



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Somebody Else's Prince

Evelyn Sharp



In a country that is so far away that only wymps and fairies ever live long enough to get there, an exceptional King and Queen once ruled over their five children, a devoted nation, and each other. Now, the five children had five gardens all in a row; and four of these belonged to the King's four sons, and were just as beautiful as gardens cannot help being, which is surely beautiful enough for ordinary folk. The Princess Gentianella, however, was anything but an ordinary princess; and her garden, the one that came at the end of the row, was far more beautiful than any one could possibly describe. This was hardly to be wondered at, for, while the four Princes had to work very hard in their gardens before anything would grow in them, the fairies just came and breathed on the Princess's garden, and everything that was bright to see and sweet to smell grew up in it. Even the wymps did not play any tricks with the Princess's garden; for they had given her their warm little wymphish hearts the moment she was born; so they allowed the sun to shine on her charming flower-beds as much as it pleased—and, of course, it pleased the sun to shine there very often indeed.

Now, the Princess's garden was surrounded by a wall. When she was quite a little girl, the King and Queen had ordered the wall to be built, just high enough to keep her from looking over it; and every time that the Princess grew a little more, another row of bricks was added to the wall, so that, by the time she had stopped growing altogether, the wall was ever so much higher than she was. She was such a dainty little Princess, though, that even then it was not a very high

wall. Still, it was high enough to prevent her from seeing what was on the other side; and this annoyed her so much that all the pretty flowers the fairies could give her did not make up for the things she was not tall enough to see. The King and Queen had no idea of this; they loved their little daughter extremely, and they only thought how clever and how wise they were to keep her from looking into the world that lay outside her garden. "She might see something to frighten her, if she could see over the wall," they said.

The four Princes had no walls round their gardens, and what was more, they could see over the wall of their sister's garden, too; but they never thought of telling her what they saw.

"Boys always have all the fun," sighed the little Princess. "I wish I were a boy!"

Then, one by one, the three elder Princes rode away into the world and left their gardens to run to seed; and at last the time came for the King's youngest son to go too.

"It will be dreadfully dull when you have gone away," said the Princess, who was sitting on the grass-plot in her garden when Prince Hyacinth came to say good-bye to her.

"Oh no," answered her brother, with a smile; "you can still play in your pretty garden."

The Princess pouted. "You would not like to play by yourself for ever and ever and ever," she remarked.

The Prince was sure he would not have liked it at all, but then, he was not a little girl. "It must be rather dull," he confessed; "but perhaps, if you wait long enough, some other prince will come into your garden, and then you can ask him to play with you."

The Princess shook her head. "He will never be able to get in," she sighed. "Only look at that stupid high wall!"

Prince Hyacinth laughed outright, as princes sometimes do when their sisters are only little girls. "I expect he'll be able to get in, if he is anything of a prince," he observed. Then he kissed her on both cheeks, and rode away like the others.

That was how the Princess Gentianella was left alone in the most beautiful garden on this side of the sun. And if it had not been for the wymps, she might never have known to the end of her days what the world was like on the other side of her wall. Fortunately for every one, however, the wymps are never far off when a charming little princess is in trouble; and on the very day that the King's youngest son rode away into the world, one of the nicest and the naughtiest and the wympiest wymps of all came head first through the sun, and was sitting on

the top of the Princess's wall with his legs dangling, before she had time to say "Oh!"

"Come now," said the wymp, "let's hear all about it." His tone was so exceedingly friendly, and he seemed so unlikely to give her good advice, which was all that a fairy would have done, that the Princess Gentianella dried her eyes and told him everything. When she had finished, the wymp stood on his head to concentrate his thoughts, and reflected deeply.

"Will you tell me what is on the other side of my wall?" asked the Princess Gentianella, as the wymp remained in this remarkable position without speaking. She did not know that it never makes much difference to a wymp whether he is on his head or his heels, so she was naturally afraid that he would make his head ache if he stood on it any longer. However, the wymp came through the air in somersaults, when he heard the Princess's question, and he landed in the middle of a bed of scarlet poppies and twinkled at her.

"You won't like it, if I do," he remarked.

"I am quite positive I shall," declared the Princess; "and you are such a particularly nice kind of wymp that you surely cannot refuse to tell me!"

No wymp of the right sort could have resisted an appeal like that; and as every wymp is the right sort of wymp, this particular wymp at once did as the Princess asked him.

"All right," he said. "There isn't much to tell, though. There are the usual rows of mountains, and the usual rivers and lakes and islands and peninsulas and—"

"Don't!" cried the Princess, stopping up her ears with her little pink finger-tips.

"—and isthmuses," continued the wymp, cheerfully; "and volcanoes, and hot springs and cold springs, and palm-trees and apple-trees and boot-trees—"

"I don't believe," interrupted the Princess, indignantly, "that there is nothing but a stupid geography book on the other side of my wall!"

The wymp looked at her and twinkled more than ever; but when he saw that her eyes were shining, just as her own flowers might have done at the time of the dew-fall, he stopped teasing her at once. No one knows better than a wymp when it is time to stop teasing.

"Hullo!" he said. "What is the matter now?"

"I thought I should see something quite different," said the Princess, plaintively.

"So you would, my little dear," cried the wymp. "I was only telling you what I saw. Give me those two ridiculous little hands of yours, and you shall see everything that I didn't."

This time the Princess Gentianella did say "Oh!" and she said it because she found herself sitting on the top of her wall, with all the world on the other side of it lying stretched out before her, for miles and miles and miles. She did not see very much at first, though, for she looked no further than the little corner of it that lay just under her eyes.

"Why," said the Princess, softly, "there is a garden on the other side of my wall. And only look, there is a real Prince in the middle of it!"

She turned round to tell her wymp all about it, but the wymp had other work to do and was already on his way to the back of the sun. So there was nothing for it but to look over the wall again, and this time the Prince glanced up and saw her.

Now, Prince Amaryllis had been waiting a great many days for some one to appear at the top of the wall, but now that some one really had appeared there and was looking so extremely glad to see him, he suddenly found he had nothing whatever to say to her. That is what occasionally happens to the most charming of princes. Fortunately, however, the Princess knew perfectly well what to say to him.

"I knew there would be something nice on the other side of my wall," she cried. "The wymp was quite wrong, wasn't he?"

"No doubt he was, if you say so," answered the Prince, who had never noticed the wymp at all. "But how is it, little lady, that you can see me?"

The Princess opened her big eyes and stared at him. "How can I help seeing you, if you are there?" she asked.

"But I'm not here, that's just it," explained Prince Amaryllis; "at least, I am not supposed to be. You see, I have been invisible all my life, and you are the first person, outside my own country, who has ever been able to see me. I am very glad you can see me," he added politely; "one gets a little tired sometimes of being heard and not seen."

"When I was a little girl," said Princess Gentianella, drawing herself up to her full height, "I was always taught to be seen and not heard. That was very dull, too. But tell me, why is it that you are invisible?"

"Alas!" said the Prince. "The whole of my country is invisible, too. Tell me what you can see, Princess, from the top of your wall."

"I can see you," answered the little Princess, promptly.

"But do you see nothing else?" asked Prince Amaryllis.

The Princess shaded her eyes with her hand and looked away into the distance. "I can see a large flat plain, with no trees and no rivers and no people and no

houses," she answered presently.

Prince Amaryllis sighed. "You are looking right into my country," he said dolefully, "and it is every bit as full of trees and rivers and people and houses as anybody else's country. Do you not hear anything either?"

"Oh, yes," said Princess Gentianella; "I can hear the murmur of voices and the ripple of rivers and the rustle of trees. I have heard those sounds all my life, but I thought they were in the wind."

"Nothing of the sort," replied the Prince. "They are the sounds that belong to my country, where everybody is heard and not seen. It all began with a christening-party, a hundred years ago. My great-grandfather was King then, and he was the most absent-minded king that has ever ruled over us, and he forgot to ask the Witch to dance with him, which, of course, offended her deeply. And it happened that she was a witch who was always making experiments, so she experimented on my country at once by making it invisible, and it has been invisible ever since."

"How strange!" said Princess Gentianella. "I never remember hearing any one talk about your country."

"Of course not," sighed the Prince; "you can't expect people to talk about a thing that isn't there, can you? You have no idea how stupid it is to live in a place that no one can see."

"But why does not someone disenchant your kingdom?" asked the Princess, who had read quite enough history to know that kingdoms are always disenchanted sooner or later.

"That is what I am trying to do," answered Prince Amaryllis. "The spell can only be removed if a king's son will spend a whole year in this waste piece of ground and make it into a beautiful garden. But although I have been here nearly a year, I have not been able to make a single flower grow. It is a little tiresome," he added with another sigh, "for it is part of the spell that I shall have to be executed if I fail."

"Dear me!" exclaimed the little Princess. "You are much too nice to be executed! Won't you let me come and play in your garden? Perhaps I might help you to make the flowers grow."

Prince Amaryllis shook his head and smiled. "It is not a nice garden to play in," he said. "I think I will come and play in yours instead, and you shall teach me the way to make the flowers grow."

So the Prince jumped over the wall into the Princess's garden, and they walked about, hand in hand, among all the bright flower-beds that the fairies had

planted there. They did not play very much, though, for they had so many things to talk about; and they talked and talked and talked, without stopping a moment, for the rest of the afternoon. For all that, when tea-time came and the Prince went back into his own garden, he remembered all sorts of things he might have said to the Princess if he had only thought of them in time; while Princess Gentianella, in the middle of her second cup of tea, also remembered all the things she might have said to the Prince, only she had not said them. That is always the way with princes and princesses who are carefully brought up.

After that, Princess Gentianella and Prince Amaryllis played together for a number of days. But they always played in the Princess's garden, because it was a much nicer garden to play in; and as for the Prince's garden, they seemed to have forgotten that altogether. Then, one afternoon, when the Princess ran out as usual into the hot sunshine, her Prince from over the wall met her with a very disconsolate face.

"The year has come to an end," he told her, "and since I cannot make the flowers grow in my garden, I shall have to go and be executed as soon as the Witch sends for me."

The little Princess's lips began to quiver, and her eyes grew large and round and shining. "It is too bad," she declared, "to execute a really nice Prince like you!"

"Do not be distressed," replied Prince Amaryllis, in a resigned tone. "Now that I have seen you, little lady, I shall be almost glad to be executed."

"You are talking nonsense," declared the Princess. "Why do you want to be executed?"

"Because, even if I knew the way to make the flowers grow," he replied, "my country would not be disenchanted unless I married Anemone, the Witch's daughter, as well. And, of course, I would sooner be executed than do that!"

"What!" exclaimed the Princess; "you have promised to marry a witch's daughter? Do you mean to say that all this while I have been playing with somebody else's Prince?"

There was no doubt that the Princess Gentianella was extremely angry; and the Prince could not help thinking that she was just a little bit unreasonable as well.

"You see, it was part of the disenchantment," he explained. "If you had to be invisible all your life, you would promise anything to get disenchanted. Besides," he added, as the Princess showed no signs of being appeased, "they told me that Anemone, although a witch's daughter, was exceedingly beautiful."

"What difference does that make?" demanded the Princess. "You ought to have told me before, that you were somebody else's Prince. You haven't been playing

fair!"

"It is true I forgot to mention it," said the Prince, a little crossly; "but one cannot remember everything, you know."

Princess Gentianella gathered up her train with much dignity and turned her back on the Prince.

"People who are as forgetful as that deserve to be invisible," she observed haughtily; and with that she swept up the garden path and into the palace. She lost all her dignity, however, as soon as she was out of the Prince's sight; and it was a very doleful little Princess who came to take tea with her royal parents that afternoon. When she even went so far as to say that she preferred bread-and-butter to plum-cake, the King and Queen began to be seriously alarmed.

"What is the matter with the child?" asked the Queen of the King.

"Perhaps she has a sunstroke," suggested the King, who thought that only illness could possibly prevent a daughter of his from eating her plum-cake at tea-time. The Queen knew better, but she waited until the King had gone back into his study before she said anything. Then she said the very best thing possible.

"What did you see when you looked over your wall, little daughter?" she asked.

"There was a prince on the other side," confessed the Princess Gentianella.

"To be sure, there was," smiled the Queen. "There is always a prince on the other side; but why should that make you unhappy? Is he not a nice prince?"

"He is a real Prince," said her little daughter; "and I should not be at all unhappy if he had not just told me that he is somebody else's Prince!"

"Never mind," said the Queen, consolingly; "you will soon find another prince in your garden."

"But not that Prince," wept the poor little Princess.

"One prince is much the same as another," said the Queen; but she did not think so for a moment, and no more did the little Princess.



Now, it was quite true that Prince Amaryllis had not been playing fair, and that his forgetfulness was enough to annoy the nicest little Princess in the world; but for all that, he was going to be executed, and it is difficult to be angry for long with anyone who is just going to be executed. So, when Princess Gentianella ran out once more into the sunshine on the following morning, she was fully prepared to make friends with her Prince from over the wall. She was greatly

disturbed to find, however, that there was no one to make friends with; and although she called the Prince's name several times, not an answer came from the other side of the wall. Then the Princess Gentianella did what she had never been brave enough to do before,—she shut her eyes and jumped; and either she jumped higher than so small a princess ever jumped before, or else the wall was not nearly such a high wall as she had always thought it was, for the next moment she found herself on her two little feet in the very middle of the Prince's garden. She was very close to the invisible country now, and the people's voices were so loud that she could actually hear what they were saying. This was not really surprising, though, for they were all saying the same thing.

"Our Prince cannot make the flowers grow, and the Witch has taken him away to be executed," was what they were saying.

When the Princess Gentianella heard that, she dropped straight down on the ground and burst into tears, and her tears rained all over the garden in showers; and wherever they fell, the flowers began to grow,—first of all, snowdrops and primroses and daffodils, then red poppies and blue larkspurs and white lilies, then hollyhocks and nasturtiums and mignonette, and last of all, roses,—red roses, pink roses, yellow roses, all sorts of roses. And the scent from all these flowers was so delicious that the little Princess lifted her head at last and looked round.

"Oh!" she cried, starting to her feet; "some one has made the flowers grow in the Prince's garden!"

"Some one certainly has," chuckled a voice from the top of the wall; and there sat the same wymp as before, looking just as though he had never gone away to the back of the sun at all. At the same instant, the people's voices sounded louder than ever from the kingdom close by.

"The flowers have learned the way to grow in the Prince's garden," they were shouting; "and the Prince will not be executed, after all!"

Princess Gentianella danced for joy, in and out of the Prince's bright flower-beds. "The Prince will not be executed, after all," she said, too.

"And he will be able to marry Anemone, the Witch's beautiful daughter," added the wymp.

All the laughter died out of Princess Gentianella's face, and she looked up at the wymp in a very woe-begone manner indeed.

"Oh," she said piteously, "I never thought of that. I—I had quite forgotten that he was somebody else's Prince."

The wymp fairly wimped when he saw the poor little Princess looking so

unhappy. "Don't you fret about that, my little dear," he cried. "Do you suppose the Witch's daughter wants anybody else's Prince, either?"

Princess Gentianella clapped her hands with delight. "Of course she doesn't!" she cried. "But perhaps she does not know he is somebody else's Prince."

"Then go and tell her so," suggested the wymp; and before she had time to thank him for his advice he had gone off once more to the back of the sun.

The little Princess did not stop to think about it, but just ran as fast as she could towards the invisible kingdom of Prince Amaryllis. It might seem a little difficult to run towards a place that did not appear to be there, but to any one who was in as great a hurry as the little Princess a thing like that was of very small consequence. So she ran and she ran and she ran, until the Prince's kingdom was really obliged to stop being invisible, for in all the hundred years that it had been bewitched no one had ever tried so hard to see it before. Besides, it would have been most impolite of anybody's kingdom to go on pretending that it was not there, when the Princess was so determined to pretend that it was; so in the end she suddenly found herself in the middle of a country that was as full of trees and rivers and people and houses as any other country, and the particular part of it in which she found herself was a nice green field full of woolly sheep.

"What a charming kingdom!" exclaimed Princess Gentianella. "How green the trees are, and how fresh everything looks! Why, there is not a speck of dust to be seen."

"Of course there isn't," answered a jolly little lamb, who was trying, as lambs will, to behave as though he had only two legs instead of four. "Dust, indeed! When a kingdom has not been seen for a hundred years, naturally it keeps fresher than a kingdom that any one can stare at. Nothing fades a kingdom like staring at it, you know. However, all this will soon be altered, for I hear that the Prince has made the flowers grow in his garden; so all he has to do now is to marry the Witch's daughter, and then we shall be disenchanted at last."

"Oh no, you won't!" said Princess Gentianella, shaking her finger at him wisely.

"Why not?" asked the lamb, standing still for the first time in his life.

"Because the Prince is not going to marry the Witch's daughter," answered Princess Gentianella; and she ran on before the lamb had time to recover from his astonishment.

Down a curly white road ran the little Princess, between two of the greenest hedges she had ever seen, until she came to a stile. Now, she had never climbed a stile in her life, so of course she did not know what to do next. However, there stood the stile waiting to be climbed, and there stood the Princess feeling very much inclined to cry, when it happened most fortunately that an old woodcutter

came strolling along. He was a particularly cross-looking woodcutter, but the Princess was in far too great a hurry to notice that.

"If you please," she said as politely as she could, "will you lift me over this great, big, high stile?"

The woodcutter at once did as he was asked, and then was so surprised at his own kindness that he stood and stared at the little Princess.

"Well, I never!" he exclaimed. "That's the first time in my life I ever did anything to please anybody. Are you a witch?"

"No, but I am looking for one," said Princess Gentianella. "Can you tell me where she is?"

"If you mean the one whose daughter is going to marry the Prince, I think I can," replied the woodcutter, who thought he might as well go on being kind, now that he had once begun.

"That is certainly not the witch I mean," answered the Princess, promptly, "for the Prince is not going to marry any witch's daughter!" And she ran on faster than ever.

Presently she came to a brook that was covered with ice.

"Dear me!" cried Princess Gentianella. "It was springtime round the corner, and here have I tumbled into the middle of winter!"

A fish popped his head through the ice, and laughed from ear to ear,—two things that he could do quite easily, for he happened to be a skate. "The seasons have been mixed up in this country ever since we were bewitched, a hundred years ago," he said. "It is no use being particular about the time of year when there is no one to see what kind of weather you are having. If you stand on tiptoe you will see summer going on in the next field."

"It must be very difficult to know what clothes to put on, when you take a walk in this country," remarked the Princess. "But, of course, it doesn't matter what you do wear when there is no one to look at you!"

"Well, well," said the skate, "things will soon be altered, and the seasons will have to right themselves again, for I am told that Prince Amaryllis is going to marry the Witch's daughter, and so the country will be disenchanted at last."

"Rubbish!" laughed the little Princess, knowingly. "Don't you believe everything you are told! The Prince is going to do nothing of the sort!"

Then she ran away from the skate and the frozen brook, and she ran right out of winter into the middle of summer; and she might have gone on running until she reached the middle of autumn too, if she had not been stopped by an enormous

sea-serpent who was lying stretched across the road. When the sea-serpent saw the Princess, of course he flapped his fifty-five fins at her, and lashed his tail about furiously, and growled in a hoarse, fishy voice. But the Princess mistook his fury for politeness. When one has lived in a garden with a wall round it and never seen a sea-serpent in one's life, one is apt to make these mistakes.

"I am very pleased to meet you," she said, with her most charming smile; "I have often wanted to meet a dragon."

"She calls me a dragon!" groaned the sea-serpent, foaming like the sea in a tempest; "and I am connected with the very best family of sea-serpents! What will people say next?"

"I am very sorry," said the Princess, humbly. "You see, I thought, as you were not in the sea—"

"I was expecting that," interrupted the sea-serpent, bitterly. "No one ever will believe in me unless I stop in the sea. It is very depressing!"

"I am sure I am very glad you have come out of the sea," said the Princess, politely, "because it has given me the pleasure of meeting you. But does it not make you very thirsty to lie in this hot dusty road?"

"Not nearly so thirsty as stopping in the sea and having nothing but salt water to drink," answered the sea-serpent. "People do not realise what a thirsty life a sea-serpent has to lead. If they did," he added severely, "they would not stand in front of him and ask so many questions!"

The Princess laughed merrily. "I do not want to stand here at all," she explained; "but unless you move your tail a little on one side, I really cannot get past."

"If you do get past," growled the sea-serpent, "you will fall into the Witch's hands."

"That is exactly where I want to fall!" cried Princess Gentianella; "only you must move your tail a little bit more than that, or else I am afraid I shall step on it."

It was such a novelty for the sea-serpent to find some one who was not frightened of him, that he had not the heart to tell her that he was just going to eat her up. So he moved his tail out of the way, and Princess Gentianella blew a kiss to him from the tips of her little pink fingers and ran on as before.

The next person she met was an old woman, who was picking thistles in a field.

"I wonder why you are doing that!" said the Princess, opening her big blue eyes.

"I am making an experiment, to see if I can find any one with so brave a heart that the thistles will not be able to hurt it," answered the old woman, mysteriously.

"But does it not scratch your fingers to gather those large prickly thistles?" asked the little Princess.

"Perhaps it does," the old woman said shortly; "but who do you suppose is going to gather them for me?"

She seemed rather cross, but the Princess supposed it was because she had pricked her fingers so much.

"Well, I am in a most tremendous hurry, but I think I can stop and help you," she answered; and down she dropped on her knees and began to pick thistles as fast as she could. And when the thistles saw what soft pink fingers were going to take hold of them, they at once bent back all their prickles and allowed the Princess to gather as many as she pleased without giving her so much as a scratch. When she had filled the old woman's apron for her, she began to run off at full speed, to make up for lost time. But the old woman called her back.

"Stop!" she cried. "Where are you going?"

"I am going to find the Witch's daughter," answered Princess Gentianella, looking back impatiently.

"Oh, indeed!" said the old woman. "May I ask what you want with her?"

"I want to tell her not to marry Prince Amaryllis, because he is not her Prince but somebody else's Prince," said Princess Gentianella.

"Oh, indeed!" said the old woman again. "And whose Prince may he be, then?"

"He is my Prince, of course!" answered the little Princess, laughing happily; and then away she ran across the field, and into the wood that lay beyond.

In the wood, under a hazel-tree, sat a tall and beautiful girl, weeping bitterly.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said Princess Gentianella, mournfully. "How dreadfully sorry I am!"

"Why?" asked the girl, looking up at her.

"Because you are crying, to be sure," answered the Princess. "Will you tell me why you are so sad?"

"My mother, who is always making experiments, wants me to marry a Prince I have never seen, just to see how we should like it," explained the girl. "And all the while, I am somebody else's Princess!"

"That is very strange," remarked Princess Gentianella. "Now I am sad because my Prince has got to marry Anemone, the Witch's beautiful daughter, and I am trying to find her to tell her that he is really my Prince. Do you think she will want to marry him, when she hears that he is somebody else's Prince?"

The beautiful girl suddenly sprang to her feet and began to laugh joyfully. "I am sure she will not," she answered, "for I am Anemone, the Witch's daughter. So nobody will have to marry anybody's Prince except her own, and the witch will not be able to make experiments any more!"

"That is settled, then," said the little Princess, contentedly. "Now let us go and find our Princes. But supposing that I find your Prince first, how shall I know that he is your Prince?"

"His name is Hyacinth," answered the Witch's daughter.

"How delightful!" cried Princess Gentianella, clapping her hands. "Then I shall find my youngest brother as well as my Prince. But do you know where they are?"

Anemone, the Witch's daughter, began to look a little doubtful. "I have just remembered," she confessed, "that I sent Hyacinth to kill your Prince, only a few minutes before you came along. Do not be anxious, however," she added hastily, "for perhaps he will not be able to find him."

The Princess Gentianella was not at all anxious. "Nobody could possibly be strong enough to kill my Prince," she observed; "and as for Hyacinth, he will be quite safe, for Prince Amaryllis is much too nice to hurt any one!"

She proved to be right, for in another minute they saw the two Princes coming towards them arm in arm. And if this should seem extraordinary, it must be remembered that it all took place in an enchanted wood, where a witch had been making experiments for hundreds and hundreds of years.

"There was no necessity to kill him, dearest," cried Prince Hyacinth, "for he is somebody else's Prince."

He held out his arms as he spoke, and into them ran Anemone, the Witch's daughter, and of course there is no need to tell into whose arms the little Princess ran. After that, there was nothing to be heard in the wood except kissing, until the Witch suddenly stepped on the scenes.

"Cobwebs and broomsticks! What is the meaning of this?" she cried furiously.

Three of them turned round and faced her in an extremely nervous manner; for, after all, a witch is a witch, and they knew fast enough that she could turn them into any shape she pleased. The Princess Gentianella did not seem nervous, however.

"Why, you are the nice old lady I met in the field," she exclaimed.

"I believe I am," said the Witch, who had never been called a nice old lady in her life before, and was not quite sure how to take it.

"I have found my Prince, you see," continued the little Princess, smiling away as happily as possible.

"So it seems," said the Witch. She was afraid to say more than that, in case the Princess should find out who she was, and she thought she would like to be a nice old lady a little longer first.

"And have you found any one yet who has so brave a heart that the thistles cannot hurt it?" asked Princess Gentianella.

"I think I have," said the Witch.

"Then we have all found what we want," smiled Princess Gentianella, "and the Witch cannot surely be so unkind as to refuse to disenchant the kingdom, just because her daughter doesn't want to marry my Prince! Do you think she can?"

The Witch dropped her thistles and held out her hands to the eager Princess. "My dear little girl," she said, "the kingdom was disenchanted the moment you came into it. As for the Witch, there is no Witch any longer, for she retired into private life as a nice old lady, just ten minutes ago. Now, as you all seem to have sorted yourselves the right way, the best thing you can do is to go off home as fast as you can."

No doubt that is where Anemone must have gone with her Prince, for when the little Princess looked round and found herself standing once more in her own garden, there was no one with her except Prince Amaryllis.

"Now may I come and play in your garden?" asked Princess Gentianella, softly.

The Prince still shook his head. "I have a much better idea than that," he said; "we will pull down the wall and make it all into one garden."

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