

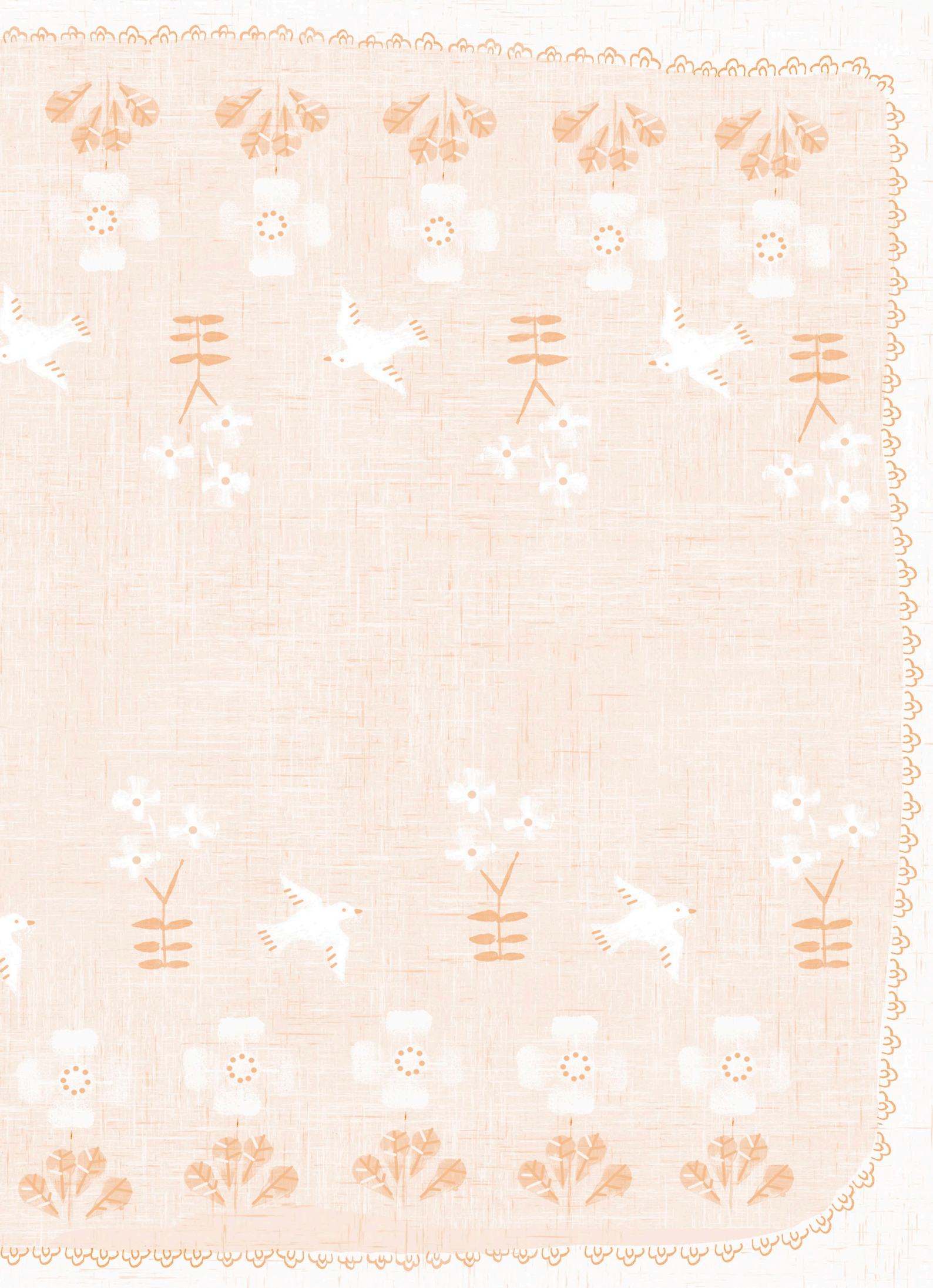
"Fresh and bright as new-fallen snow" – Kiran Millwood Hargrave

Frindleswylde



Natalia & Lauren O'Hara





For Frania and Patricia

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FRINDLESWYLDE



By

NATALIA and LAUREN O'HARA



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“Can you feel a tremble in the wind? The sun grows pale.
The wild things hide.

“Frindleswylde is coming...

“Soon his face will peek from frozen ponds. The wild North
wind will sing his name. He’ll snatch the storks and hide the
moon and pick the locks. As he creeps by, the bristling hills
turn white as ghosts.”



Granny shut the window and put another log on the fire.

“Poor storks!” said Cora, who was fond of a pair who lived on their roof. “But Frindleswylde would never snatch a child, would he, Granny?”

“Little one – old or young, kind or cruel, rich or poor, Frindleswylde snatches all. So promise to be wary when I’m out in the woods.

“Frindleswylde is cunning and he takes many shapes. If you open the door, he’ll bring in the cold. If he brings in the cold, he’ll put out the lamp. And if he puts out the lamp, I cannot come home to save you.”

The lamp sat in a little round window in the attic. There it shone night and day, bright as a snowy owl’s eye. When Granny finished work every night, she followed its golden light home through the woods.

“I promise!” said Cora. Then Granny lit her pipe and read fairy tales until supper, which was chicken soup with rolls shaped like crowns, and tiny golden pancakes with hot berries and cinnamon.

That same night, the first snow fell. Granny locked Cora’s window and tucked her up tight. But all through the night,

a silver birch in the yard knocked on the glass – rap-tap-trap.

“Frindleswylde!” Cora whispered. And she ran away to Granny’s bed.

At dawn Granny went out to the yard to cut down the tree. But as she swung her axe it shook in her hand because inside the trunk was something as hard as a headstone. She whittled away the bark. Inside was a little child made out of ice. Granny dropped her axe in the snow.

The ice child looked exactly like Cora.

Granny hurried back to the house, but just then it began to snow. And by the time she reached the back door the ice child was already half buried. Its eyes – so like Cora’s – looked fearful. So Granny turned back. She picked up the ice child, carried it into the kitchen and brushed the snow off its cheeks.

Then she picked up her tools and went to work. And as her steps died away, the ice child laughed.



Cora yawned, rubbed her eyes and screamed. Snow whistled down from the ceiling. Snow smothered the floor. Snow buried her quilt and bunny and pillow. “Granny!” she wailed. There was no reply, just a crash in the kitchen.

Cora crawled out of bed, snatched Granny’s scarf to keep herself warm and tiptoed down the hall. In the living room, hailstones pounded the floor and cracked the windows. A blizzard howled in the bath. In the kitchen, a crow was nesting in the breadbin. And when she peered into Granny’s pot she saw the dumplings in the soup had turned to snowballs. Cora heard footsteps above. “The lamp!” she cried, and scabbled upstairs.

In the dim attic stood a boy as pale as a frosty morning. He had snow-white hair and eyes like the Arctic sea.

“Frindleswylde!” Cora whispered. “You’re just a little boy.”

“Oh, I am *everything*,” said Frindleswylde. “And also nothing, which is far better!”

He plucked the lamplight with his fingers – it flickered like a caught butterfly – and dropped it into a hazelnut shell from the nut bowl. Then he snapped the shell shut, stepped back and fell out of the window.

