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A Circle of Cats

Elizabeth Meyers

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De Lint, Charles. *A Circle of Cats*. Illustrated by Charles Vess. Viking, 2003. ISBN 0670036471. \$16.99. 44 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Meyers

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy fiction; Fairy tales;

Subject: Magic--Juvenile fiction; Cats--Juvenile fiction; Trees--Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

Lillian spends most of her time exploring the woods around her Aunt's farm, searching for the fairies she's convinced are just out of sight. One day, after running with a deer into parts of the wood she's never seen before, Lillian falls asleep beneath an ancient beech tree. When a snake bites her while she sleeps, a gathering of cats decides to save her by turning her into a form that isn't on the verge of dying: a cat. While Lillian is grateful not to be dead, she wants to become a girl again. It will take the wits of the old Apple Tree Man and the Father of Cats to transform her back, and along the way, Lillian discovers just how to see fairies.

De Lint's book has a pleasant mythical feel, although some relatively unnecessary plot points (i.e. Lillian's fascination with fairies) tend to diffuse the drive of the story. Nevertheless, the book has some beautiful moments, especially when coupled with Vess's gorgeous illustrations. The point where Lillian meets the Apple Tree Man is especially effective; the pictures of him are beautifully tree-like, and De Lint delightfully describes his emergence from the apple tree. De Lint fans will find this an enjoyable, non-hefty tale.