



WELCOME TO THE 18TH ANNUAL WITCHLETS IN THE WOODS!

Saturday, August 3 – Wednesday, August 7, 2019

Mendocino Woodlands, Camp II, 39350 Little Lake Road, Mendocino CA 95460

We look forward to coming together as a community again this year with new friends as well as old. Witchlets was birthed by the desire to create a sacred space for pagan families to come together and honor the gifts that witches of all ages bring to the world. Together, we create a place where our families are surrounded by magic and where children and adults feel safe and free to step into their magical power. It is an opportunity for pagan families of all kinds to build community resources and expand extended family.

In that spirit, all adult campers and teachers agree to act with integrity and mindfulness in our interactions with all of the children in camp, recognizing that while we are each responsible for our own children, at camp we create community and share the sacred trust of creating a safe and nurturing container for all of our children.

Witchlets in the Woods is drug and alcohol free during the length of camp except for prescription drugs, medicinal herbs, nicotine, and caffeine. Reclaiming is a tradition that chooses to move between the worlds at will without the aid of mood-, mind-, or spirit- altering substances.

We are organized by volunteer Weavers and Spinners, who meet monthly and make decisions by consensus. All who are interested are welcome to attend our meetings. If you'd like to become a member of the Weavers or a Spinner, you must have attended one camp and be able to commit to missing a maximum of two meetings throughout the year. This year's Weavers are: Adissa, Alla, Jamie, Meg,

Natasha, and Rahula. Talk to any of us if you want to know more about becoming a Weaver or Spinner!

At camp, there are many ways to step into leadership and help make the magic happen. We are committed to the Reclaiming Principles of Unity which can be found on our website at www.Witchlets.org.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Before camp, the main contacts for Camp 2019 are the coordinators, Meg and Rahula, who can be reached at 510-207-1500 or by sending an email to info@witchlets.org. Our mailing address is P.O. Box 14404, San Francisco CA 94114.

To get the most up-to-date information about Witchlets and to participate in discussions, please subscribe to our email-based group by sending an email to: witwoods-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Our Facebook group is at www.facebook.com/WITWoods. We also provide important information about camp on our website's blog at www.Witchlets.org.

During camp, the only phone at camp is a pay phone. If someone needs to reach you while you're at camp, they will need to call 707-937-9958 and let it ring and ring. The pay phone is located outside and it may take a while for someone to hear that it's ringing. Cell phones generally do not work in the Mendocino Woodlands.



CAMP SIGN-IN

On-site registration is from 2:00 – 4:00 pm, Saturday, August 3, at the Woodlands Camp II. When you register, please make sure to sign the Photo Release form and the Liability form for all members of your family before heading to your cabin or camping spot. We ask that you sign up for camp tasks at that time, as well.

Please give yourselves plenty of time to get settled before the all-camp meeting and snacks (yay!) which begin at 5:00 pm. Dinner will be served at approximately 6:00 pm.

GENERAL SCHEDULE

Our days follow this general routine with a few changes for meetings and special offerings:

Mornings

7:00 Breakfast
9:00 Clean up
9:30 Entering story
10:00 Paths

Afternoons

12:30 Lunch; Ritual planning (all are welcome)
1:30 Clean up
2:00 Family free time (nap, journal, swim, play, hike, listen to the forest...)
2:00 and 3:30 Workshops

Evenings

5:30 Dinner
7:00 All-camp ritual (except Monday's ritual will be at 4:00 before dinner)
9:00 Fire circle with story and song

PATHS

Paths will meet each morning for the duration of camp, and are traditionally organized by age.

Faery Path (Ages 0–4): Rima, Mia, and Christina will hold our faeries with play and song. This path is for faeries accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Newt Path (Ages 4–8): Join Riyana, Phoenix, and George in “Elements for Newts” — an Elements of Magic path designed especially for young folks. Singing, crafts, nature magic, and games will link us to the four elements and the general story line of the camp story. We will explore and play in or near “Newt Central”, which is located close to Bear Path in case parents are needed. Our Newts will be exploring near the river during one of our path mornings, so please feel free to bring water friendly clothing and/or shoes with you to camp. Newt family members are invited to a special campfire one evening, where Newts will share path stories, songs, and s'mores.

Raccoon Path (Ages 8–13): Led by Ingrid, Hilary, and KaeliMo, we will dive into an amazing journey of our own. Working with games, trances, shapeshifting, spellworking, and crafts, we will transform and find our very own gifts that we endow to ourselves, our families, and the world.

Raven Path (Ages 13–19): Join our teen team — Copper, Maeve, Stas, and Sequoia — to explore magic and mystery from a teen's point of view, and build connections with the Earth and one another.

Otter Path (Young Adults): Many Otters are mentors or teachers in morning paths. With organizational support from Jax, they will connect in the afternoons or evenings – more info TBA at camp.

Bear Path (Adults, ages 18 and up): Rose and Moss will offer a magical experience for adults based on our camp story.



WHAT TO BRING

Do your best, but... if you get to camp only to find that you forgot your fanciest tutu, or left your unscented bug repellent on the bathroom sink back home — no worries. Chances are, someone brought extra and will be happy to share. Just ask.

Highly recommended stuff

- Clothes for warm days, very cold evenings
- Flip flops for the shower
- Comfy walking shoes/shoes for the river
- Sleepwear/Bathrobe
- Two towels and personal toiletries — scent free please
- Water bottle
- Cushion, mat/ground cloth, or portable chair
- Bedding and pillow (The camp only supplies beds. Some years people are COLD. Please bring warm bedding and warm clothing.)
- Tent and necessary items, if you are tenting
- Medicines and supplies for first aid. Herbal remedies to share are wonderful
- Ritual wear and jewelry, bring lots of fun outfits or you will wish you did
- Sunhat and sunglasses
- Coat hangers (there are closets)
- Flashlight and batteries (There is no electricity in the cabins. It gets REALLY dark at night)
- Extra batteries

- Extra snacks, if needed, in a rodent-proof container (snacks will be available during the day)
- Alarm clock or watch
- Cash for the Goblin Market, scholarship fundraising raffle and silent solidarity auction, and tips for teachers and cooks.
- Unscented sunscreen and bug repellent (to support folks with sensitivity) and/or loose fitting, long-sleeved clothes with cuffs. Mosquitoes at sunset!

Optional stuff

- Items for Ancestor and Faery altars
- A small container of water from a lake, river, stream, or ocean near your home to add to the waters of the world, an ongoing collection used in our rituals
- Dirt from your home for ancestor altar
- Decorations for camp, including the dining room, altars, and your cabin
- Favorite books, music
- Journals if desired
- Jump ropes, balls, games, etc
- Drums and other musical instruments
- Craft supplies to share: scissors, glue, pictures, crayons and pens and paper etc
- Personal comfort items (stuffed animals, blankets...)
- A blank t-shirt or item of clothing/cloth that you would like to decorate or tie-dye
- A special, magical item to contribute to scholarship fundraising raffle





COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AGREEMENTS

This is an outline of our camp agreements, which, as all relationships do, evolve and change over time. *Please take the time to read to your family members prior to camp.* Some agreements are mandated by the Mendocino Woodlands whose goodwill we value.

Cabins If you specified on your registration form that you'd like a cabin, your family will be assigned one or more cabins (depending on the number of people in your family). You will get a private cabin(s) unless you specified that you'd be willing to share with another family. You're welcome to trade around with other families as you desire. You can also bring a tent and camp out if you like, or put it up next to your cabin for extra room. The cabins are rustic and dark, they have no electricity, the lower half and the roof are wood, with bug screens instead of windows, so it can get quite cold at night. Some people bring coverings to put over the windows with push pins, if you require more privacy. We cannot use candles nor gas lanterns in the cabins nor anywhere in camp, as requested by the Woodland staff. The dining hall and shower block have electricity.

Food We serve omnivore and vegetarian meals, breakfast, lunch, and dinner. There are also always snacks out in the dining hall for hungry little stomachs. If you indicated food sensitivities on your registration, our amazing cooks make every effort to serve something yummy you can eat at every meal.

Campers are encouraged to be thoughtful about how much food they put on their plates. There is usually enough for seconds, so take what you know you'll eat, and come back for more if your body needs it.

The kitchen closes at 7:00 pm nightly. After this time, if you use any dishes, please wash them yourself so it does not create extra work for the kitchen staff in the morning. A late evening snack will be provided in the dining hall. If you would like a hot beverage after kitchen closing time, hot water will be available for use in the dining hall, and you may bring your own supplies to make your hot beverages (and clean up your cups, please!).

Our special-food needs liaison (Alla) will contact people with special-dietary needs before camp and will be available during camp. At camp, please see Alla to communicate with the kitchen.

There is also a refrigerator available in the dining hall for your use at all times. Please be mindful about the amount of items you bring, as all campers share this one refrigerator.

Required Tasks When you arrive at Camp II for on-site registration, we ask that all adults, age 19 and over, assign yourself to three task shifts — at least one in the kitchen — during camp. We ask campers aged 12-18 to sign up and perform two tasks. Task shifts include helping with meal prep or clean up in the kitchen, cleaning bathrooms, or helping with childcare for others who are working.

All adults take three shifts, except:

- Adults with witchlets under the age of 5 sign up for two tasks per adult.
- Teachers and Weavers sign up for one task.

We co-create and maintain the space as a community during camp. Please commit to the chores you sign up for, and arrive on time to perform them. If you have questions about your shift, ask Seonaid at camp.

All Camp Clean Up In addition to the tasks above, all campers 13 and older are expected to take on one task for all camp clean up on the last morning. We are on a tight schedule to leave the Woodlands clean and in good shape, and we all need to work together to do it! (Single adults with witchlets aged 12 and under are excused for all camp clean up.)

Transportation Due to a limited amount of parking space, cars will get to unload in the closest lot, and then will be required to park farther along the road. See the map and directions at the end of this packet.



Electronics Witchlets in the Woods is a place where families connect with each other, the natural world, and Spirit. With this as a goal, we ask that common areas, including: the woods, fire circle, and lodge be free of individual electronics (such as phones, laptops, radios, and hand-held devices). As we come here to create sacred relationships with nature and each other, we encourage each family to talk about and decide together how electronic devices and games influence the valuable ways we connect. Please consider the whole community when making your decisions.

Gaming in the Lodge Any campers who like to spend time playing board games, role playing games, card games, etc. in the dining hall are invited to a meeting on the first evening of camp (Saturday night) after dinner, to agree on community guidelines for dining hall gaming.

Camp Participation There are many wonderful things to do at camp. The only required participation is to do the joyful obligations (a.k.a. required tasks) that you sign up for. We all participate in camp in our own unique way and it is important to remember that everyone is their own spiritual authority (as described in the Reclaiming Principles of Unity), and each family group has their own approach. Enjoy camp!

Workshops Anyone can offer a workshop! Please let us know before camp if you want to offer one. Workshops should avoid using highly scented or volatile materials (like potpourri, nail polish, etc.)

Glitter Please leave glitter at home. It is generally not biodegradable, and eventually ends up in the stomachs of animals and in our waterways.

Showers There is only one shower block, to be shared by people of all bodies and ages. There are also a few private showers for those wishing privacy.

Substances Witchlets in the Woods is drug and alcohol free during the length of camp, except for prescription drugs, medicinal herbs, nicotine, and caffeine. There is one designated smoking area. Do not smoke nor vape anything anywhere else – this is a Mendocino Woodlands rule due to high fire danger. Absolutely NO smoking in cabins. Please note that smoking substances and prescriptions are for your personal use. We ask that you don't share them.

Candles/Fires There are no candles nor gas lanterns allowed in the cabins nor anywhere in the Woodlands. There are only two designated fire pit areas. This is a high fire-danger area.

Environmental Sensitivity To support folks who are allergic to scents and other environmental factors, please do not wear fragrances, including essential oils and citronella, and avoid using heavily scented soaps, shampoos, and other personal-care products.

There ain't no bugs on me! Because we have people at camp who are allergic to chemical fragrances and essential oils like citronella, please do not use citronella at camp. There will be odorless insect repellent available to share at camp. If you have concerns about DEET, have everyone in your

family eat garlic, brewers yeast, and vitamin B for at least one week before camp and bring long sleeved, loose fitting clothes, bug nets for head (especially for baby) and stay in during sunrise and sundown. Vitamin B patches are a popular, newer form of skeeter protection. Google it and order some, if so inclined, please be aware that some people do experience allergic reactions to the patches. Also, check your family carefully for ticks daily.

Physical Accessibility All of the camp is rustic dirt paths and wooden bridges, not wheelchair accessible. Most of the bathroom blocks are up 15 foot slopes, which can be difficult if you have mobility problems. We do have one bathroom available near the dining hall especially for adaptive use. People have gotten around with walking sticks and crutches at previous camps. We will do our best to support your needs.

Raffle We will be holding a raffle to raise money for the scholarship and work study fund. We invite you to choose special, magical items, for a variety of ages, from your home to donate. We also suggest talking to your family about why we have a raffle (to raise funds to help families come to camp) and the beauty of donating precious gifts to that effort.

Silent Solidarity Auction The Silent Solidarity Auction offers special magical items of slightly higher value to raise funds for camp scholarships. You could also offer a service, such as a tarot reading. If you have an item or service to offer, contact Rahula at sadie.sabot@gmail.com, and don't forget to bring your checkbook or some cash to camp!

Goblin Market We invite all crafts people and anyone who has a service to share to participate in our flea market. You need to provide your own table and everything you might need to sell your wares. We ask that you donate 10% of the final sales to go towards next year's scholarship fund.

Skyclad As witches, we hold our bodies as sacred and a gift from the Goddess. Some children and adults celebrate this by being naked, especially while swimming. If you or your children are unfamiliar with being around people without clothes, you might want to discuss this before camp to get used to the idea! We do not ask that everyone take off their clothes, just to be open to others who do.

Swimming There is a swimming hole within driving distance and there are regular, non-WITW-sponsored excursions to it! We expect all drivers to and from the swimming hole to obey all relevant traffic laws.

Families We hold that anyone who calls themselves family, is family. We welcome and expect extended and diverse families including queer families, two-parent heterosexual families, single-parent families, no-child families, and polyamorous families as well as many other forms that we have neglected to mention here.



A Container for Working Through Conflict

Occasionally, campers may experience disconnect or conflict with another camper or campers. That's okay. Conflict happens, even in the most magical of groups. At Witchlets, we agree to take the following steps, should conflict arise.

1. First step, take a deep breath and try to resolve it yourself. Reach out to your fellow camper, even if it's scary, share your feelings, and see if you can move through it together.

2. If that doesn't help, reach out to an Ally (they'll be introduced during the first camp meeting) and tell them you need to "Clear a Held Feeling".

3. The Ally will schedule a session between conflicted campers approximately 24 hours later, give each camper a "Clearing Held Feelings" packet, and ask them to complete it before the scheduled session.

4. During the session, facilitated by one or more Allies, all involved will be given a chance to speak, listen, and respond.

5. If the conflict remains, you can request a community meeting.

6. If the conflict still remains, the Weavers will make a final decision in an open meeting.



DRIVING DIRECTIONS TO THE MENDOCINO WOODLANDS

For more information on the camp site, visit www.MendocinoWoodlands.org.

Drive time from Sacramento, Oakland, and San Francisco airports is approximately four hours.

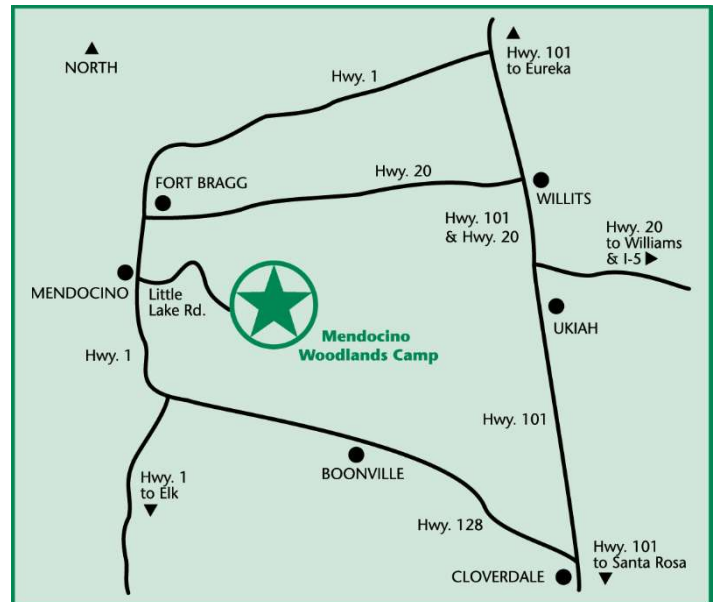
From Santa Rosa and the Bay Area:

Take Highway 101 North to Cloverdale. Turn left onto Highway 128 and stay on it until it merges with Highway 1 at the coast. Follow Highway 1 north to Mendocino. At the traffic light, turn right onto Little Lake Road and follow it out about five and one-half miles to the end of the pavement. Bear right (you'll see a sign for the Woodlands) and follow this gravel road out approximately another three miles to arrive at the Woodlands. Drive into the Woodlands. You will pass group Camps I and III, keep driving all the way to Camp II, which is at the very end of the road. Look for "Witchlets" signs along the way.

Or... take Highway 101 North to Highway 20 in Willits. Turn left (west) and follow 20 until it dead ends at Highway 1. Turn left on Highway 1 south until you get to Mendocino. At the traffic light, turn left onto Little Lake Road and follow it out about five and one-half miles to the end of the pavement. Bear right (you'll see a sign for the Woodlands) and follow this gravel road out approximately another three miles to arrive at the Woodlands. Drive into the Woodlands. You will pass group Camps I and III, keep driving all the way to Camp II, which is at the very end of the road. Look for "Witchlets" signs along the way.

From Eureka Area:

Take Highway 101 south to either Highway 1 or Highway 20. When you get to Fort Bragg, follow Highway 1 south to Mendocino. At the traffic light,



turn left onto Little Lake Road and follow it out about 5-1/2 miles to the end of the pavement. Bear right (you'll see a sign for the Woodlands) and follow this gravel road out approximately another three miles to arrive at the Woodlands. Drive into the Woodlands. You will pass other group camp areas all the way to Camp II which is at the very end of the road. Look for "Witchlets" signs along the way.

From Sacramento Area:

Take I-5 north to Williams, then go west on Highway 20 to Highway 101. Go north on 101 to Willits, then left (west) on Highway 20 until it dead ends at Highway 1. Turn left on Highway 1 south until you get to Mendocino. At the traffic light, turn left onto Little Lake Road and follow it out about 5-1/2 miles to the end of the pavement. Bear right (you'll see a sign for the Woodlands) and follow this gravel road out approximately another three miles to arrive at the Woodlands. Drive into the Woodlands. You will pass group Camps I and III, keep driving all the way to Camp II, which is at the very end of the road. Look for "Witchlets" signs along the way.



Vasilisa the Brave

Adapted: Elizabeth Winthrop/ WITW Story Charrette



Many years ago there lived a rich merchant. He and his wife had only one daughter, whose name was Vasilisa. When Vasilisa was still very young, her mother became gravely ill. She called Vasilisa to her bedside.

"Listen well, my child," she said. "I am dying and do not have much time left with you. Take this little doll and carry her with you always. Hide her in your pocket and never show her to anyone. Whenever you are sad or in danger give the doll something to eat and drink. Whisper your troubles to her and she will tell you what to do." The mother kissed her daughter and blessed her, and soon after that, she died.

Vasilisa was very sad. In the midst of her sorrow, she remembered the little doll and took her from her pocket. She set a piece of bread and a cup of milk before the doll and whispered, "My dear mother is dead, and I am so lonely for her." The doll's eyes began to shine, and suddenly she came alive. She ate a morsel of the bread and took a sip from the cup and said, "Don't weep, little Vasilisa. Shut your eyes and sleep. The morning is wiser than the evening." Vasilisa lay down and slept, and in the morning her sadness had lifted a little.

As time passed, the merchant began to search for a wife who would be a kind stepmother to his little Vasilisa. He decided on a widow with two daughters of her own who were not much older than

Vasilisa. But the stepmother was a cold, cruel woman, who married the merchant for his money. Her two daughters were jealous of their new stepsister. They forced her to do all the work around the house while they sat with their arms folded like the ladies at court.

At night, when everyone was fast asleep, Vasilisa would take the doll from her pocket. "Eat a little and drink a little," she would say, "and listen to my story. My stepmother and her daughters wish to drive me out of my own father's house. What shall I do?"

And every night the little doll's eyes would shine, and she would come alive. Once she had eaten and drunk her share, she would whisper words of comfort to Vasilisa until the girl fell asleep.

Years passed, and Vasilisa grew. The only joy in Vasilisa's life came from the little doll which she kept safely hidden in her pocket. There came a time when the merchant had to go on a long journey to a distant land. He bade farewell to his wife and her two daughters, kissed Vasilisa, and gave her his blessing. As soon as he left, his wife sold his house, packed all his goods, and moved the family to another house at the edge of a gloomy forest.

Deep in this forest, as the stepmother well knew, lived an old witch named Baba Yaga. She lived alone in a small hut that stood on chicken legs at the edge of a clearing. No one dared go near the hut, for it was rumored that Baba Yaga ate people as one eats chickens. Every day the stepmother sent Vasilisa into the forest to search for flowers and berries, hoping the girl would be devoured by the old witch. But the little doll did not let her go near Baba Yaga's hut, and every day when Vasilisa came safely home, the stepmother hated her even more.

One autumn evening, the stepmother called the three girls to her and gave them each a task. One was to make a piece of lace, the other to knit a pair of stockings, and Vasilisa was to spin a basketful of flax. Then the stepmother put out all the fires in the house and went to bed, leaving only one candle lighted.

After three hours, the elder daughter put out the candle, just as her mother had instructed her to do. "What shall we do?" she cried in mock alarm. "There is no light in the house."

"One of us will have to fetch fire from Baba Yaga," said the other sister. "She is the only one who lives nearby."

"I don't need light," said the sister who was making lace. "I have enough light from my steel pins."

"And I have enough light from my silver needles," cried the sister who was knitting the stockings. "Vasilisa, you will have to go, for you have no light from your flax."

The sisters pushed Vasilisa out of the house, and locked the door, crying, "You cannot come back until you bring us light."

Vasilisa sat down on the doorstep. From one pocket she took the tiny doll and from the other, the bits she always saved from her own supper. "Eat a little and drink a little and listen to my story. I must go into the dark forest to Baba Yaga's hut to get some fire, and I am terrified that she will eat me. Tell me what to do."

"Do not fear, little Vasilisa," the doll said. "As long as I am with you, no harm shall come to you."

Vasilisa put the doll back into her pocket and entered the forest.

Suddenly she heard the beating of hooves, and a man on horseback galloped past her. He was dressed all in white. His horse was milk-white, and its harness was white. Just as he passed her, the night paled into dawn. Vasilisa went a little farther, and again she heard the beating of a horse's hooves and there came another man on horseback. He was dressed all in red, and the horse under him was blood red, and its harness was red. Just as he passed her, the sun rose. Vasilisa walked on until she could find no path through the forest. As the light began to fade again, she came to the clearing and Baba Yaga's little hut. The fence around the hut was made of human bones, and the top of the wall was decorated with human skulls. The sight filled Vasilisa with fear.

Inside the wall, by the gate, stood a tree. The tree looked withered and its branches drooped across the gate. Vasilisa felt for it, and poured the last of her water and the last few crumbs in her pocket on the earth. The tree immediately began to look better, and its branches straightened, leaving the gate clear.

Then a third horseman came galloping up. He was dressed all in black, and his horse was coal-black, and its harness was black. As he thundered up to the gate of the hut, he disappeared as if the earth had swallowed him up. At that moment, night came and the forest grew dark. The skulls on the wall lit up, and the clearing around the hut was as bright as day.

Suddenly the forest was filled with a terrible noise, and Baba Yaga came flying through the trees. She traveled, not in a chariot, not in a coach, but in a great iron mortar that flew along by all by itself. She rowed it with a pestle, and all the while she swept out the tracks behind her with a broom made of long-dead persons' hair.

Even more strange was Baba Yaga's house. It sat atop huge, scaly yellow chicken legs, and walked about all by itself, twirling sometimes around and around like an ecstatic dancer.

Baba Yaga stopped at the gate and cried: "Little House, Little House, Turn your back to the forest and your face to me."



The little hut spun around to face her and stopped. Baba Yaga began to sniff, first in one direction and then another. "FOO! FOO! I smell the smell of a human. Show yourself, whoever you are!"

Trembling with fear, Vasilisa stepped forward. Bowing low, she said, "It is only me, Vasilisa. My stepmother has sent me to you to fetch some fire."

"I know your stepmother," said the old witch. "If you want my fire, you will have to stay and work for it. If not, I will eat you for my supper."

Then she turned to the gate and shouted, "My strong locks, unlock! My stout gate, open!" They obeyed in an instant, and Baba Yaga swooped in. Once Vasilisa had passed through, the gate slammed shut and the locks snapped back into place.

"Bring me all the food from the oven," Baba Yaga shouted, and Vasilisa hurried to obey. There was enough food for three giants, but Baba Yaga ate it all, leaving only a tiny shred of meat and a crust of bread for Vasilisa. Then the old witch lay down on the stove.

"Tomorrow when I leave," she said, "you must clean the yard, sweep the floors, and cook my supper. Then take a bushel of wheat from my storehouse and pick out of it all the black grains and all the wild peas. If you do not do as I have asked, I will eat you for my supper." Then she turned to the wall and soon began to snore.

Vasilisa went into the corner and took the tiny doll from her pocket. "Eat a little and drink a little and listen to my story," she said. "I am locked in this old witch's hut, and if I do not do all that she has ordered, she will eat me for supper tomorrow. What shall I do?"

The doll ate a bit of the bread and a snippet of the meat and said, "Do not be afraid, Vasilisa. Hold me tight and go to sleep. Remember, the morning is wiser than the evening."

The next morning Vasilisa rose early. When she looked out the window, she saw the white horseman gallop from around the corner of the hut. As he cleared the wall, the night paled into dawn. The old witch whistled for her mortar and pestle, and as she climbed into the mortar, the blood-red horseman galloped from around the corner. He leaped over the wall, and at that very moment, the sun rose. At a command from Baba Yaga, the gate swung open and the old witch rode off, sweeping away the trail with her broom.



The yard was clean and the floors of the hut had been swept. The little doll was sitting in the storehouse picking the last black grains and wild peas from a bushel of wheat. So Vasilisa rested all day. In the afternoon, a thin sad cat came and twined their way around Vasilisa's ankles meowing pitifully. Vasilisa fed them a few scraps left from dinner the night before. The cat immediately jumped in her lap and purred, looking sleeker already.

When evening came, the cat left the house and she laid the table for the old witch's supper and sat looking out the window. As it had happened before, just as the coal-black horseman came galloping up to the gate and disappeared, night fell. The eyes of the skulls began to shine. Soon the trees began to groan and creak, and Baba Yaga rode up in

her huge iron mortar. "Well, have you done all that I ordered?" she asked.

"See for yourself, Baba Yaga," answered Vasilisa.

Baba Yaga went all about the place, sniffing in the corners and tapping with her pestle. Try as she might, she could find nothing to complain of. There was not a weed left in the yard, nor a speck of dust on the floors, nor a single black grain or wild pea in the wheat. "You have done well," she said. Then she clapped her hands and shouted, "Ho, my faithful friends, grind my wheat." Immediately, three pairs of hands appeared, seized the wheat, and carried it away.

Vasilisa set the witch's supper on the table, and although there was enough food for four giants, the old witch ate it, bones and all, leaving only a small morsel for Vasilisa. Then she stretched herself out on the stove and said, "Tomorrow, you must do all that you have done today, and besides these tasks, you must take from the storehouse a half bushel of poppy seeds and clean them one by one." Then she fell asleep.

Vasilisa fed her little doll and crept into a corner to sleep. And once again, the next morning all the tasks were done, and when Baba Yaga returned that evening, she could find nothing to complain of. She clapped her hands and shouted, "Ho, my faithful friends, press the oil out of my poppy seeds." And as before, three pairs of hands appeared in the air, and carried away the poppy seeds.

Vasilisa set the supper in front of the old witch, and Baba Yaga ate enough for five giants while Vasilisa waited and watched.

"Why do you stand there as if you were dumb?" the witch snapped angrily.

"I did not speak because I did not dare," answered Vasilisa. "But if you will allow me, Baba Yaga, I wish to ask some questions."

"Remember Vasilisa, if you know too much, you will grow old too soon. What do you wish to ask?"

"When I came to your hut, a white horseman passed me by. Who was he?"

"That was my bright, white day," answered Baba Yaga. "He is a servant of mine. He cannot hurt you. Ask me more."

"Afterward, another rider overtook the first. He was dressed all in red, and his horse was blood-red. Who was he?"

"He too is my servant, the round red sun," answered Baba Yaga. "He cannot hurt you either. Ask me another."

"There was a third rider," said Vasilisa. "He was dressed all in black, and his horse was coal-black. Who was he?"

"My servant, the dark, black night," said the old witch angrily. "He also cannot harm you. Ask me more."

But Vasilisa remembered what the witch had said, and she remained silent.

"Ask me more," roared the old witch. "Ask me about the three pairs of hands that serve me."

"Three questions are enough for me," Vasilisa replied. "I would not wish to grow old too soon."

"It is well you did not ask of the three pairs of hands, for they would have seized you and ground you up for my supper. Now it is my turn. How is it that you have been able to do all the tasks I required of you?"

Vasilisa was so terrified that she almost told the old witch the secret of the little doll. Just in time, she remembered her mother's warning and said, "The blessing of my dead mother helps me in all things."

The witch sprang up from her chair. "Get out of my house this instant!" she shrieked. "No one who bears a blessing should cross my threshold."

Vasilisa ran as fast as she could. The tree by the wall opened the gate wide for her so she could escape through it. Baba Yaga seized one of the skulls with the burning eyes and threw it after her. "Here is the fire you came for," she shouted. "Take it and have the joy of it." Vasilisa set the skull on the end of a stick and hurried home.

All the night long, the skull lit a path through the woods. At one point, Vasilisa lost the path and had no crumbs to feed her doll. The cat from Baba Yaga's house suddenly appeared in the forest and Vasilisa saw that it was sitting at the end of a clearing where the path began again. Petting it in thanks, she resumed her journey through the forest.

Towards the evening of the next day, Vasilisa came out of the forest to her stepmother's house. Vasilisa saw no light through the windows of the house, so she picked up the skull and carried it inside. The stepmother and step-sisters were sitting in the dark, as they had not been able to light a fire since she left. As they saw Vasilisa enter with the skull they looked up in anger and fear. The skull blazed even brighter and laser-like beams came out of its eyes. The stepmother and stepsisters shrieked in fear and ran out of the house and into the woods. And no one has seen them from that day to this.

Vasilisa buried the skull in the ground, locked the house, and left. She took refuge with a kind old woman who lived all alone near the town gates, where she waited for her father's return.

One day she said to the old woman, "Please, grandmother, buy me some flax to spin into thread. The days are long and my hands need work." The old woman bought her some flax and Vasilisa set to work. Soon there was enough thread to weave a dozen shirts. When the old woman had gone to sleep, Vasilisa took the tiny doll from her pocket, set some food and drink before her, and said, "Eat a little and drink a little and listen to my story. I have spun beautiful thread, but I have no loom on which to weave it."

"Bring me some wood and an old basket and a few hairs from a horse's mane, and I will arrange everything for you," said the little doll.

When Vasilisa woke the next morning, there stood a loom, perfectly suited for her delicate thread. All winter long, Vasilisa sat weaving her thread into linen. Then she bleached the linen and gave it to the old woman. "Take it to the market and sell it. The money you receive shall pay for my food and lodging." And the wise woman did as she asked and they had more ease in their lives.

When Vasilisa's father returned from his long journey, he was filled with happiness to find his brave Vasilisa working as a spinner and weaver and doing so well.

As for the little doll—Vasilisa kept her always with her.

