

# The Wish, the Wisdom and the Web

A One-Act Play for Children

An original eco-drama

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## Cast of Characters

Narrator	Chief Groundskeeper
King Kairsalot	Master-at-arms
Queen Concordia	Old Oracle
Princess Sarah	Chief Agronomist
Prince Lee	Warrior 1
Wizened Wizard	Warrior 2
Bumble	Warrior 3
Chief Geographer	Warrior 4
Chief Physician	Sewing ladies
Chief Huntsman	Jump rope girls
Chief Biologist	Sound-makers
Director of Intelligence	
Chief Strategist	

**Scene 1:** In the castle, including throne room, conference room and armory.

**Scene 2:** On the journey, through the woods, the cliffs, and the cavern.

**Scene 3:** In the castle, including throne room, conference room and library.

## The Wish, the Wisdom and the Web

### Scene 1

#### In the Castle

**Narrator:** Long, long ago and far, far away, a peaceful people dwelt on the island of Arthropodia. Graceful chitin-clad creatures of the lush green forests delighted the people with their shining shapes and gentle music. The feathered, the furred, the shiny, the spiny—each had its place in the fabric of life.

Then, not quite so long ago, gruesome griffins, half lion, half bird, arrived from across the ocean, and tore through the tapestry of Arthropodia. Every day without warning, their huge shadows fell over the land, forcing everything that could move to scurry for cover. Growing ever bolder as their numbers increased, the griffins snatched loons from the lovely lakes, fawns from the ferny forests, and ponies from the peaceful pastures. Unearthly screams echoed as one innocent after another was carried off to a rookery high in the mountains.

Good King Kairsalot worried night and day. He felt the pain of his people. Because he had lost his own firstborn daughter, he knew how they feared for the lives of their children.

**King Kairsalot:** Oh, the dear, dear children! I just can't let them get Prince Lee and Princess Sarah. I've sent all my best thinkers and observers out to try to solve this

problem. Scientists! Spies! Strategists and Sages! Come to the King's Counsel Conference Room. Tell us what you've found!

*(Enter: Chief Huntsman, Chief Biologist, Director of Intelligence, Chief Strategist, Prince Lee, Queen Concordia, Wizeded Wizard, Chief Geographer, Master at Arms, Chief Agronomist, Chief Physician, Chief Groundskeeper. They sit in a circle around the king.)*

**Chief Huntsman:** Our weapons are useless. The griffins just snatch them and break them like toys.

**Chief Biologist:** They fear nothing, not even fire. Poisons just make them grow stronger.

**Director of Intelligence:** They sleep in an aerie high in the mountains.

**Chief Strategist:** Perhaps we could kill them while they sleep.

*(Old Oracle hobbles into the conference room. As all the king's counselors look to her for an answer, she falls into a trance.)*

**Old Oracle:** By the command of King Kairsalot and the wish of his warrior child, by the Ancient's wisdom, Arthropodia will be saved.

*(All look expectantly at Prince Lee. He flexes his muscles.)*

**Chief Agronomist:** What command?

**Chief Physician:** Which wish?

**Chief Strategist:** What wisdom?

*(The Old Oracle blinks twice and waves a gnarled hand at a fly in front of her face.*

*Without another word, she fixes her eyes on the fly and follows it out of the room.*

**Prince Lee:** I just wish that we could get rid of these griffins quickly so we can finish our soccer season.

**King Kairsalot:** Is that the right wish? Do I need to command him to go conquer the griffins? Is that what it means?

*(The counselors all shrug.)*

**King Kairsalot:** Oracles can be so confusing.

**Queen Concordia:** Yes, dear.

**King Kairsalot:** *(gripping scepter, standing tall, deepening voice.)* I command that my dearest warrior child, Prince Lee, go in quest of the griffins. The strongest young men of the Kingdom must accompany him. We must grant his every wish, that the land will be saved.

*(The Wizened Wizard steps forward and whispers in the King's ear.)*

**King Kairsalot:** Yes, yes, he might need some spells. Not you, though, you're too old.

Send that young fellow. Your apprentice. What's his name?

**Wizened Wizard:** Bumble, the beekeeper's son.

**King Kairsalot :** Yes, that's the one.

*(Assembly watches Prince Lee, Bumble and their group of warriors muster.)*

**Narrator:** And so, the next day, Prince Lee, along with thirty sturdy sportsmen and one young wand-wielding wizard, set out to vanquish the monsters on the mountain.

*(Warriors march out, following Prince Lee. Bumble drops his wand, picks it up. All exit except the king who sits in his throne, worried and miserable.)* Weeks went by. Still, the shadows came, and the screeches. Still, the people cowered in fear. All except Princess Sarah.

*(Enter Princess Sarah, skipping, and Queen Concordia walking somberly.)*

**Princess Sarah:** Daddy, Lee and his friends must be lost or trapped. I'll rescue them so that Lee can fulfill the prophecy of the Old Oracle. Many times, he has rescued me when I needed help. Now, it is my turn to help him.

**King Kairsalot:** Little girls can't rescue strong young men. Tell her, Concordia.

**Queen Concordia:** Yes, dear.

**Princess Sarah:** How I wish people would take me seriously. He is my brother. I must save him so that he can save Arthropodia from the griffins. I will get ready, and then I will go. It is my duty."

*(Sarah stalks off. On the other side of the stage, she finds the Master-at-Arms mending weapons bent and broken by battles against the griffins.)*

**Princess Sarah:** Oh please, you must help me! I cannot sit idle while my brother is lost. I must become strong and sure and skillful. Please, help me prepare for a long and perilous journey. Teach me all that a warrior should know.

*(Master-at-Arms bows deeply, and coaches Princess Sarah in exercises and sword practice.)*

**Narrator:** The Master-at-Arms helped Princess Sarah develop a program of exercises to build her strength and agility. Hour after hour she practiced, lifting and stretching, running and leaping.

**King Kairsalot:** Most unseemly for a daughter. Tell her, Concordia.

**Queen Concordia:** Yes, dear.

**Narrator:** Sarah worked long hours, stopping only to eat and to sleep. Her mother and the ladies of the court implored her to help embroider flowers on napkins.

*(Enter Queen Concordia, Chief Seamstress and Ladies-in-waiting)*

**Chief Seamstress:** Princess Sarah, your dainty fingers could make such beautiful embroidery, if only you would try.

**Queen Concordia:** Yes, dear.

**Ladies-in-waiting:** *(giggle)*

**Princess Sarah:** Useless frippery. But here, give me that needle. I have a better use for it.

**Narrator:** Sarah used her needle to remake her clothes. She cut away bothersome frills, added new layers for warmth and durability, and built in extra pockets and loops for carrying all manner of necessities.

*(Sarah works with scissors and needle then dons new jacket with useful doodads.)*

She studied. She pondered. Whenever she could, she listened to the King's counselors as they brought their findings to the throne room.

*(In throne room, Chief Geographer shows the King and Queen a new map)*

**Chief Geographer:** The griffins have taken over this these rocky cliffs overlooking the valley. That's treacherous terrain, even for the most experienced mountaineers.

**King Kairsalot:** *(slumping in his throne, and handing the map to the queen)* What will become of our beautiful boy. I fear we'll never see him again.

**Princess Sarah:** Mother, may I have that map?

**Queen Concordia:** Yes, dear.

**Narrator:** Sarah hoarded what others discarded—short stumps of candles, a bent box of matches, a murky mirror, a nicked knife, a rugged coil of rope. Soon, she had a collection of potentially useful pieces hidden inside her traveling clothes.

**King Kairsalot:** What is that clanging and jangling? She is becoming quite unbalanced, Concordia.

**Queen Concordia:** Yes, dear.

**King Kairsalot:** Wizard!

*(Wizened Wizard totters in, bows.)*

**Wizened Wizard:** Yes, Sire.

**King Kairsalot:** She is all we have left. We cannot lose her. I command you: Stay by her side and grant her every wish. If she is happy here, maybe she will forget her foolish plan to save her brother.

**Wizened Wizard:** Harrumph

*(Wizened Wizard bows low to the king and can't quite straighten up completely after the bow. Hobbles heavily to look for the princess. Princess is in training room practicing tricks with ropes and blades. Wizened Wizard shuffles right up to her, blocking her path.)*

**Princess Sarah:** *(smiling)* Excuse me.

**Wizened Wizard:** Your father has sent me to watch over you, to grant your wishes and to keep you happy.

*(Wizened Wizard pulls beautiful white flower from his sleeve. Sarah looks at it briefly and then goes back to her work with the rope. Wizard pulls out a more beautiful pink flower and presents it to her. She ignores him and goes on with her work. Wizard lets fly a shower of sparks and a cloud of fluttering butterflies. Sarah attaches her rope to a hook and huffs and puffs as she climbs up it. She looks down on the butterflies.)*

**Princess Sarah:** How beautiful. I remember how wonderful it was before the griffins when we could play outside.

*(She sighs and climbs down the rope, and with a flick of her wrist frees it from its hook. Wizard shuffles away. Sarah pensively unties the knot in her rope. Wizard returns with a group of giggling girls. The girls take up Sarah's rope and start a boisterous jump rope game with much singing and laughing. Sarah sways with the rope. Girls wave her in for her turn. She jumps in smiling, the rope turns faster. Suddenly, Sarah just stops.)*

**Princess Sarah:** No. Thank you. That will be all for now.

*(The girls drop the rope, bow their heads and exit.)*



**Princess Sarah:** It just won't work to try to make me happy. This is not a time to be happy. This is a time that I must do my duty. I must save my brother so that he can save Arthropodia.

**Wizened Wizard:** I must do as my King commands. I cannot leave your side.

**Princess Sarah:** Then you must come with me. You might be useful.

**Wizened Wizard:** Harrumph.

## Scene 2

### The Journey

**Narrator:** As the next day dawned, Princess Sarah assembled all her tools and provisions, looped her rope over her shoulder, and crept out of the castle with the Wizened Wizard in her wake. Bravely, she strode across the courtyard, past the snoring sentry, into the willow wood. The sun climbed, but shadows darkened as they wended their way deeper into the forest. The wide lane narrowed into a fern-lined footpath. Creatures of the wood peered at them as they passed—the deer, the squirrel, the wood thrush. Sarah felt their unquestioning faith in her quest. Her pace slowed. Her pulse quickened. She breathed deeply and pressed forward.

Just then, a family of spiders skittered across the path.

**Princess Sarah:** Eeeek! (*She backs up suddenly, bumping into the Wizened Wizard.*)

**Wizened Wizard:** What is it?

**Princess Sarah:** Spiders. Horrible, horrible spiders.

**Wizened Wizard:** This is Arthropodia. Our arthropods are our greatest treasure. Surely you have learned how our insects provide food for our amazing array of arachnids.

Whatever did you expect, child?

**Princess Sarah:** I had forgotten the spiders.

*(Sarah sits on a stump, hugging herself, rocking to and fro. A huge spider descends on a thread from the canopy above, extends its eight legs and alights on the back of her hand.)*

**Princess Sarah:** Eeeeeeeeeeeek!

*(Shaking all over, she brushes it off. She covers her face with her hands and bursts into tears.)*

**Wizened Wizard:** Oh dear, oh dear. And I was commanded to keep her happy. Oh dear, oh dear. *(He pats her head with his wrinkled hand.)* I thought you were fearless.

**Princess Sarah:** My sister died from the bite of a spider.

**Wizened Wizard:** Ah, yes. Years ago.

**Princess Sarah:** Mama allows no spiders in the castle. She carries a big brush to banish every one she sees.

*(Sarah sniffs loudly and reaches into her pocket. Stifling her sobs, blows her nose and wipes her face with a half-embroidered napkin. She takes a deep breath and stands strate and tall.)*

**Princess Sarah:** I am not my sister. My mother's fears will not be my fears. I will be fearless.

**Narrator:** One last tear spilled onto Sarah's smudged cheek as she turned and walked on, down the path, further into the shadows. But she found no solace in the whisper of the wasp, the bumble of the bee or the trill of the toad. Even constant chorus of cicadas could not comfort her. She heard only the silence of the spiders. Around her, webs hung from every tree and shrub. Every few steps, a wisp of web wafted over the trail, brushing her

arm or her hand. (*Sarah acts increasingly repulsed and terrified.*) She cringed. She shuddered. She searched the path ahead to avoid them, but as the foliage thickened, the number of webs increased. Funnel webs, orb webs, lattices and ladders tilted grotesquely in the branches. For every web, her mind's eye conjured a vision—eight bulging eyes seeking her, eight jointed legs reaching toward her, two grasping jaws with fangs full of venom ready to strike. As she watched a Daddy Long Legs scurry over the toe of her boot, she walked right into a huge wheel of web that clung to her hair, her face, her neck. Plucking desperately at its sticky strands, she fell to the ground and dissolved into tears. (*Sarah sinks to the floor and sobs.*)

**Wizened Wizard:** Oh dear, oh dear. Such woeful weeping!

**Princess Sarah:** It's no use. I am afraid of nothing, except spiders. I cannot go on through these spider webs. You must get rid of the spiders. All of them. I wish it. You must.

**Wizened Wizard:** Harrumph. The Workings of the Web keep the balance in Arthropodia. Each little spider eats thousands of insects. Without spiders, the Kingdom will never be the same.

**Princess Sarah:** With them, I cannot go save my brother, and we will never be rid of the gruesome griffins.

**Narrator:** His King's command and the utterance of the Old Oracle echoed in the Wizard's mind.

**King Kairsalot:** (*From offstage.*) I command you: Stay by her side and grant her every wish.

**Old Oracle:** *(From offstage.)* By the command of King Kairsalot and the wish of his warrior child, by the Ancient's wisdom, Arthropodia will be saved.

**Narrator:** Just then, a shadow darkened the woods. He looked up to see a griffin overhead, a moaning calf in its clutches. Taking the weight of the Ancient Wisdom on his shoulders, he wove a momentous spell.

*(Wizened Wizard shouts an obscure incantation and gestures with his wand. Lights flash and thunder rumbles. Sarah cowers, trembling.)*

**Narrator:** Throughout the kingdom, every single spider shriveled and fell. A great wind whistled through the land, whisking away every web in every corner. Sarah looked up.

**Princess Sarah:** Is it done?

**Wizened Wizard:** It is done.

**Narrator:** Wordlessly, they went on. For seven days and seven nights, they traveled along the course of the river, climbing ever higher towards the mountains. They stopped only to eat or to rest when darkness fell. On the eighth day, Sarah awoke to a strange buzzing sound. Three katydids preened on her bedroll, while a dozen flies droned haphazardly around her head. She waved them away and awakened the Wizard to show him the map.

**Princess Sarah:** Today we leave the river valley. I know we'll find Prince Lee and his friends soon. We have to!

**Narrator:** Sarah hastily packed their gear and looped her rope over her shoulder. Then she trudged upward toward the rocky cliffs. The Wizard trailed behind her as she trudged upward. The forest thinned, and gave way to a rock-strewn meadow. A great cloud of gnats filled the air. Shooing them was futile. She narrowed her eyes to slits and pressed her lips closed to keep them out. On they went.

**Wizened Wizard:** Must rest.

*(Wizened Wizard bends stiffly to sit on a rock. Sarah sits beside him. She pulls food and water out of her pack.)*

**Princess Sarah:** Eat something. You need energy.

**Narrator:** They ate in silence, looking at the rocky trail leading to the cliffs looming ahead. Between chews and swallows, Sarah listened.

*(Insect noises rise and fall, getting louder and more persistent. Sarah swats at bugs, shooing them away from the Wizard.)*

**Princess Sarah:** We must go on.

*(Sarah leads the way. Suddenly she finds a brass button on the trail.)*

**Princess Sarah:** Look. This is Lee's.

*(She hands the Wizard a brass button.)* He must be nearby. Lee! Where are you? Lee!

*(Echoes call back Lee-Lee-Lee.)*

**Wizened Wizard:** *(Circling his wand around the button)* Piece of brass from coat of roamer, take this girl right to your owner. *(Pokes Sarah with wand)* Hurry. After it!  
*(He tosses button into the air; Sarah grabs it and it drags her onward.)*

**Narrator:** For miles, Sarah ran with the button, over rattling rocks between bulging boulders, leaving the Wizened Wizard farther and farther behind. Suddenly, her toe caught the edge of a rock, and she sprawled forward into the dust.

**Princess Sarah:** *(to herself)* You're not hurt. Get up. But where is the button?

*(Searches all around desperately. Insect noises get louder.)*

**Narrator:** Overcome with her aloneness in the stark landscape, Sarah sank to the ground. She hugged her knees to her chest and searched inside herself for the strength to go on. Just then, the drone of the insects stopped. *(Pause. Silence.)* A deep, distant flapping

came closer and closer, and with it a sudden chill. Sarah looked up to see a huge griffin circling overhead, talons extended. She jumped up and ran for the nearest cover.

Sarah scrambled into the darkness of a cave in the cliff. She winced as the griffin's talons scraped against the limestone. She held her breath until its harsh screech faded into the distance. Exhausted, she leaned against the cool rock wall and fell asleep.

*(Enter Bumble, leaning on a crutch, with tattered clothes and one arm tied to a splint and one eye swollen shut.)*

**Bumble:** Princess Sarah! What are you doing here?

**Princess Sarah:** Bumble! You're alive! Where's Lee? Where are the others?

**Bumble:** Many have been lost. Lee and the others are trapped in a deep cavern with no way out. I try to bring them food and water, but they are wounded and weakening. We tried weapons and wishes but the griffins only grow stronger. One of them snatched my wand and ate it. My spells are useless.

**Princess Sarah:** We had better get you all home, then. Where is this cavern? If they got in, there must be a way out. Maybe I can help. Let's go.

*(Bumble leads the way deeper into the cave. Sarah shoulders her rope and follows him through the darkness. From the silence, come low voices, moans and labored breathing.)*

**Bumble:** Careful now. We're almost there. Sorry, our lights went out long ago.

**Princess Sarah:** My candles, and matches. *(She lights a candle)* Now where's that mirror.

*(She uses the mirror to direct the flickering light around the cavern and into the pit).*

**Warrior 1:** What's that?

**Warrior 2:** Who's there?

**Warrior 3:** They did send help after all!

**Warrior 4:** Is that Princess Sarah?

**Prince Lee:** *Breathing heavily, groaning, lying on his side holding his knees.)* Save yourselves. Don't worry about me.

**Narrator:** Without a word, Sarah looped one end of her rope around a sturdy stalagmite near the opening to the cavern below and tossed the other end over the edge into the cavern.

**Bumble:** You can't go down there. Your parents would never forgive me.

**Princess Sarah:** You can pull me up better than I could pull you up. Listen. I will send up the strongest first. Then, you two can pull up the sickest.

**Bumble:** But—

**Princess Sarah:** Bumble, listen. Arthropodia needs Lee to save us from the griffins.

**Bumble:** Right. Let's go.

*(Sarah climbs "down" the rope to the cavern, lights another candle.)*

**Warrior 1:** Brilliant! Rope! Just what we need! But I think I'm too weak to climb it.

**Princess Sarah:** *(To the biggest)* You first. Then you will help the others from above. *(Sarah ties the end of the rope around him, then working together, they all boost him upward and Bumble helps from above.)*

**Princess Sarah:** Now, Lee.

*(Carefully, she ties the rope around him and he is lifted and pulled up. Then the others until just one remains.)*

**Warrior 4:** Up you go, now, Princess.

**Princess Sarah:** No, I'll be fine.

**Warrior 4:** But—

**Princess Sarah:** Don't argue. I wish it.

**Narrator:** Sarah tied the rope around his belt, and gave him a leg-up, as all who were able pulled from above. Her candle sputtered and died. Voices echoed in the dim flicker of the light from above.

**Bumble:** Not much light left. Here comes the rope.

**Princess Sarah:** I'm ready.

*(They pull her up. When she is four feet off the ground, she suddenly tumbles to the floor. The frayed rope hung limp in her hand.)*

**Prince Lee:** Sarah!

**Princess Sarah:** I'm fine.

**Bumble:** But the rope!

**Princess Sarah:** "I'll throw it to you, and you can retie it."

**Bumble:** It won't be long enough.

**Princess Sarah:** Just do it.

**Narrator:** Quickly, Sarah coiled the rope and tossed it up to him. With a desperate grasp, he caught it. He tied it as around the stalagmite and let the end down toward her. It dangled, useless, six feet above her head. She jumped for it, but couldn't reach. Fear tugged at her throat. She sat on the floor, head in her hands, listening to desperate voices echoing above her.

**Warrior 1:** Oh, no!

**Warrior 2:** What will we do?

**Prince Lee:** Oh, Sarah. Why?

**Princess Sarah:** *(to herself)* Silly goose, of course. Bumble, tie the two pieces together. Square knot. Right over left, then left over right.

**Bumble:** Got it. *(Grunts as he tests the knot)* Here it comes.



**Narrator:** With a leap and a scramble, Sarah grasped the end of the rope and climbed up as the men pulled from above.

*(All express their relief and gratitude. Much back-slapping, fist-bumping, high-fiving.)*

**Princess Sarah:** Now we really must get you all home. Lee needs a doctor. Here, get those two sticks, and the rope.

*(She quickly makes a litter for Prince Lee, and he settles onto it with a groan. Two warriors take up the litter and they move to the cave's entrance. Insect noises crescendo.)*

**Warrior 1:** *(Swatting at swarm)*What the—

**Warrior 2:** Yikes!

**Warrior 3:** Ack!

**Bumble:** Ugh! *( swatting the air around him)* Back into the cave.

*(All huddle at the cave's entrance and share food from Sarah's pack.)*

**Warrior 4:** How can those flies be so far from the valley?

**Warrior 1:** Why are there so many of them?

**Bumble:** Could we possibly survive walking right through them?

**Princess Sarah:** Maybe they'll be gone in the morning.

**Narrator:** Clinging to that hopeful thought, they fell asleep.

*(Snores and insect noises.(Enter Wized Wizard, muttering an incantation.).)*

**Wized Wizard:** *(from the far side of the stage)* Harrumph!

**Princess Sarah:** *(Sits up with a start and spies Wizard)* Over here! *(Waving wildly).*

We're over here!

*(Wized Wizard makes his way with his wand bouncing in a complex rhythm, muttering his incantation.)*

**Prince Lee:** Are the flies gone?

**Princess Sarah:** No.But look! Here comes help.

**Warrior 2:** Wow. It's like he's in a bubble with no bugs.

**Prince Lee:** I wish we could all travel in that bubble.

**Bumble:** Maybe he'll teach me that spell.

**Narrator:** In no time at all, they were marching down toward the valley, enclosed in the Wizard's bug-free bubble. Prince Lee moaned in the hammock. Around them, skippers and dragonflies, beetles and wasps, darted among swarms of flies and midges.

Treehoppers, leafhoppers and grasshoppers pinged against the invisible shield. When she got hungry, with hardly a grimace, Sarah reached through the bubble to snag a snack of locust or cicada. Soon all the men followed her example. By the third day, the travelers hardly noticed the empty exoskeletons crunching underfoot.

The Wizened Wizard tripped on a tree root and crumpled to the mossy forest floor. In an instant, clinging legs closed in on them, covering their clothing. He took the wand in his other hand and started the spell again.

**Princess Sarah:** You need to rest. You are exhausted. Let Bumble work the spell now.

**Wizened Wizard:** Harrumph.

**Narrator:** Sarah fetched water from the creek, and divided the last of her food among them. With the Wizened Wizard's coaching, he soon carved a wobbling bubble out of the whirring mass around them. Once rested, they went on. When, at last, they stood looking up at the castle, they could barely see its brave shape on the hill through the buzzing black fog. The windows were boarded shut. The walls seethed with crawling caterpillars. On the ancient trees in the courtyard, only the veins of the leaves bristled from the branches, a skeletal remnant of the lush green of early spring. A great

disordered flapping from above sent eddies through the buzzing mass. As one, the travelers gaped at a great flock of griffins above them.

*(Travelers all turn their heads upward and stare.)*

**Bumble:** So many together!

**Warrior 3:** What does it mean?

**Wizened Wizard:** Quickly! Inside!

*(Sarah digs into her pocket, finds the key and hurries to open the castle door. They all crowd into the entrance hall and slam the door shut behind them.)*

### Scene 3

#### At the Castle

*(Enter King Kairsalot, clumping along with his scepter followed by Queen Concordia.)*

**King Kairsalot:** Oh, my, my, what now? Look, Concordia, it's the children! They're alive!

**Queen Concordia:** Yes, dear.

*(Happy hugs and exclamations. An ear-splitting shriek.)*

**Narrator:** The glad company froze in terror as horrible screeches rent the air outside. Humming and buzzing pulsed through the air, growing louder and louder. Great flappings and snappings and cracks and crashes, eclipsed the buzzing and humming. Then, came an earth-shaking thud, *(Pause. Thud)* and a fiendish groan *(Pause. Groan)*. Another thud, *(Thud)* and another *(Thud)*, and another *(Thud)*, each followed by a great, moaning sigh. *(Moaning sigh.)*

**Bumble:** What is it?

**Narrator:** Silently, they all listened as the buzzing and humming subsided to a continual drone. A crunching, munching noise grew steadily louder. (*Crunching, munching noise.*)

(*The Wizenad Wizard whispers in the King's ear.*)

**King Kairsalot:** Concordia, find them food, and beds.

**Queen Concordia:** Yes, dear.

(*Queen Concordia shepherds the travelers offstage.*)

**King Kairsalot:** Scientists! Spies! Strategists and Sages! To the King's Council Conference Room, now!

**Narrator:** The best minds in the kingdom puzzled over these events while Princess Sarah slept. In the morning, she peered through the boards on her bedroom window. How she used to love the sunshine streaming through those windows, and the view over the wall to the valley below! Now, tiny creatures of the air blocked the sunlight and the view into the distance. Still, she could see the ground around the castle, littered with huge white bones. She dressed quickly and slipped into the King's Council Conference room.

**Chief Biologist:** The griffins succumbed to the mosquitoes and their remains were quickly devoured by flesh-eating beetle larvae. I believe we can safely say that the griffins will no longer prey on Arthropodia.

(*Hand shaking, fist bumping, high-fives*)

**King Kairsalot:** Isn't it wonderful, Concordia?

**Queen Concordia:** Yes dear.

(*Prince Lee enters on a wheelchair, legs both in casts. All cheer.*)

**Prince Lee:** Maybe we can finish the soccer season after all. I can't play till these legs heal, but I can watch."

**Chief Groundskeeper:** Alas, the fields are swarming with insects, You can't breathe out there without inhaling fifteen different species.

**Chief Agronomist:** The new crops are being devoured as fast as they sprout. Even the grain in the silos is disappearing.

**Chief Physician:** So many—old and young—have succumbed to fevers brought by the mosquitoes.

**King Kairsalot:** (*Slumps in throne.*) Alas. I fear that Arthropodia is in the grip of a plague even greater than the griffins.

**Wizened Wizard:** Harrumph

**King Kairsalot:** What's that you say? Speak up, man.

**Wizened Wizard:** "The wish... the Workings of the Web."

(*He stands unsteadily and stumbles from the room.*)

**Chief Agronomist:** What wish?

**Chief Physician:** What web?

**Chief Groundskeeper:** He's gone quite dotty.

**Chief Biologist:** Past time for retirement.

**Princess Sarah:** (*Soliloquy*) Ah, they have no idea what really happened. It's all my fault! In his great wisdom, he warned me of the power in the webs, and I insisted on wishing them away. Because of my wish, insects plague the land because my wish destroyed the arachnids that kept the balance. Because of my wish, locusts devour the crops, caterpillars destroy the trees, ants carry off the food stores. Because of my wish, mosquitoes torment the people, causing mysterious fevers and death. My wish has destroyed the fabric of Arthropodia.

*(Sarah runs out of the Council Room in search of the Wizened Wizard. Finds him in the library surrounded by books.)*

**Princess Sarah:** *(angrily)* If only you had not taken my fears so seriously! If only you had denied my wish! *(sadly)* If only I hadn't wished away the webs!

**Wizened Wizard:** Ah, child, we cannot undo what is done. Because of your wish, your brother lives. Because of your wish, the griffins are gone.

**Princess Sarah:** *(Picks up cobweb and studies a tiny speck clinging to it.)* Just look at this tiny little tangle of legs. It was only doing what it was meant to do. And because of my wish, it is dead. All because of me. How I wish all the spiders would awaken and rebuild their wonderful webs!

*(Lights flash. Thunder rumbles. Magical music sounds.)*

**Princess Sarah:** Oh look! It's stretching its legs! It's stuffing its broken web between its jaws! It's spinning a new web!

**Narrator:** All over Arthropodia, spiders awoke and began to spin new webs.

**Princess Sarah:** Oh, you wonderful spell weaver! That was your wisdom! They only slept!

**Wizened Wizard:** Until you awakened them with your wish.

*(Sarah throws her arms around him.)*

**Wizened Wizard:** Harrumph.

**Narrator:** Day by day, the number of insects decreased. New leaves grew on the trees. Damaged crops recovered, flowered, and fruited. Prince Lee's legs healed, and the soccer season resumed. Bumble worked diligently to learn the Workings of the Web while the

Wizened Wizard took more naps. Good King Kairsalot watched his daughter help people of all kinds use what they had left to rebuild their lives.

**King Kairsalot:** Very impressive, for a daughter.

**Queen Concordia:** Yes, dear.

**Narrator:** Princess Sarah's story spread throughout the kingdom. All marveled at the truth of the words of the Old Oracle—the command of the king, the wishes of his warrior child, and the wisdom of the ancient Wizard had set the world right again. Forever after, the people of Arthropodia took Princess Sarah seriously. They named her Warrior of the Web, and sought her advice about matters great and small. But Sarah never spoke another wish, not even in a whisper.