

Sleeping Beauty

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I

Once upon a time there lived a king and queen who were very unhappy because they had no children. But at last a little daughter was born, and their sorrow was turned to joy. All the bells in the land were rung to tell the glad tidings.

The king gave a christening feast so grand that the like of it had never been known. He invited all the fairies he could find in the kingdom—there were seven of them—to come to the christening as godmothers. He hoped that each would give the princess a good gift.

When the christening was over, the feast came. Before each of the fairies was placed a plate with a spoon, a knife, and a fork—all pure gold. But alas! As the fairies were about to seat themselves at the table, there came into the hall a very old fairy who had not been in-

vited. She had left the kingdom fifty years before and had not been seen or heard of until this day.

The king at once ordered that a plate should be brought for her, but he could not furnish a gold one such as the others had. This made the old fairy angry, and she sat there muttering to herself.

A young fairy who sat near overheard her angry threats. This good godmother, fearing the old fairy might give the child an unlucky gift, hid herself behind a curtain. She did this because she wished to speak last and perhaps be able to change the old fairy's gift.

At the end of the feast, the youngest fairy stepped forward and said, "The princess shall be the most beautiful woman in the world."

The second said,

"She shall have a temper as sweet as an angel."

The third said,

“She shall have a wonderful grace in all she does or says.”

The fourth said,

“She shall sing like a nightingale.”

The fifth said,

“She shall dance like a flower in the wind.”

The sixth said,

“She shall play such music as was never heard on earth.”

Then the old fairy’s turn came. Shaking her head spitefully, she said,

“When the princess is seventeen years old, she shall prick her finger with a spindle, and—she—shall—die!”

At this all the guests trembled, and many of them began to weep. The king and queen wept loudest of all.

Just then the wise young fairy came from behind the curtain and said: “Do not grieve, O King and Queen. Your daughter shall not die. I cannot undo what my elder sister has done; the princess shall indeed prick her finger with the spindle, but she shall not die. She shall fall into sleep that will last a hundred years. At the end of that time, a king’s son will find her and awaken her.”

Immediately all the fairies vanished.

II

The king, hoping to save his child even from this misfortune, commanded that all spindles should be burned. This was done, but it was all in vain.

One day when the princess was seventeen years of age, the king and queen left her alone in the castle. She wandered about the palace and at last came to a little room in the top of a tower. There an old woman—so old and deaf that she had never heard of the king’s command—sat spinning.

“What are you doing, good old woman?” asked the princess.

“I am spinning, my pretty child.”

“Ah,” said the princess. “How do you do it? Let me see if I can spin also.”

She had just taken the spindle in her hand when, in some way, it pricked her finger. The princess dropped down on the floor. The old woman called for help, and people came from all sides, but nothing could be done.

When the good young fairy heard the news, she came quickly to the castle. She knew that the princess must sleep a hundred years and would be frightened if she found herself alone when she awoke. So the fairy touched with her magic wand all in the palace except the king and the queen. Ladies, gentlemen, pages, waiting maids, footmen, grooms in the stable, and even the horses—she touched them all. They all went to sleep just where they were when the wand touched them. Some of the gentlemen were bowing to the ladies, the ladies were embroidering, the grooms stood currying their horses, and the cook was slapping the kitchen boy.

The king and queen departed from the castle, giving orders that no one was to go near it. This command, however, was not needed.

In a little while there sprang around the castle a wood so thick that neither man nor beast could pass through.

III

A great many changes take place in a hundred years. The king had no other child, and when he died, his throne passed to another royal family. Even the story of the sleeping princess was almost forgotten.

One day the son of the king who was then reigning was out hunting, and he saw towers rising above a thick wood. He asked what they were, but no one could answer him.

At last an old peasant was found who said, "Your highness, fifty years ago my father told me that there is a castle in the woods where a princess sleeps—the most beautiful princess that ever lived. It was said that she must sleep there a hundred years, when she would be awakened by a king's son."

At this the young prince determined to find out the truth for himself. He leaped from his horse and began to force his way through the wood. To his astonishment, the stiff branches gave way, and then closed again, allowing none of his companions to follow.

A beautiful palace rose before him. In the courtyard the prince saw horses and men who looked as if they were dead. But he was not afraid and boldly entered the palace. There were guards motionless as stone, gentlemen and ladies, pages and footmen, some standing, some sitting, but all like statues.

At last the prince came to a chamber of gold, where he saw upon a bed the fairest sight one ever beheld—a princess of about seventeen years who looked as if she had just fallen asleep. Trembling, the prince knelt beside her, and awakened her with a kiss. And now the enchantment was broken.

The princess looked at him with wondering eyes and said: "Is it you, my prince? I have waited for you long."

So happy were the two that they talked hour after hour. In the meantime all in the palace awaked and each began to do what he was doing when he fell asleep. The gentlemen went on bowing to the ladies. The ladies went on with their embroidery. The grooms went on currying their horses, the cook went on slapping the kitchen boy, and the servants began to serve the supper. Then the chief lady in waiting, who was ready to die of hunger, told the princess aloud that supper was ready.

The prince gave the princess his hand, and they all went into the great hall for supper. That very evening the prince and princess were married. The next day the prince took his bride to his father's palace, and there they lived happily ever afterward.