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SLEEPING BEAUTY

Once upon a time, there was a king and a queen who were very happy because at last their little daughter had been born. The princess was beautiful, sweet, and calm. All across the kingdom, bells were ringing, flowers were placed on windows, and people smiled as they walked by, because everyone wanted to celebrate the baby's arrival.

To celebrate that special day, the king and queen prepared a great party in the castle. They invited family, friends, important neighbors, and also several good fairies, who would come to give

magical gifts to the baby. The tables were filled with bread, fruit, sweets, and cakes, and the hall shone with many lights.

When the celebration began, one of the fairies stepped close to the cradle and said with a smile:

—I will give her the gift of joy. May she always have a kind heart.

Another fairy took a step forward and added:

—I will give her the gift of beauty.

A third fairy raised her wand and said:

—And I will make her gentle, clever, and loved by everyone.

The king smiled happily.

—Thank you for taking care of our daughter, he said with emotion.

The queen looked at the little princess and whispered:

—How lucky our child is.

But suddenly, the doors of the hall flew open. A dark fairy, who had not been invited, entered in great anger. Everyone fell silent

when they saw her. Her face was stern, and her voice sounded cold like the wind on a sad night.

—Since I was left out of this feast, she said, —I too will give a gift to the princess.

The king stood up in fear.

—You were not invited because we feared your anger, he answered.

The queen, trembling, added:

—Please, do not hurt her.

But the dark fairy lifted her wand and cried:

—When the princess grows up, she will prick her finger on a spinning spindle and fall asleep forever.

At those words, everyone was filled with horror. Yet there was still one good fairy who had not spoken. She stepped forward calmly and said:

—I cannot completely undo the spell, but I can change it.

The king looked at her with hope.

—Then help us, he said.

The fairy nodded.

—The princess will not sleep forever. She will sleep for many years, until one day she awakens.

The king and queen breathed with a little relief, though they were still worried. To protect their daughter, they ordered that every spindle and spinning wheel be taken away from the kingdom. No one was allowed to keep one in their house. They wanted to prevent the curse from coming true.

Years passed, and the princess grew up healthy and happy. She was kind to everyone and loved to walk through the gardens, listen to the birds, and speak with the people in the castle. She had a sweet smile and curious eyes. Although she lived surrounded by care, she knew nothing about the spell that had fallen upon her when she was a baby.

On the day she turned fifteen, the princess wandered alone into an old part of the castle that almost no one visited. She climbed a narrow staircase, opened a small door, and came to a room in a

tower. There she found an old woman sitting beside a spinning wheel, patiently turning thread.

The princess looked at her with curiosity.

—Good morning, she said. —What are you doing?

The old woman replied:

—I am spinning, dear child.

The princess stepped a little closer.

—I have never seen this before.

Then she asked with a smile:

—May I try?

—Of course, answered the old woman. —Come closer.

The old woman held out the spindle. But as soon as the princess touched it, she pricked her finger. At that very moment, the spell came true. The girl slowly closed her eyes and fell asleep on a little seat near the window.

At once, a soft silence spread through the whole castle. The king fell asleep in his chair. The queen fell asleep in her room. The

cooks, the guards, the servants, and even the palace dogs sank into a deep sleep. Everything became still, as if time itself had stopped.

Then, to protect the princess while she slept, the good fairies made a great forest grow around the castle. Tall trees appeared, tangled branches, thick bushes, and roses that covered the paths. From far away, only the highest tower could barely be seen among so many leaves.

The years went by. Many people heard the story of the sleeping castle. Some said there were treasures inside. Others thought there were ghosts or strange creatures. Many brave people tried to enter, but the forest was so thick that no one could make it very far.

One day, a young prince came to that land and heard the story. An old man from the village told him:

—Inside that castle, a princess has been sleeping for many years.

The prince listened carefully and said:

—I want to see her.

—Many have tried, replied the old man, —but no one has been able to enter.

The prince lifted his eyes toward the forest.

—I will try, he said firmly.

When he came near the forest, something surprising happened. The branches began to move aside gently, as if they were opening the way for him. The thorns did not hurt him, and a clear path appeared before his eyes. Step by step, he reached the castle.

When he entered, he saw that everything was silent. People slept in the halls, in the kitchens, and in the rooms. It seemed as if time had stopped completely. The prince walked carefully until he found the tower. He climbed the stairs and opened the door to the little room.

There was the princess, asleep and peaceful, as if she were only resting for a moment. Sunlight came in through the window, and her face looked calm. The prince stepped closer and looked at her with wonder.

—At last I found you, he whispered.

Then, with great tenderness, he gave her a kiss.

At that very moment, the princess opened her eyes.

She looked around, as if she had awakened from a long and deep dream.

—Who are you? she asked in a soft voice.

The prince smiled.

—I am a prince who came here to find you.

The princess slowly sat up.

—Have I been asleep for a very long time? she asked.

—Yes, he answered, —but now everything will be well again.

At that same moment, the whole castle awoke. The king opened his eyes. The queen stood up. The guards began to move again, the cooks returned to their work, and the dogs ran happily through the halls. It seemed as though they had only slept for one night.

When the king and queen saw their daughter awake, they ran to embrace her with joy.

—Our dear princess! cried the queen, with tears of happiness.

—At last you are awake, said the king with a smile.

The princess hugged them tightly.

—I am so happy to see you again, she said.

Soon after, the castle was filled once more with music, laughter, and lights. There was a great celebration, even happier than the first one. This time everyone was rejoicing because the spell had ended and a new life was beginning for the princess.

In time, the princess and the prince became very good friends, and later they decided to stay together always. They lived surrounded by love, peace, and hope. And in that kingdom, for many years, people remembered the story of the princess who slept for a long time, but awoke to find a world full of love.

THE END

