



Sleeping Beauty

by Charles Way
directed by Greg Banks

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This is the once upon a time, happily ever after tale you know - EXCEPT...

This princess is nobody's marshmallow, and this prince is her very best friend. The battle between good and evil that rages around them has its roots in the petty jealousies that often shake our world, and its outcome threatens disaster. The kiss on which the story turns happens for all the right reasons. This feisty, muscular and FUNNY version of the fairy tale is one you want your children to see.

• A SYNOPSIS OF THE STORY •

Branwen and Modron are sisters and powerful witches. But there the similarity stops. Branwen is as generous and kind as Modron is threatened and vicious, and the two of them are locked in combat. The center of their conflict is a baby girl. Branwen has chosen the orphaned infant for the childless King Peredur and Queen Guinevere, but Modron wants her for her own. With the aid of Branwen, the king and queen find the child. She is everything they've wished for! They are an instant family! Unfortunately, they anger Modron when they don't invite her to the adoption celebrations for Briar Rose, as they've named the girl. Modron curses the child: she will prick her finger on a spindle and die before her sixteenth birthday! Branwen can't destroy her sister's spell, but she can diffuse it. The girl will not die, but instead will sleep for one hundred years, to be awakened only by a kiss.

Peredur and Guinevere raise Briar Rose with only one playmate, a half man, half dragon, Gryff, who is the result of one of Branwen's spells gone awry. He is invisible to all but Briar Rose, but he is her devoted guardian (and one very funny fellow). They

also remove all spinning wheels from their kingdom and will not allow Briar Rose to pass its borders. This brings about two circumstances: first, this is not okay with the restless princess as she grows into a curious and headstrong young woman. Second, it creates a shortage of cloth - what with the lack of spinning wheels - that must be supplied by neighboring kingdoms. The good news is that as a favor to a neighbor (cloth supplying) king, Peredur and Guinevere agree to take in young Prince Owain to be Briar Rose's companion. The two become best friends, and it is this friendship that motivates the prince, who often feels worthless and utterly unskilled in every way, to do whatever it takes to rescue the princess when she finally succumbs to Modron's sleeping spell and is imprisoned by the evil sister witch.

Owain's mission to rescue his friend is a journey through the fairy kingdom and past a hungry, riddle telling, spider king. As the prince goes, and ultimately succeeds, he uncovers resources of strength and loyalty that astonish him as much as anyone else. In the end one has good reason to believe that these young friends do have a good chance at living happily ever after.

Things to imagine, think about and do

- Gryff is a wonderful character, a friend to both Briar Rose and Owain. He is half dragon and half human (the spell that made him didn't work out quite right). Draw some pictures of what you think Gryff might look like. Make him different every time! Then talk together about what he must feel like, being half one thing and half another. Have you ever felt that way or known anyone who has?



- Princess Briar Rose wants to leave her kingdom and see the world, but when she finally has the chance to walk outside of the walls she is afraid.

Why might she feel that way?

What might you say as a word of advice to her?

Sleeping Beauty is a story that has been told so many ways over so many years. The more different ways you can read, see, or hear the story, the more you can enjoy a new telling. You can appreciate the choices the artists involved make.

- Prince Owain has no idea of how important he will be in this story because he has always been told he is worthless. Can you think of anyone you know that is more important than they feel? Maybe you can think of a way to tell them so.

Check it Out!

Enchantment, by Orson Scott Card. *An American boy finds a sleeping princess in a Russian forest. When he kisses her they are transported to the 9th century. Adventures and a happy ending.* (ages 10–14)

Shrek, by William Steig. *An ogre, Shrek leaves home and terrifies everyone he encounters in his search for his equally ugly bride. Also a film based on the book, which takes the story in a whole different direction: **Shrek**, DreamWorks Pictures. Once upon a time a big, green, smelly ogre met a beautiful princess and they fell in love! (any age)*

Sleeping Ugly, by Jane Yolen. *When beautiful Princess Miserella, Plain Jane, and a fairy fall under a sleeping spell, a prince undoes the spell in a surprising way.* (ages 10–12)

FOR TEEN/ADULT READERS: **Briar Rose**, by Jane Yolen. *In this grim re-telling, the wall of thorns becomes a barbed-wire prison, while the sleeping princess is both victim and heroine.*