

Little Rosehip

Once upon a time there lived a king and a queen, and every day they would say: "Ah, if only we had a child!" Yet they had no children.

And one day, when the queen was bathing, a frog crawled out of the water onto the shore and said to the queen: "Your wish shall be fulfilled: before the year is out, you shall bear a daughter."

What the frog said came to pass: the queen indeed gave birth to a daughter, who was so pretty that the king could not contain himself for joy and arranged a magnificent feast on account of it.

He invited to the feast not only his relatives, friends, and acquaintances, but also all the sorceresses, so that they might be kind and favorable to his child. There were thirteen of these sorceresses in that kingdom, but since the king had only twelve golden plates on which to serve them food, one of them had to remain uninvited.

The feast was celebrated magnificently, and when it was nearly over, the sorceresses bestowed various wonderful gifts upon the child: one gave virtue, another beauty, a third wealth, and everything else one could possibly wish for on earth.

When eleven sorceresses had already spoken their wishes, suddenly the thirteenth entered. She had come to take revenge on the king and queen for not having invited her to the feast; and so, without bowing to anyone or looking at anyone, she cried aloud: "On her fifteenth year, the princess shall prick herself with a spindle and immediately fall down dead." And without adding another word, she turned and left the hall. Everyone was terribly frightened by this; but then the twelfth sorceress stepped forward, who had not yet spoken her wish, and since she could not cancel the evil wish of her predecessor but was able only to soften it, she said: "The princess shall fall down dead, but she shall not die; she shall only fall into a deep, unbreakable sleep that will last one hundred years."

The king, of course, wished to protect his dear child from the predicted terrible misfortune, and therefore issued a decree that all spindles throughout his entire kingdom should be burned.

Meanwhile, the gifts of the sorceresses gradually began to manifest in the young princess: she was both beautiful and modest, gentle and wise, so that she won the heart of everyone who saw her.

It happened one day (precisely on the day when she turned fifteen) that the king and queen were not at home, and the princess remained all alone in the entire castle. So she went wandering everywhere, began inspecting rooms and all sorts of little chambers as she pleased, and finally came to an old tower.

Having climbed up this tower by a narrow winding staircase, she approached a low door. In the keyhole stuck a rusty key, and when she turned it, the door swung open before her, and there she saw in a small room an old woman who was diligently spinning flax, quickly turning the spindle between her fingers.

"Good day, grandmother," said the princess, "what are you doing here?"—"As you see: I am spinning," answered the old woman, nodding her head to the princess. "And what is this little thing that spins so merrily?" asked the princess; she took the spindle into her hands and also wanted to spin.

But scarcely had she touched the spindle when the magical spell was fulfilled: the princess pricked her finger with the spindle and at that very moment fell onto the bed standing in that small room and sank into a deep sleep.

This sleep enveloped the entire castle: the king and queen, who had just returned home and were entering the hall, gradually began to fall asleep; along with them fell asleep all their courtiers. The horses in the stable fell asleep, and the dogs in the yard, and the pigeons on the roof, and the flies on the walls; even the fire blazing on the hearth seemed to freeze, and the roast that was cooking over the fire ceased to sizzle; and the cook, who had grabbed the kitchen boy by the hair for some offense, let go of his hair and fell asleep.

The wind too subsided, and not a single leaf on the trees before the castle stirred...

And around the castle there gradually began to grow an impenetrably thick hedge of thorn bushes, and every year it rose higher and higher until finally it surrounded the whole castle, and even grew so tall that not only could the castle no longer be seen through it, but not even the flag on its roof.

Throughout the surrounding country, however, rumors spread about the sleeping beauty-princess, who was called Briar Rose; and so from time to time princes arrived and attempted to penetrate through that hedge into the castle.

But this proved impossible, because the thorn bushes, intertwined, stood as a solid wall, and the youths who tried to force their way through became entangled in it, could no longer free themselves, and died in vain.

Many, many years later, another prince came to that region and heard from an old man the tale of the thorn hedge and of how behind that hedge there must be a castle in which for already one hundred years in a row lay in deep sleep a wondrously beautiful princess called Briar Rose, and near her, plunged into the same sleep, slept the king, the queen, and their entire court.

The old man had also heard from his grandfather that many princes had come and tried to penetrate through the thorn hedge, that they had become stuck in it and met an untimely death.

But the youth said: "I am not afraid of this; I wish to go there and I wish to see the beauty-princess." And no matter how the old man tried to dissuade him, the prince paid no heed to his words.

Meanwhile, one hundred years passed, and the very day arrived when Briar Rose was destined to awaken from her long sleep.

When the young prince approached the hedge, instead of thorn bushes he saw many large, beautiful flowers, which parted of their own accord sufficiently for him to pass through the hedge unharmed, and behind him they closed again into an impenetrable wall.

In the castle courtyard he saw the horses and the hunting hounds, which lay sleeping; on the roof sat the pigeons, tucking their heads under their wings, also asleep. And when he entered the house, there slept the flies on the wall, the cook in the kitchen still stretched out in his sleep his hand toward the boy whom he had intended to grab by the hair, and the maid sat sleepy before the black chicken which she was supposed to pluck.

He went further and saw in the hall all the courtiers sleeping deeply around the king and queen, who had fallen asleep near the throne. He went further, and such silence reigned all around that he could hear his own breathing.

At last he approached the old tower and opened the door of the little chamber in which the beauty-princess slept. And she appeared to him so lovely that he could not take his eyes off her; he bent down to her and kissed her.

Scarcely had his lips touched the princess's lips in the kiss when she opened her eyes, awoke, and gazed kindly upon the prince.

And they descended hand in hand from the top of the tower—and what then? The king awoke from his sleep, and the queen, and all their courtiers, and they looked at one another in amazement. And the horses in the yard sprang to their feet and began shaking themselves; and the dogs rose and began wagging their tails; and the doves on the roof fluttered, looked around, and flew off into the fields. The flies crawled again upon the walls; and the fire in the kitchen blazed up anew and began cooking the food; and the roast sizzled on the spit; and the cook dealt the kitchen boy a hearty slap, so that he bawled; and the maid finished plucking the black chicken clean.

Then the wedding of the prince with the beauty-princess was celebrated, and they lived in complete contentment until their deaths.