



## Sleeping Beauty

### Description

By Charles Perrault



Once upon a time there was a king and queen who were very sad that they had no children. They met with all the doctors and magicians in the world. And finally the queen was expecting a baby and gave birth to a girl.

At her christening, all the fairies that could be found in the country (there were seven) were given as godmothers to the little princess, so that each of them would give her a gift, as was the custom of the fairies in those days, and the princess would thus have all the perfections imaginable.

After the baptism ceremonies, the whole company returned to the king's palace where there was a great feast for the fairies. A magnificent place setting was placed before each of them, with a solid gold case containing a spoon, a fork, and a knife of fine gold, set with diamonds and rubies. But as everyone took their place at the table, an old fairy entered, who had not been invited, because it had

been more than fifty years since she had left her tower, and she was thought to be dead or enchanted. The king had a place setting given to her, but he could not give her a solid gold case like the others, because only seven had been made for the seven fairies. The old woman thought she was being scorned, and grumbled some threats between her teeth. One of the young fairies, who was near her, heard her; and judging that she could give some bad gift to the little princess, went, as soon as they left the table, to hide behind the tapestry in order to speak last, and to be able to repair, as much as it would be possible for her, the evil that the old woman would have done.

However, the fairies began to give their gifts to the princess. The youngest gave her the gift that she would be the most beautiful person in the world; the second, that she would have the wit of an angel; the third, that she would have admirable grace in everything she did; the fourth, that she would dance perfectly well; the fifth, that she would sing like a nightingale; the sixth, that she would play all kinds of instruments to perfection. When the old fairy's turn came, she said, shaking her head more out of spite than out of old age, that the princess would pierce her hand with a spindle and die.

This terrible gift made the whole company shudder, and there was no one who did not cry at this horrible prediction. At that moment the young fairy came out from behind the tapestry, and said aloud these words:

– Rest assured, king and queen, your daughter will not die; it is true that I do not have enough power to undo entirely what this old fairy has done. The princess will pierce her hand with a spindle; but instead of dying, she will only fall into a deep sleep that will last a hundred years, at the end of which the son of a king will come to wake her up.

The king, in order to avoid the misfortune announced by the old woman, immediately published an edict, by which he forbade all persons to spin with a spindle, nor to have spindles at home, on pain of life.

At the end of fifteen or sixteen years, when the king and the queen had left on a journey, the young princess amused herself by running around the castle one day, and going from room to room, she arrived at the top of a dungeon in a small room, where a good old woman was there all alone spinning her distaff. This good woman had not heard of the king's ban on spinning.

– What are you doing there, my good woman? said the princess.

– I am spinning, my beautiful child, answered the old woman who did not know her.

– Ah, how pretty it is, » said the princess, « how do you do it? Give it to me so that I can see if I would do the same.

She had no sooner taken the spindle than, as she was nervous, a little dizzy, and as the prediction of the fairies so ordered, she pierced her hand with it and fell down fainting.



The good old woman, quite embarrassed, cried for help: they came from all sides, they threw water in the princess's face, they undressed her, they clapped her hands, they rubbed her temples with water from the Queen of Hungary; but nothing made her come back.

Then the king, who had gone up to the noise, remembered the prediction of the fairies, and judging well that it was necessary that it arrived, since the fairies had said it, made put the princess in the most beautiful apartment of the palace, on a bed of gold and silver embroidery. She looked like an angel, so

beautiful was she; for her fainting had not taken away the bright colors of her complexion: her cheeks were incarnate, and her lips like coral; she had only her eyes closed, but one could hear her breathing softly, which showed that she was not dead.

The king ordered that she be left to sleep in repose until her time to wake up had come. The good fairy who had saved her life by condemning her to sleep for a hundred years, was in the kingdom of Mataquin, twelve thousand leagues away, when the accident happened to the princess; but she was warned of it in an instant by a little dwarf, who had seven-league boots (they were boots with which one could walk seven leagues in a single stride)

The fairy left at once, and after an hour she was seen arriving in a chariot of fire, dragged by dragons. The king went to greet her as she got off the wagon. She approved of all that he had done; but as she was very far-sighted, she thought that when the princess woke up, she would be very embarrassed and all alone in this old castle: here is what she did.

She touched with her wand all that was in the castle (except the king and the queen), governesses, maids of honor, chambermaids, gentlemen, officers, butlers, cooks, guards, Swiss, pages, footmen; she also touched all the horses that were in the stables, with the grooms, the big dogs of the basse-cour, and the little Pouffe, the princess's little dog, who was next to her on her bed.

As soon as she had touched them, they all fell asleep, only to wake up at the same time as their mistress, so as to be ready to serve her when she needed them. The spits themselves, which were in the fire, all full of partridges and pheasants, fell asleep, and the fire too.

All this was done in a moment; the fairies were not long in their work. Then the king and the queen, after having kissed their dear child without her waking up, went out of the castle, and made public the prohibitions to anyone to approach it. These prohibitions were not necessary; for in a quarter of an hour there grew, all around the park, such a great quantity of large and small trees, of brambles and thorns intertwined, that neither beast nor man could have passed through; so that one could see only the top of the towers of the castle, even if one was far away. There was no doubt that the fairy had done a trick of her trade there, so that the princess, while she slept, would have nothing to fear from the curious.

After a hundred years, the son of the king who reigned at that time, and who was of a different family from the sleeping princess, went hunting on that side of the river and asked what towers he saw above a large, thick wood. Each one answered him according to what he had heard about them. Some said that it was an old castle where spirits returned; others said that all the witches of the region held their Sabbath there. The most common opinion was that an ogre lived there, and that he took all the children he could catch, to eat them at his leisure, and without anyone being able to follow him, as he alone had the power to make a passage through the wood.



The prince did not know what to believe, when an old peasant spoke up, and said to him:

– My prince, it is more than fifty years since I heard from my father that there was a princess in this castle, the most beautiful that could be seen; that she was to sleep there a hundred years, and that she would be awakened by the son of a king, for whom she was reserved.

The young prince, at this speech, felt all on fire; he believed without balancing that he would put an end to such a beautiful adventure; and pushed by love and by glory, he resolved to see at once what it was. No sooner did he advance towards the wood, than all the tall trees, the brambles and thorns moved aside of their own accord to let him pass. He walked towards the castle, which he saw at the end of a large avenue, and, what surprised him a little, he saw that none of his people had been able to follow him, because the trees had come closer as soon as he had passed.

He did not let his way continue: a young and loving prince is always valiant. He entered a large

forecourt where everything he saw at first was able to freeze him with fear.

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It was a dreadful silence: the image of death was everywhere, and it was only the stretched out bodies of men and animals, which seemed dead. He recognized, however, by the budding noses and ruddy faces of the Swiss, that they were only asleep, and their cups, in which there were still a few drops of wine, showed enough that they had fallen asleep while drinking.



He passed a large courtyard paved with marble; he climbed the stairs, he entered the room of the guards who were ranged in hedges, rifles on their shoulders, and snoring as best they could. He passed through several rooms full of gentlemen and ladies, all sleeping, some standing, others sitting. He entered a room all gilded, and he saw on a bed, whose curtains were open on all sides, the most beautiful sight he had ever seen:

a princess who appeared to be fifteen or sixteen years old, and whose resplendent radiance had something luminous and divine about it. He approached, trembling and admiring, and knelt down

beside her.



Then, as the end of the enchantment had come, the princess awoke; and looking at him with more tender eyes than a first view would seem to allow:

– Is it you, my prince? » she said to him, « you have been waiting a long time.

The prince, charmed by these words, and even more by the manner in which they were said, did not know how to show her his joy and his gratitude; he assured her that he loved her more than himself. His speeches were clumsy; little eloquence, much love. He was more embarrassed than she was, and one should not be surprised; she had had time to think of what she would have to say to him, for the good fairy, during such a long sleep, had given her the pleasure of pleasant dreams.

At last they had been talking for four hours, and they had not yet said half the things they had to say to each other.

However all the palace had awaked with the princess; each one thought of making his load, and as

they were not all in love, they died of hunger; the lady of honor, pressed like the others, became impatient, and said aloud to the princess that the meat was served. The prince helped the princess to get up; she was fully dressed and very beautifully, but he was careful not to tell her that she was dressed like her

Grandmother, and that she had a collar on; she was no less beautiful.

They passed into a hall of mirrors, and supped there, served by the officers of the princess. The violins and oboes played some old but excellent pieces, although they had not been played for nearly a hundred years; and after supper, without wasting any time, the Grand Chaplain married them in the castle chapel, and the lady-in-waiting drew the curtain for them: they slept very little, the princess did not need it very much, and the prince left her in the morning to return to the city, where his father must have been in pain.

The prince told her that while hunting he had gotten lost in the forest, and that he had slept in the hut of a coalman, who had made him eat black bread and cheese. The king his father, who was a good man, believed him; but his mother was not quite persuaded, and seeing that he went almost every day to hunt, and that he always had a reason in hand to excuse himself, when he had slept two or three nights outside, she no longer doubted that he had some love affair; for he lived with the princess for more than two whole years, and had two children, of whom the first, who was a girl, was named Aurora, and the second a son who was named Jour, because he appeared even more beautiful than his sister.

The queen tried many times to make him speak, but he never dared to tell her his secret: Indeed he feared her as much as he loved her, for she was of the race of ogres, and the king had only married her because of her great wealth. It was even said at court that she had the inclinations of ogres and that when she saw little children passing by, she had all the trouble in the world to restrain herself from throwing herself on them to devour them; so the prince never wanted to say anything.



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But when the king was dead, which happened after two years, and he saw himself the master, he

publicly declared his marriage, and went with great ceremony to fetch the queen his wife in his castle. They made a magnificent entrance to the capital, where she entered accompanied by her two children.

Some time later the king went to war with the emperor Cantalabutte his neighbor. He left the regency of the kingdom to the queen mother, and strongly recommended his wife and children to her: he had to be at war all summer, and as soon as he was gone, the queen mother sent her daughter-in-law and her children to a country house in the woods, to be able to more easily satisfy her horrible appetite.

She went there a few days later, and said one evening to her butler:

– I want to eat tomorrow at my dinner little Aurora.

– Ah! madam, said the butler...

– I do, » said the queen (and she said it in the tone of an ogress who wants to eat fresh flesh), « and I want to eat her with Robert's sauce.

This poor man, seeing that it was not necessary to play with an ogress, took his big knife, and went up to the room of the little Aurore: she was four years old at the time and came jumping and laughing to throw herself on his neck, and to ask him for a candy. He began to cry: the knife fell from his hands, and he went into the barnyard to cut the throat of a little lamb, and made such a good sauce for it, that his mistress assured him that she had never eaten anything so good. At the same time, he took the little Aurora and gave her to his wife to hide in the house she had at the back of the barnyard.

Eight days later, the wicked queen said to her butler:

– I want to eat at my supper the little Day.

He did not reply, determined to deceive her as he had done the other time; he went to look for little Day, and found him with a small foil in his hand, whose iron he was crossing with a large monkey; he was only three years old, however. He took it to his wife, who hid it with little Aurora, and gave instead of little Day a very tender little kid, which the ogress found admirably good.

It had gone very well up to that point; but one evening this wicked queen said to the butler:

– I want to eat the queen with the same sauce as her children.

It was then that the poor butler despaired of being able to deceive her again. The young queen was twenty years old, not counting the hundred years she had slept: her skin was a bit hard, although beautiful and white; and how could he find, in the menagerie, a beast as hard as that? He took the resolution, to save his life, to cut the throat of the queen, and went up to her room, with the intention of not wasting any more time; Having convinced himself, he entered, dagger in hand, into the room of the young queen. He did not want however to surprise her and he told her with much respect the order which he had received from the queen mother.

– Do your duty, she said to him, by holding the collar to him, carry out the order which one gave you; I will go to see my children again, my poor children whom I liked so much.

She believed them dead, since they had been taken away without telling her anything.

– No, no, madam, » replied the poor butler, all moved, « you will not die, and you will immediately see your children again; but it will be at my house, where I have hidden them, and I will still deceive the queen by making her eat a young doe in your place.

He immediately led her to her room, and leaving her to embrace her children and weep with them, he went to prepare a doe, which the queen ate at her supper with the same appetite as if it had been the young queen; she was well pleased with his cruelty, and prepared to tell the king, on his return, that the rabid wolves had eaten the queen his wife and his two children

One evening, as she was roaming around the courtyards and backyards of the castle looking for some fresh meat, she heard little Day crying in a lower room, because the queen his mother was scolding him for being naughty, and she also heard little Aurora asking forgiveness for her brother.

The ogress recognized the voice of the queen and her children, and furious at having been deceived, she

The next morning she ordered, with a frightful voice that made everyone tremble, that a large vat be brought to the middle of the court, which she had filled with toads, vipers, snakes and serpents, in order to throw the queen and her children, the butler, his wife and his servant into it: she had given the order to bring them with their hands tied behind their back.

They were there, and the executioners were preparing to throw them into the vat, when the king, who was not expected so soon, entered the courtyard on horseback; he asked in amazement what this horrible spectacle meant. Nobody dared to tell him, when the ogress, enraged by what she saw, threw herself head first into the vat, and was devoured in an instant by the ugly beasts she had put there.

The king was sad in spite of everything: she was his mother; but he soon consoled himself with his beautiful wife and children.



**date créée**

30/01/2023

**Auteur**

cdf