



Sleeping Beauty



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Once, in a faraway kingdom, there lived a king and queen who longed for a child. At long last, a little daughter was born and they named her Briar Rose after the flowers that twisted up the walls of their castle.

News of the princess's birth spread far and wide and bells rang out across the land.

"I shall hold a great feast!" declared the king. "And all the fairies shall come and bless my child with magic."

For days, the castle hummed with excitement. The ladies and gentlemen practised their dances, the guards polished their armour, the servants hung the great hall with armfuls of roses, and the cook stirred and stewed and sweated. Most excited of all was the court poet, who had written a new poem for the princess and read it to anyone who would listen.

There were thirteen fairies in the kingdom, all sisters, but only twelve were invited. The king only had twelve gold plates (which is all fairies will eat off) and besides, the thirteenth fairy was a terrifying old woman who lived alone in the mountains. The king and queen were certain she would never know.

The feast was the most magnificent the kingdom had ever seen. The ladies and gentlemen danced for hours, the guards' armour sparkled, and every dish from the kitchen was more delicious than the last. Even the court poet was warmly applauded.

Eventually, it was time for the fairies to give their gifts.


"My gift to the child shall be kindness," said the first fairy.

"Mine shall be intelligence," said the second.

"I bring the gift of music and she shall sing like a nightingale," said the third.

The fairies spoke one by one, but just as the twelfth fairy stepped up to Briar Rose's cradle, the room darkened and the fires flared angrily.





With night-time trailing behind her like a cape, the thirteenth fairy swept into the room.

"And why is it that I, who am the eldest and cleverest of my sisters, was not invited?" she stormed.

The king and queen were speechless. The other fairies called out to their sister, but she would not listen.

"I could have brought the princess the most precious gift of all," the thirteenth fairy spat. "Instead, I only bring a curse."

She raised her hand. "My curse is this. On the girl's seventeenth birthday, she shall prick her finger on a spinning wheel and fall down dead."

With that, she left. Behind her, the candles and fires went out and the room was plunged into darkness and confusion.

The only one who remained calm was the twelfth fairy, who had not yet given her gift. With a wave of her hand she reignited the fires and the candles, and then she stepped before the king and queen.

"Your majesties," she said. "I am the youngest and smallest of the fairies, and I cannot undo my sister's curse, but I can soften it. On the day of her seventeenth birthday, the princess shall indeed prick her finger on a spinning wheel, but she shall not die. She will sleep for a hundred years until she is awakened by a prince."

Briar Rose's parents were grateful, but they still wanted their daughter to escape this fate, so they ordered every spinning wheel in the land to be destroyed. The bonfires could be seen for miles around.

Briar Rose grew into a girl with all the blessings the fairies had given her.

She was loved throughout the kingdom and the curse was all but forgotten.

On the princess's seventeenth birthday, she woke early and decided to explore the many empty rooms of the castle.

She climbed up spiral staircases and walked through forgotten rooms containing furniture and tapestries that were centuries old.

Briar Rose thought she was completely alone, but then she heard someone singing. Following the sound, she climbed a narrow stairway. At the top was a very old woman with a spinning wheel. The wheel whirled, the old woman sang her song, and Briar Rose wanted nothing so much as to reach out and touch the spindle.

"Mistress," said the princess, "please tell me what you are doing?"

The woman didn't answer.

Maybe she cannot hear? thought the girl and, drawn towards the strange machine, she reached out her hand to it and pricked her finger.

A drop of blood bloomed on her fingertip, and then she fell onto the bed, fast asleep.

The old woman vanished.



Soon, every other living creature in the castle was sound asleep too.

The king and queen slumbered on their thrones, while ladies and gentlemen slept in the middle of their dance. At the gates, guards slept at their posts and in the kitchen, the cook nodded off over arms in the air and a verse on the tip of his tongue.


As time passed, a wall of thorns grew up around the castle, and the twelve good fairies kept watch in case their sister should return to make mischief.

The legend of the sleeping princess spread, and many princes came in the hope that they would wake her.

All of them were stopped by the forest of thorns around the castle. Some retreated cut and bleeding and some never reappeared. Nearly a hundred years went by and the princess and the castle were nearly forgotten. The thorns grew so high that not even the tallest tower could be seen. Inside, nothing moved. Dogs slept by the fire, fleas slept on the dogs, doves slept in the eaves and mice slept in the walls. Even flies hovered asleep above the quiet horses in the stable.

Then, one day, red rosebuds appeared amongst the thorns and a young prince who had come from far away stopped to look at them.





The prince had first noticed only the rosebuds, but he soon saw that they grew out of the largest thorn bush he had ever seen.

From a distance, he realised it was the size of a kingdom. He stopped at a cottage where he found an old farmer's wife feeding her hens, and asked her what she knew about it.

"To tell the truth, I'd nearly forgotten it was there," she said. "You'd think some magic lurked around that place! My father told me a story of a princess who was cursed to sleep for a hundred years. They say she is as beautiful as a rose, but that all who seek her shall perish."

The prince was not afraid, so he drew his sword and galloped on his horse towards the wall of thorns.

Unknown to him, this day marked a hundred years since Briar Rose had fallen asleep. As the prince neared the thorny wall it parted to make a path to the castle.

Soon he arrived at the gates, and there he saw people sleeping in the clothes of a hundred years ago. Everything was covered in climbing roses, and these opened ahead of him, leading him through corridors, up stairs and finally to a small room at the top of a tall tower.

The prince pushed open the door, and there he saw the sleeping princess. He stepped toward the bed, leaned over and gently kissed her. Her eyes opened.

"Are you the prince who was to wake me up?" she asked. "I've waited so long."

Al-
l around the palace,
people began to yawn
and open their eyes.

The ladies and gentlemen started dancing again, the guards stood to attention and the cook placed the cherry on Briar Rose's birthday cake. The court poet waved his arms and continued reciting.

Even the floors, roofs and walls of the castle came back to life as the dogs scratched, the fleas leapt, the mice rustled and the flies buzzed above the whinnying horses in the stable.

The princess and prince talked for many hours and then walked hand in hand to the throne room to speak to Briar Rose's parents.

The wedding was held soon, and at the table thirteen golden plates were laid for the fairies who were invited to give their blessing. They all lived happily ever after.