

★ **Scary Fairy in Wicked Wood****Jana Bauer****Caroline Thaw, Illustrator****David Limon, Translator**

Kind World Publishing (Apr 19, 2022)

Hardcover \$16.99 (104pp)

978-1-63894-004-3

In Jana Bauer's adorable novel-in-stories, *Scary Fairy in Wicked Wood*, a selfish pixie learns to cooperate with the woodland creatures of her new home instead of only looking out for herself. Reminiscent of classic children's books, Bauer's tales put strong-willed characters into whimsical situations to teach moral lessons.

Banished by her grandmother, crotchety Scary Fairy blows into the forest in a teapot drawn by a hot air balloon and sets up house in a hole in a tree. She makes a poor first impression by using the resident animals—sometimes in a literal way, as when she employs Hedgehog as a hairbrush. The woodland feud softens as Scary Fairy invites the others to join in with traditional fairy celebrations and helps them out when their plans backfire.

Bauer imagines quirky rituals and innovative solutions to minor disasters. The creatures often have to pull together to solve problems. For instance, one hot July, Scary Fairy begs Beaver to build a dam to create a swimming pool; instead, it floods the woods and threatens everyone with homelessness. Temporary shelters have to be found.

The other scenarios explore important concepts, as of consent, the spread of rumors, the importance of good manners, rising above an initial desire for revenge, and overcoming misunderstandings. These lessons are subtle, however, with the book's didactic habits taking a backseat to its fun adventures.

Caroline Thaw's sweet drawings, all graceful lines and muted color fills, feature a mixture of North American and European species wearing spectacles, neckerchiefs, and aprons. David Limon's lucid translation even includes onomatopoeia and nonsense words, and an open ending leaves space for possible sequels.

The nostalgic *Scary Fairy in Wicked Wood* conveys timeless wisdom through charming children's fantasy stories.

REBECCA FOSTER (May / June 2022)

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