A legend within the kingdom said that the Ginkgo trees were planted as symbol of longevity and survival for the Kingdom of Kindness. They had been given to the king's grandfather as a gift from a visitor from a distant land far to the east.

The ancient Ginkgo trees bloomed golden blossoms, and sparkling silver apricots clung to their uplifting branches. Delicate fan-shaped leaflets soothed Sigmund as he relaxed against a sturdy trunk. He felt drowsy until a burst of wind whirled around him and a chill shivered across his body.

"I cannot rest, I must return to the castle immediately," Sigmund exclaimed.

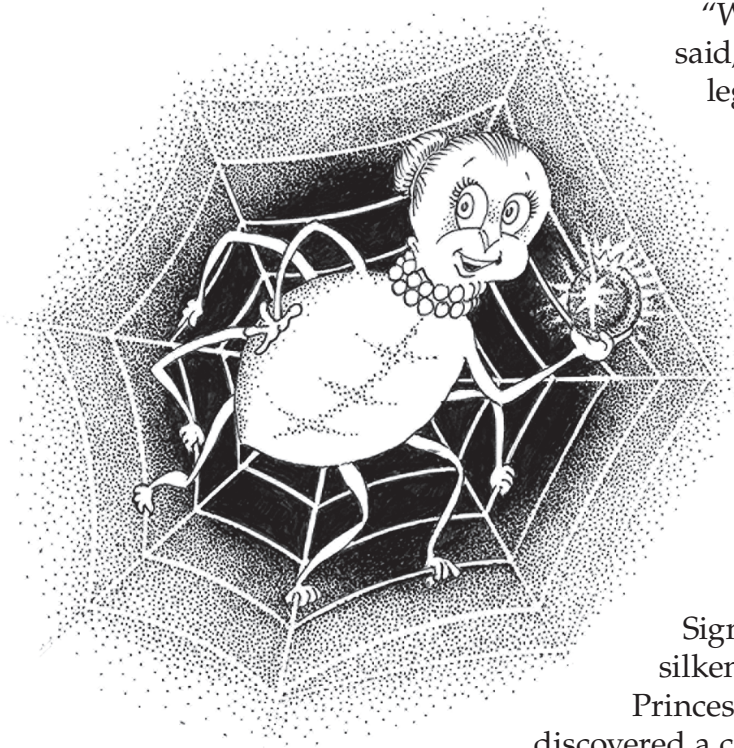
Sigmund reached for a tree limb for support. His grasp shook several silver apricots from the branches. Bouncing on the ground and cracking open, they released an unexpected aroma as silvery white fluid flowed from the shattered fruits.

“Rimsiyavyo!” Sigmund shouted in his ancient Cush language. “This is the answer! I remember, when I was a young man in Cush, my tutor explained that the milk white liquid from silver apricots was used to cure lingering illnesses. This is the cure for Princess Shayna I have been searching for. Rimsiyavyo!”

Sigmund plucked a handful of silver apricots from the ancient Ginkgo tree and hurried toward the Royal Castle. Once inside the castle, Sigmund peeked into Princess Shayna’s Royal Bed Chamber to make sure she was safe and then returned to his Royal Laboratory.

“Rimsiyavyo! I will not rest until I make a magic potion from the silver apricots to cure Princess Shayna,” he proclaimed.

By daybreak, Sigmund’s experiment proved a success. “Rimsiyavyo! I must give Princess Shayna a dose of the Silver Apricot Potion before her breakfast!” he exclaimed.



“Wake up, Sarah Spundah,” Sigmund said, tickling Sarah Spundah’s eight tiny legs.

The Guardian of the Forest of Friendship had come to the Royal Castle to assist Sigmund with his experiments and was sleeping on one of her silver spider webs in a window of Sigmund’s Royal Laboratory.

“What is all the excitement about?” Sarah Spundah asked, slowly stretching each of her eight tiny legs.

“Sarah Spundah, I need your help!” Sigmund requested. “Please, spin your silken spider threads into a vessel to hold Princess Shayna’s Silver Apricot Potion. I discovered a cure for her sleeping sickness!”

“It will take but a moment,” Sarah replied. “I am honored to help the little princess and spin a replica of the silver apricots that hang on the ancient Ginkgo trees.”

“Thank you, Sarah Spundah. This is a perfect vessel for the Silver Apricot Potion,” Sigmund said as he gently cradled the newly spun silver vessel and rushed off to Princess Shayna’s Bed Chamber.

The princess was about to bite into a cinnamon cake that Lady Eva had baked for breakfast when Sigmund rushed into her Royal Bed Chamber.

“Good morning, Sigi,” Princess Shayna said.

“Rimsiyavyo! It is a glorious morning, indeed, for I have discovered the cure for your illness, Princess Shayna,” Sigmund rejoiced. “Please wait to eat the cinnamon cakes.”

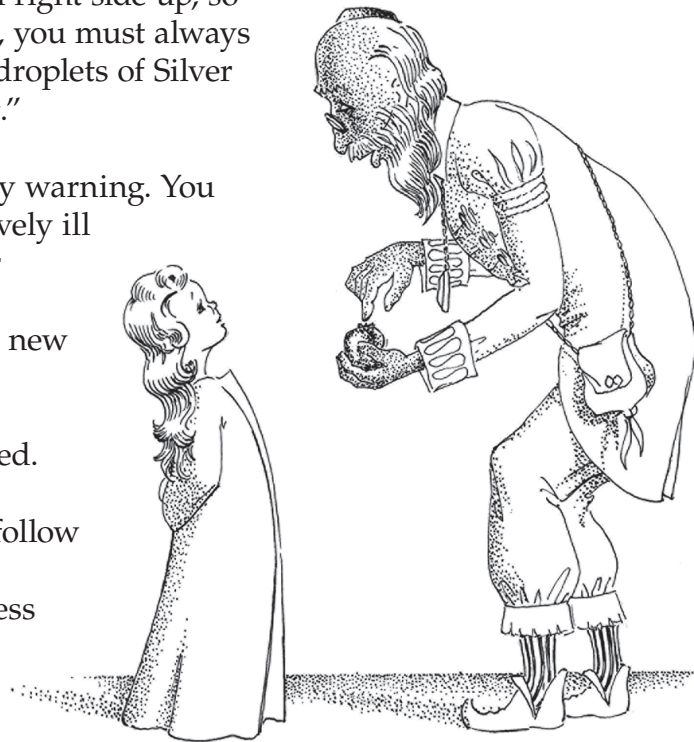
“Sigmund, we are eager to learn about the cure,” the king and queen said, as White Falcon flapped his powerful wings with excitement.

“The cure for Meevillain’s Sinister Sleeping Spell is this Silver Apricot Potion, which is stored in this silver vessel Sarah Spundah spun for you,” Sigmund told the princess. “Princess Shayna, you must listen carefully and follow my precise instructions. First, you must always carry your Silver Apricot Potion with you wherever you go. Second, you must turn the vessel upside down to release three droplets of the Silver Apricot Potion onto your fingertip. Then you must turn the vessel right side up, so it will refill itself with the potion. Third, you must always remember to accurately dispense three droplets of Silver Apricot Potion each time **before** you eat.”

Sigmund cautioned, “Shayna, heed my warning. You will endanger your life and become gravely ill again if you do not dispense your Silver Apricot Potion as I have instructed. You must promise to carefully perform your new routine.”

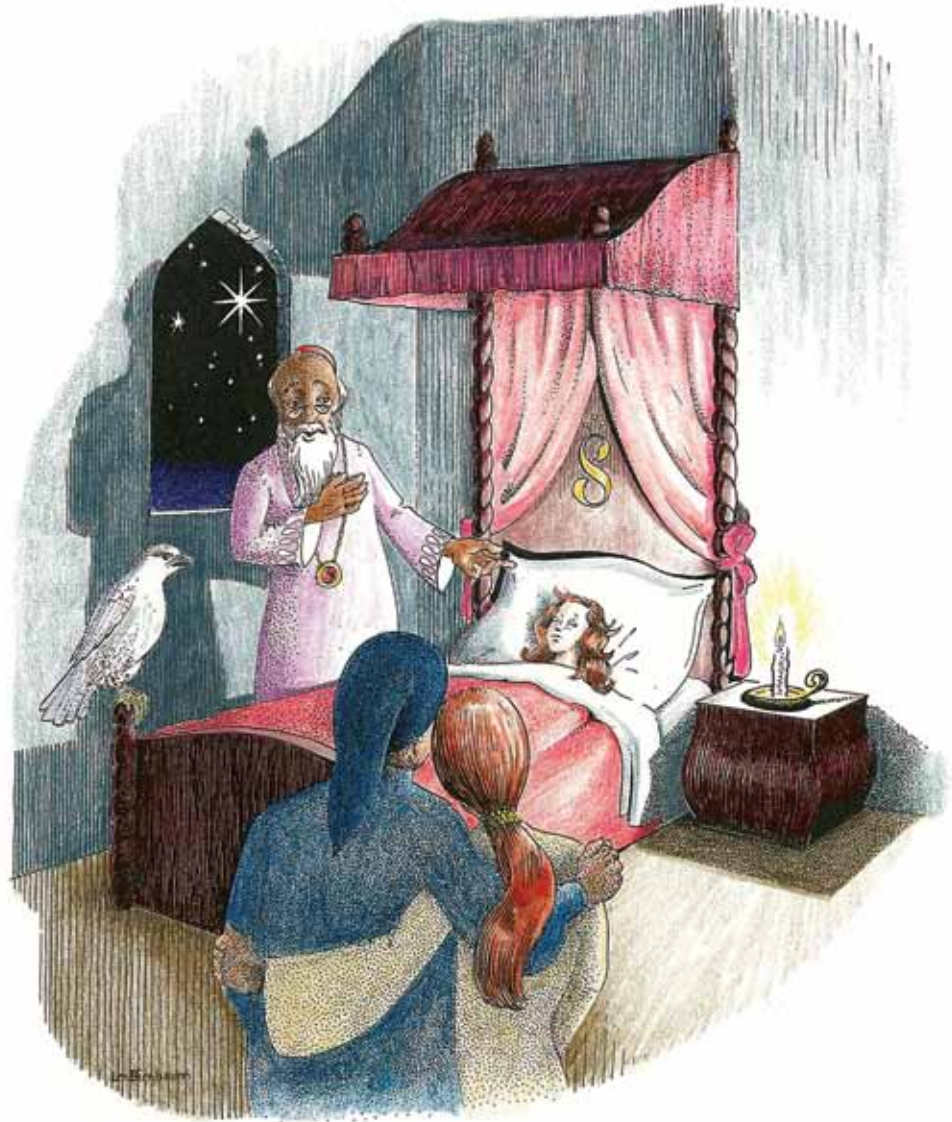
“I will, Sigi,” Princess Shayna promised.

Princess Shayna learned to carefully follow Sigi’s instructions about dispensing her Silver Apricot Potion. Handling her illness might have become a challenge for the princess, but she used her Invisible Visible Gift and easily adapted to her new routine. She learned to dispense her Silver Apricot Potion each time before she ate and rapidly regained her good health.



With loving encouragement from her family and White Falcon, the princess became confident with her new routine. She learned to handle the challenge of her illness, turning what might have become an obstacle into an opportunity to discipline herself and understand others who also had to overcome difficulties in their lives. Princess Shayna’s empathy, appreciation of life, and the blessings of good health and comfort increased as she learned to take good care of herself.

*You will find reflections about this chapter on page 109 of the Gift Giver’s Guide.*



#### Chapter 4: Silver Apricots

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1. Have you ever had to reveal the truth about something that was difficult?
2. When Clouds of Chaos shadow your life, what do they look and feel like?

Unscramble this word **IPSEBOSNIYTILR** and reflect how it is important to the story and your life.

(*rspnonsitvilt*)