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Sleeping Beauty



The Sleeping Beauty by the Brothers Grimm

Once upon a time, there lived a king and a queen, who had no children. This made them terribly sad. Every day they wished, "If only we had a child," but the days passed and they remained childless.

However, one day, as the queen was walking by the side of the river, she saw a poor little fish that had been thrown out of the water and lay gasping and nearly dead on the bank. The queen took pity on the little fish and threw it back again into the river. Before it swam away, it raised its head out of the water and said "I know what your wish is, and it shall come true—in return for your kindness to me, you will soon give birth to a baby girl."

The queen went home and told her husband what had happened, and sure enough, the words of the fish came true.

The king was so delighted with his little daughter that he decided to throw a great party and show the child to all the land. So he invited all his kinsmen, nobles, friends, and neighbors. But the queen said "We must have the fairies also, that they might be kind and good to our little daughter."

Now there were thirteen fairies in the kingdom, but unfortunately the king owned only twelve golden plates. He was ashamed and frightened to insult any one of them by asking that she dine from a silver plate. Therefore, the oldest and most troublesome of the fairies was not invited to the feast. And, to tell the truth, the king was secretly glad of an excuse to exclude her.

So twelve fairies came to the feast, and when it was over, each fairy presented the new baby with a magic gift. One gave her beauty, another wisdom, a third goodness, and so on.

When eleven of the twelve fairies had given their gifts, the castle door suddenly flew open, and the thirteenth fairy flew into the room. She was very angry that she had not been invited to the feast, and she was determined to have her revenge.

"My curse upon the princess!" she shouted. "On her fifteenth birthday, she shall prick herself on a spinning wheel and fall down dead." And without another word, she turned and left the hall.

Everyone was horrified and grief-stricken by the old fairy's words. But then the twelfth and youngest fairy, who had not yet given her wish for the princess, stepped forward. "I cannot change the curse," she told the king,

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"but I can soften it a bit. Your daughter will not die. Instead she shall fall into a deep sleep which will last for a hundred years."

The poor king was sick with grief and worry. To protect his daughter from all misfortune, he had all the spinning wheels in the kingdom burnt in a great bonfire, and ordered that anyone caught using or owning a spinning wheel be put to death.

As time went on, all the wishes of the good fairies came true. The princess grew to be kind, wise, and beautiful. And the king and queen gradually forgot the dreadful curse that had been placed on their daughter.

Now it happened that on the very day that their daughter turned fifteen, the king and queen were away from home, and the princess was left alone. So, to amuse herself, the princess wandered about the castle, running up and down the halls and peeking into long-forgotten rooms.

Eventually, she came to a little room at the top of a high tower, where a good old woman was spinning on her wheel. For, you see, this woman had never heard of the king's law against spinning wheels.

"Good morning," said the princess politely, "Whatever are you doing?"

"Why, I'm spinning," said the old lady.

"Oh, let me try, please," said the princess. But no sooner had she reached out to touch the spinning wheel than she pricked her thumb on the spindle, and fell down lifeless to the ground. However, she was not dead, but had merely fallen into a deep sleep.

The king and the queen, who had just come home, and all their court, fell asleep too. The horses slept in the stables, the dogs in the court, the pigeons on the house-top and the very flies slept upon the walls. Thus, everything within the castle stood still, and all was as silent as death.

A large hedge of thorns sprung up all around the castle, and every year it became higher and thicker. At last, the castle was surrounded and hidden, so that not even the turrets or chimneys could be seen.

But there were stories told in nearby lands about a lovely princess who lay sleeping somewhere in an enchanted castle. And, from time to time, several kings' sons came and tried to break through the thicket into the palace. This, however, none of them could ever do, for the thorns and bushes laid hold of them, as it were with hands and there they got stuck and could not escape.

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After many, many years there came a king's son into that land, and an old man told him the story of the thicket of thorns—how a wonderful castle stood behind it and how a beautiful princess lay in it asleep, with all her court. He told, too, how he had heard from his grandfather that many, many princes had come and had tried to break through the thicket, but that they had all stuck fast in it.

Then the young prince said, "All this shall not frighten me; I will go and see this sleeping princess." The old man tried to hinder him, but his mind was made up to go.

Now, that very day, the hundred years were at an end. And when the prince reached the hedge of thorns, it was covered with hundreds of beautiful flowers. They made way for him as he approached, and then shut in after him as thick as ever.

When the prince came to castle, he saw the dogs lying fast asleep in the courtyard. The horses were sleeping in the stables, and on the roof sat the pigeons asleep, with their heads under their wings. And sleeping flies were clustered on the walls.

The silence inside the castle was so frightful that the prince needed all his courage to go on. At last he came to a ruined tower; he climbed the narrow staircase and pushed open the door to the little room where the princess was sleeping.

There she lay, fast asleep on the floor by the window, looking so beautiful that he could not believe his eyes. So he knelt down beside her and gave her a kiss. As soon as he kissed her the spell was broken and she opened her eyes. "Is that you, my prince?" she said looking up at him. "I've been dreaming of you for a very long time now."

Soon the king and queen also awoke, and all the court, and everyone looked on each other with great wonder. And the horses shook themselves, the dogs jumped up and barked, the pigeons took their heads from under their wings and flew into the fields, and the flies on the walls buzzed around again.

As soon as the wedding could be arranged, the prince and princess were married with great feasting and celebration. And the two lived happily together for the rest of their lives.

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