

Sleeping Beauty (I)

Once upon a time there was a king and a queen. They had longed for a child so when the queen gave birth to a daughter the king decided to throw a party for all the lords and ladies and fairies in the land. Unfortunately there were thirteen fairies and the king only had twelve fairy plates so he decided just to invite his favourite twelve fairies, thinking that the thirteenth might not mind. She did.

The lords and ladies brought presents for the baby princess and the fairies lined up to cast magic wishes over her. They wished the princess to be loved, kind, beautiful, clever, funny, polite, inquisitive, musical and so on. But when the last fairy raised her wand for her wish, there was a crack in the air and the thirteenth fairy stood by the princess's crib. Fairies can be very angry when they've been slighted and this fairy particularly so.

The thirteenth fairy raised her wand and cried, "The princess will be all these wonderful things but before her sixteenth birthday, she will prick her finger on a spinning wheel and DIE!" And she vanished in a puff of fury.

Everyone in the room howled with horror and the king and the queen held their baby in tears. But just then, the twelfth fairy piped up, "I've not made my wish yet. The princess will not die, but will fall asleep for 100 years."

The years went by and the princess grew up to be loved, kind, beautiful, clever, funny, polite, inquisitive and all the other things she had been wished to be. The king had ordered all the spinning wheels in the land to be burned and it was now the day before the princess's sixteenth birthday. The king and the queen believed that they had survived the curse and were planning a great celebration the following day.

Sleeping Beauty (2)

Everyone in the castle was busy cooking, cleaning and decorating. The inquisitive princess wandered around the castle watching it all. Turning a corner she saw a stairway that she'd never been up before so up she went. At the top she found an old lady sitting at a strange object. "Good day, madam," said the polite princess. "May I ask what that strange object is?"

"It's a spinning wheel, my dear," said the old lady. "Would you like a go?"

She showed the princess how to sit at the wheel and move the wool. The clever princess picked it up quickly but laughing with the pleasure of it she pricked her finger and immediately fell down in a deep sleep.

When the princess fell asleep, everyone else fell asleep – the cook at the stove, the boys catching mice, the king talking to his lords. Everyone, that is except the old lady who disappeared in a puff of revenge.

The years went by and dust and cobwebs covered the castle. Thorns grew up around it and a story spread across the land that there was a sleeping beauty hidden in the castle. Some brave men tried to get close but the thorns defeated them all.

Ten years went by, then twenty, fifty, ninety, ninety-nine and then one hundred years. On that day a brave and inquisitive prince came riding by, having heard the story. When he came to cut the thorns they melted away and he walked up to and into the castle. He walked past the boys catching the mice and the king talking to his lords and up a small staircase. At the top he found a beautiful sleeping princess and he kissed her awake.

"Thank you," said the polite princess.

And when the princess woke up the whole castle woke up. The birthday party became a wedding feast and the princess and the prince lived happily ever after.

Retold by Sarah Snashall