

CINDERELLA LIBERATOR



REBECCA SOLNIT

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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Text © 2019 Rebecca Solnit
Illustrations by Arthur Rackham

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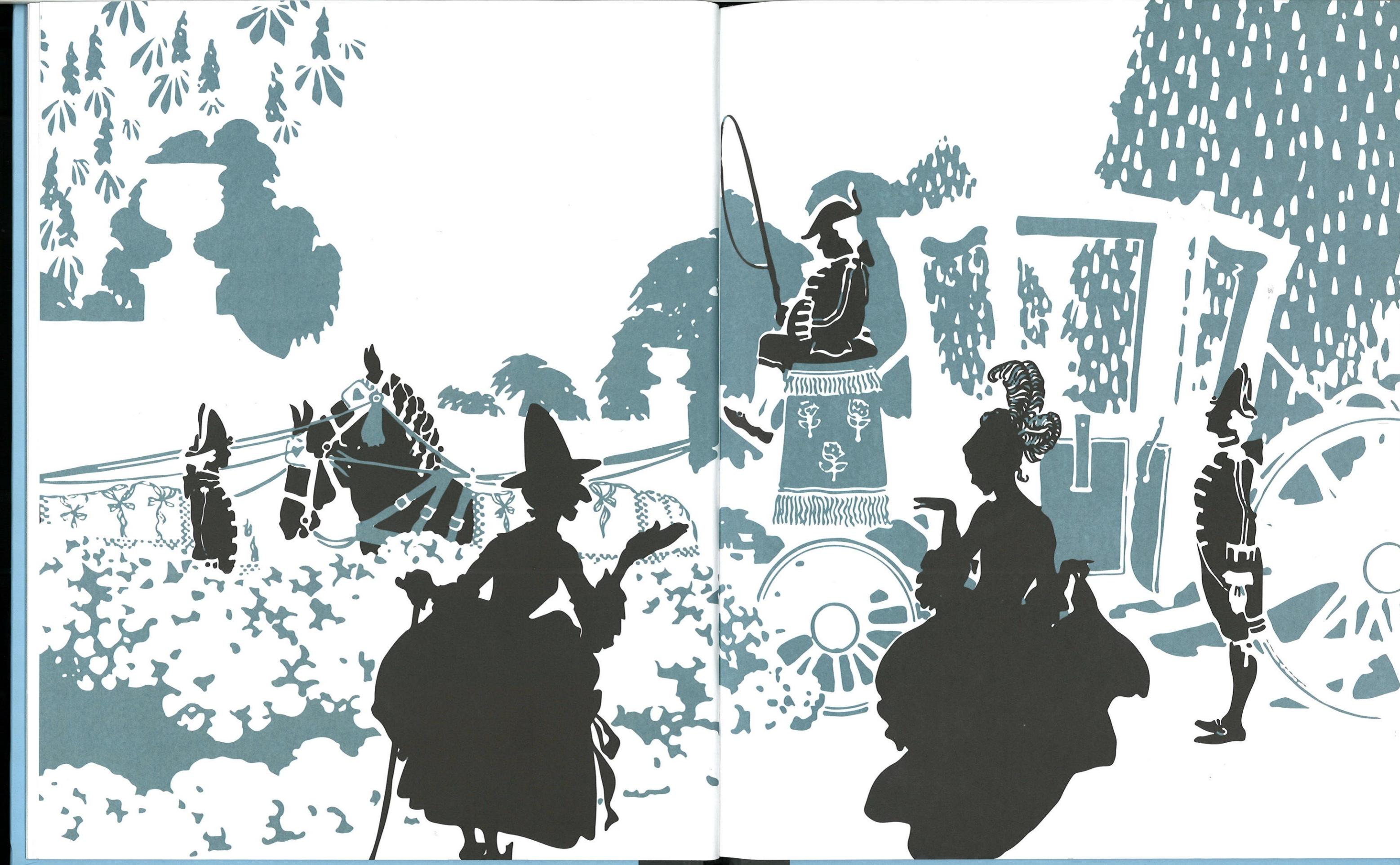
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Away they went—the six horses yearning to gallop, the coachwoman keeping them at a lively trot—through the town at night, hooves clattering on cobblestones, to the castle.

No one questioned who the late guest was when she pulled up in such a fabulous coach led by such a fine team of horses, and she went into the ball, and she danced—for she had learned to dance in the market square at the harvest festival and by watching her stepsisters' dancing lessons and sometimes dancing about the kitchen by herself when she was at work or dancing with the boy who delivered the mail or the girl who delivered the newspaper when they knocked on the kitchen door.

She danced with so many people to the beautiful music of three drums, four tubas, five trumpets, six violins, seven harps, eight guitars, and nine flutes, round and round the ballroom, all the people in dresses twirling around, so that if you saw them from above, they looked like whirling flowers in full bloom. The people in satin jackets and velvet breeches and

brocade hats looked like flowers that had not yet bloomed but were still folded up like buds.

And then she danced with the prince, round and round and round some more.

Prince Nevermind had very nice satin trousers and a very nice smile, and they talked a little until he asked her who she was. She was afraid he might laugh at her or send her away in front of everybody, and she ran away before that could happen. That is, she sent herself away. As she ran, her shoes came off, and she grabbed one but left the other behind her on the ballroom floor. She did not want to tell him she was Cinderella from the kitchen in the town below the castle.

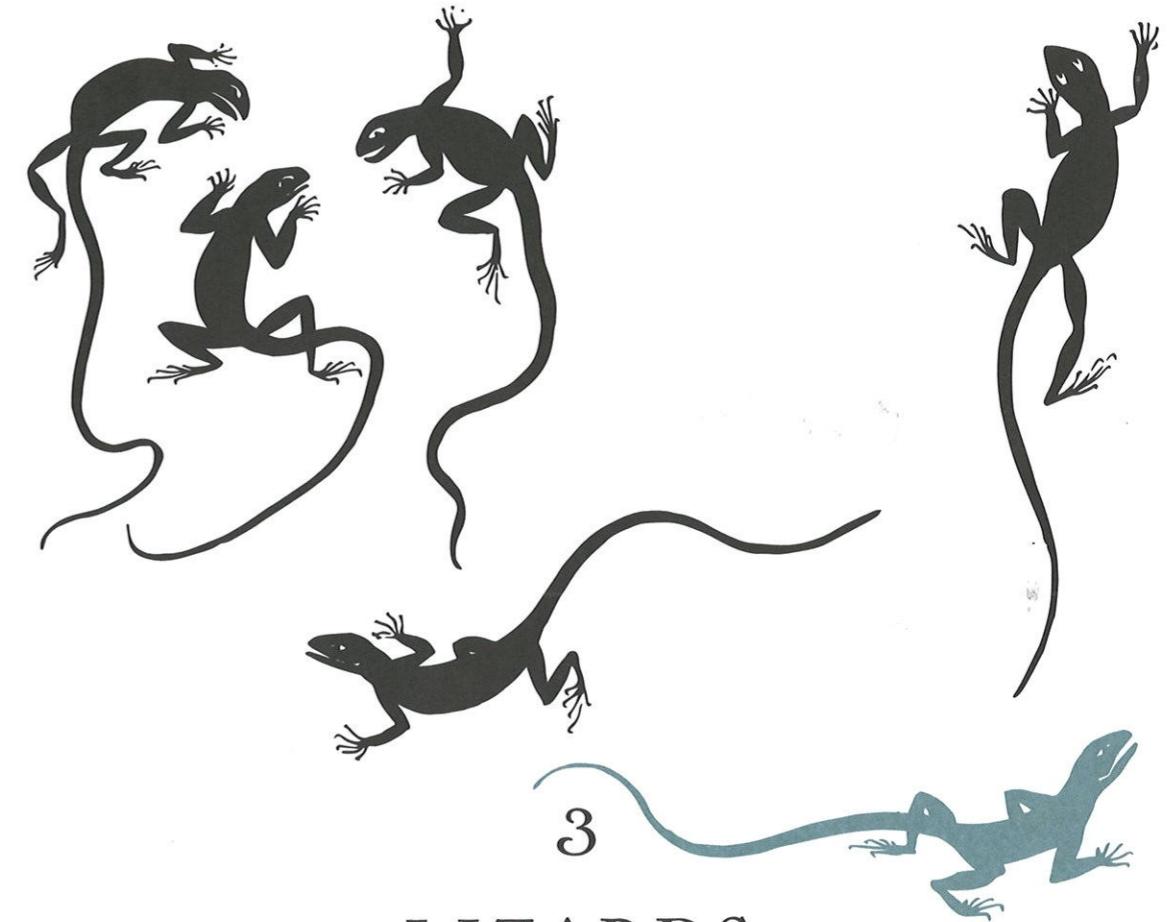
She ran out barefoot into the night, and jumped into her coach, and the coachwoman called out to the horses and the footwomen jumped up, and the horses galloped off with snorts and clattering hooves, and they were home before she knew it.



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LIZARDS

The blue fairy godmother opened the door, and asked her if she'd had a good time, and she said *Yes*, and *No*, and *It was very interesting to see all the fancy clothes and the fancy plates with fancy cakes and the fancy mirrors and the fancy lights*. And then she said, *It was even more interesting to see lizards become footwomen and mice become horses*. The fairy godmother replied that true magic is to help each thing become its best and most free self, and then she asked the horses if they wanted to be horses.

Five of the horses said, in horse language, which fairy godmothers speak and most of us do not, that they loved running through the night and being afraid of nothing and bigger than almost everyone. The sixth horse said she'd had a lot of fun but she had mice children at home and wanted to