

THE FAIRY TALE MAGAZINE

Briar
and
Thorn

The *Sleeping Beauty* Issue
Spring/Summer 2025

THE FAIRY TALE MAGAZINE

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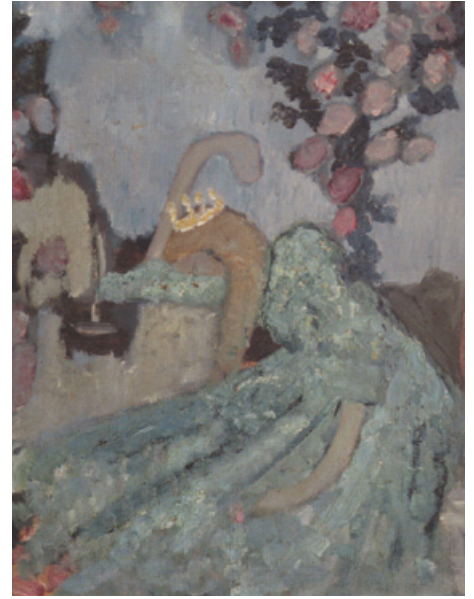
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear reader,

Not even a year ago I wrote to Kate Wolford suggesting that I become the next Editor in Chief of this beloved magazine. I am pleased to welcome you to my first issue in this new role. Thank you, Kate, for trusting me to carry the vision forward. “Briar and Thorn” kicks off our 18th year.

Sleeping Beauty tales are often fraught for many of us. We have myriad thoughts and feelings about this tale. Sometimes it’s about a protagonist who sleeps through most of her story. Sometimes it’s the idea of waiting for a prince to kiss us awake. Other times it’s about the violation of a person. Whatever your thoughts and feelings, I invite you to experience the tale afresh as our authors show us other paths through the briars, illuminating the story with new light.



Paula Modersohn-Becker, Dornröschen

As Guest Poetry Editor Sally Rosen Kindred and I read for this issue, we a range of poems and stories, many of them written in traditional fairy tale style. We both chose at least one work that touches on a more contemporary world even as it preserves aspects of the tale.

Within these pages, you will find fairies, curses, wishes, desires, even regrets. Some carry the tale to unfamiliar places while others challenge the notion of a curse, to see if it might instead be a blessing. While some ask who sleeps, others imagine who stands by awaiting the moment of awakening. In our quest for longing, belonging, and even desires, do we meet the world with curiosity or anger? Do we react poorly to feeling slighted? Whomever we wish would awaken, perhaps we can respond with love.

“Briar and Rose; The Sleeping Beauty Issue” features poetry and short prose by Sara Cleto and Brittany Warman, Rachel Ferriman, Caitlin Gemmell, R. Haven, Emily Kramer, Thomas R. Keith, Laura Matney, Robin Michel, Yukti Narang, Jon Negroni, Jo Niederhoff, Sergej Pavlović, Angela Rega, Deborah Sage, Amy Trent, Lynden Wade, KT Wagner, Kim Whysall-Hammond and our own Kelly Jarvis.

Contributing Writer Kelly Jarvis brings us a delightful Enchanted Creators Interview with Jane Yolen. Kelly has also crafted a non-fiction article about the tale type. Thank you to all who have been instrumental in the creation of this issue. To Madeline Mertz, Donna DeBeasi, Sally Rosen Kindred, Kelly Jarvis, and Kate Wolford, you have my great gratitude.

And, dear reader, thank you for reading and being part of our community. Please find our YouTube Channel and watch our new Author Talks With Kelly Jarvis as she interviews authors writing fairy tale retellings and fairy tale related books. *The Fairy Tale Magazine* is actively supported by its exclusive Fairy Godparents Club, which meets for a variety of fairy tale related topics, talks, celebrations and a workshop each year.

Kristen Baum DeBeasi
Editor/Publisher

TABLE OF CONTENTS



TO SLEEP, PERCHANCE TO DREAM: THE ENDURING APPEAL OF SLEEPING BEAUTY – 5

Kelly Jarvis

BRIAR-ROSE REFLECTS ON HER LIFE – 9

Deborah Sage

ASH IN YOUR EYES – 10

Jo Niederhoff



THE WRITING MAGIC OF JANE YOLEN – 13

Kelly Jarvis

IN LISBETH ZWERGER'S 'BRIAR ROSE' – 17

Rachel Ferriman

LET ME SLEEP – 18

R. Haven

UPON A DREAM – 19

Jon Negroni

GIFTS FOR GIRLS – 23

Dr. Sara Cleto and Dr.
Brittany Warman



HEIRLOOM ALCHEMY – 24

Amy Trent

FAIRY TALE DREAMS – 29

Emily Kramer

AWAKEN – 30

Angela Rega



THE TRUTH THAT SLEEPS – 33

Kim Whysall-Hammond

HOBO QUEEN – 34

KT Wagner

OUR MOTHER AS SLEEPING BEAUTY – 37

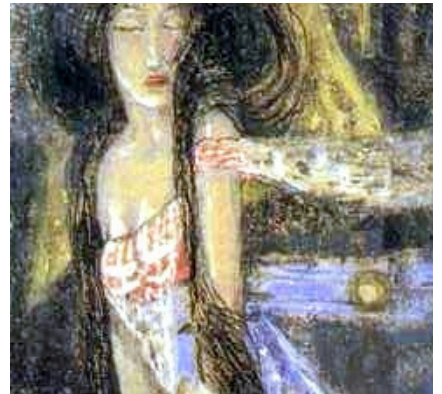
Robin Michel

THE TAPESTRY – 38

Kelly Jarvis

SLEEPING BEAUTY RETURNS THE GODDESS TO THE WORLD – 42

Caitlin Gemmell



STEADFASTLY WAITING – 43

Sergej Pavlović

CENTURY'S REST – 46

Thomas R. Keith

SLEEPING GIRL – 47

Laura Matney

I WOKE UP ONE DAY AND FOUND ME – 50

Yukti Narang



A WAY THROUGH THE BRIARS – 51

Lynden Wade



To Sleep, Perchance to Dream:

The Enduring Appeal of Sleeping Beauty

by Kelly Jarvis

By contemporary standards, Sleeping Beauty is the most old-fashioned of princesses. She is a wished-for child who falls into a death-like slumber as soon as she comes of age. She is awakened by the call of romance and motherhood. She spends the majority of her fairy tale sleeping while men search through forests and hack through briars in their attempts to rescue her, and her happily-ever-after is found at the altar of marriage. Her antiquated passivity seems at odds with the modern feminine spirit, and yet, her story continues to circulate, inspiring countless artistic and literary adaptations. So, what is it about this tired young woman that captivates our collective imagination? The answer may be found in a close examination of ATU 410, the tale type named for Sleeping Beauty herself.

Sleeping Beauty is one of the few fairy tales widely read in our culture that leans into the presence of fairy magic, and specifically, the fairy magic performed by



female fairies. *Sun, Moon, and Talia*, an early variant of the story written by Italian author Giambattista Basile in 1634, features female nurse fairies who attend Talia and her newborn twins, and the king and queen of Charles Perrault's French tale *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood* (published in 1697), invite seven female fairies to their daughter's christening. The Brothers Grimm refer to the christening guests as "wise women" in their 1812 German variant *Little Briar-Rose*, but readers quickly learn that these wise women have the fairy power to bestow both gifts and curses on the child. In each of these stories, danger comes in the shape of an item related to spinning which has long been considered the work of women, and in each of these stories it is an old crone who introduces the young girl to the forbidden flax or spindle. The tales' emphasis on supernatural fairy lore and women's work evokes the Moirai of Greek mythology, three powerful female deities who spin, measure, and cut the life thread of every mortal being. Sleeping Beauty may seem like a passive character to modern audiences, but the fairy lore and feminine wisdom embedded in her tale highlight the importance of female action.



Of course, men are important players in *Sleeping Beauty* stories as well. Powerful fathers outlaw spinning in futile attempts to protect their daughters from death, and passionate suitors are enthralled with the sleeping maidens' charms. In Basile's *Sun, Moon and Talia*, it is a wandering king who gathers "the first fruits of love," leaving Talia, who sleeps through pregnancy and labor, to be awakened by one of her twins sucking the flax from her finger. Perrault cleans up the moral issues in Basile's tale by presenting a young prince who is "all on fire" with the legends he has heard about a beautiful princess sleeping in a ruinous castle. Animated by stories, Perrault's prince arrives at the exact moment *Sleeping Beauty* awakens, and her conscious state allows her the agency to choose marriage. The Brothers Grimm walk a middle line between Basile and Perrault, giving their readers a prince who kisses his *Sleeping Beauty* awake. Although Briar Rose is unable to consent to the kiss because she is asleep when it begins, the kiss is traditionally understood as a welcome and romantic expression of true love, celebrating a trope that many fairy tale enthusiasts hold dear.

While the Brothers Grimm end their story with wedded bliss shortly after the couple shares their first kiss, both Basile and Perrault explore what happens when the protagonist is brought to her new kingdom. The king in *Sun, Moon, and Talia* already has a wife who is none too pleased to meet her husband's paramour, and Perrault's legend-loving prince has an ogress mother who tries to eat the princess and her children with a "*sauce Robert*." No longer protected by the fairy magic that has kept them safe through their enchanted slumbers, these sleeping beauties must navigate dangerous domestic landscapes, relying on tender-hearted cooks to undermine murderous queens until things can be set right.

Although the complex gender dynamics and extended family relationships that affect the heroines' movements are no doubt fascinating, it is the *Sleeping Beauty* herself who commands most of our attention in every version of the story. She is defined by her sleep, an act that is necessary to human survival. Sleep is about more than physical rest; it has an emotional component as well. It is only through deep sleep that we reach the altered state of consciousness in which the brain becomes *more* active, producing dreams. Feminist critics who complain about *Sleeping Beauty*'s passivity fail to consider the activity of her mind. *Sleeping Beauty* dreams for one hundred years. Although she may appear inactive, her creativity is at work, following its own timeline and schedule. This recognition takes on added poignancy when we consider that Perrault's and Grimms' variants of *Sleeping Beauty* both begin with a couple's desperate wish for a child. Despite their actions in the marital bed, the kings and queens of *Sleeping Beauty* stories struggle with infertility, and it is only when they surrender themselves to a passive process beyond their ordered control that their wishes for children come true. Passivity is not necessarily negative, and the generative activity of creation is rarely witnessed by the naked eye. When we assess the power and agency of *Sleeping Beauty*, we can't discount the transformative act of dreaming that bubbles beneath the surface of her passive state.

In addition to being defined by her sleep, the protagonist of ATU 410 stories is also defined by her beauty, another sticking point for feminist critics who rightfully interrogate society's preoccupation with women's physical features. *Sleeping Beauty* is not the only fairy tale heroine to be defined by her beauty; Snow White, yet another sleeping maiden, is





described as “the fairest of them all,” and the Beast famously falls in love with a woman *named* Beauty, but the beauty of fairy tale protagonists is rarely presented in descriptive terms because it is rarely equated with surface qualities alone. More often, the protagonists’ beauty in fairy tales is a reflection of their inner natures. The women *appear* beautiful on the outside because they *are* beautiful on the inside, and their beauty can be understood as a metaphor for their intelligence, empathy, curiosity, and resourcefulness, qualities that contemporary feminists hold dear.

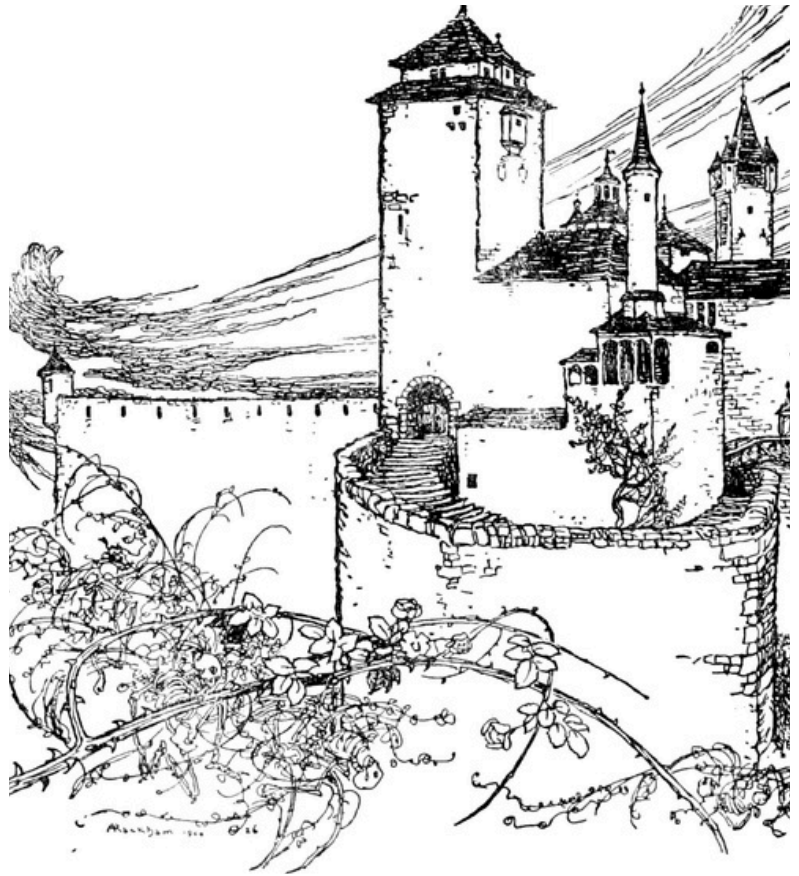
The beauty standards of Sleeping Beauty are of particular interest to readers because they imply the beauty of stasis. When we see something beautiful, a sunset, a rainbow, or a newborn baby, we long to preserve that beauty beyond the point of its departure, capturing it in paintings and photographs that we can revisit whenever we like. For centuries, artists have been inspired by the idea of a sleeping maiden in the bloom of her youth, untouched by time and unmarred by death. It is not wrong to interrogate the unrealistic beauty standards circulated by traditional fairy tales, but, at the same time, we must recognize that the construct of beauty, in its variant forms, brings us closer to the divine. Sleeping Beauty, suspended in a state of rest, is meant to be admired, and there is nothing wrong with reveling in the joy that her lasting beauty brings.

Another reason for *Sleeping Beauty’s* continued popularity may be the tale’s interaction with myths, legends, and literature. One of the earliest *Sleeping Beauty* tales, the story of Zellandine and Troylus, is found in the French medieval text *Perceforest*, a part of the Arthurian legend cycle. Zellandine’s fate is connected to the goddesses of love, childbirth, and justice, Venus, Lucina, and Themis, who all feature in her story. Talia’s twins, named Sun and Moon, evoke the Greek god and goddess of the sun and moon, twins Apollo and Artemis, and anthropological critics have drawn connections between Sleeping Beauty’s death-like trance and Persephone’s descent to the Underworld. The Brothers Grimm use the annotations of their tale to connect *Briar Rose* to the legend of Brunhilde, a Norse shield maiden imprisoned behind a ring of fire, and, although Oisín of Ireland, who sleeps away three hundred years in Tír Na nÓg, and Rip Van Winkle, who snoozes through the American revolution, are hardly considered sleeping beauties, their enchanted naps can be meaningfully paired with ATU 410 narratives.

Alfred Lord Tennyson and Angela Carter are among the renowned writers who have explored sleeping maidens in their works *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Lady of the House of Love*, but it is Walt Disney who solidified the story as a fairy tale classic, combining elements from both Perrault and Grimm to produce the 1959 animated film *Sleeping Beauty*. Disney pairs the haunting strains of Tchaikovsky’s *Sleeping Beauty Waltz* with fairies and dragons drawn from folklore, introducing an evil fairy so important to the story that she is given a name; Maleficent. Disney’s villain proved so popular that she starred in her own live-action film and sequel (*Maleficent*, 2014 and *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil*, 2019). By awakening the evil fairy from the slumber of her antagonist status and providing her with the voice to tell her own story, Disney has broadened our understanding of the traditional fairy tale narrative.

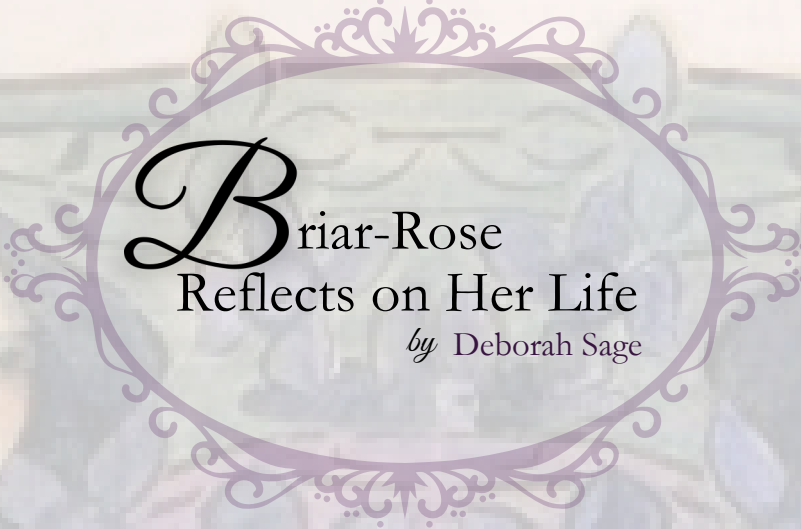
In *About the Sleeping Beauty*, P. L. Travers, the writer of *Mary Poppins*, claims that “the idea of the sleeper, of somebody hidden from mortal eye, waiting until time shall ripen has always been dear to the folkly mind.” Perhaps we are drawn to the idea of the sleeper because nature herself goes to sleep each winter. Yet, beneath earth’s hardened landscape, she remains hard at work, actively preparing for her inevitable awakening. I like to believe the beautiful blooms which unfurl to perfume the air each spring are winter’s dreams made manifest, her promise that no matter how long the night may seem, the morning will always return. It is this strain of hope, quietly growing in the darkness of our despair, that encapsulates the enduring appeal of *Sleeping Beauty*.

“I shall never know which good lady it was who, at my own christening, gave me the everlasting gift, spotless amid all spotted joys, of love for the tale,” P. L. Travers writes. *Sleeping Beauty* may be the most old-fashioned of princesses, but when those of us who have been gifted with love for the fairy tale turn over the soil of her stories, unearthing their hidden messages, we are treated to a dazzling array of feminine power and fairy magic that will protect and nourish the enchanted seeds of our own winter dreams.



Work Cited

Travers, P.L. *About the Sleeping Beauty*. McGraw-Hill



Briar-Rose Reflects on Her Life

by Deborah Sage

Who is to say that I did not live during those
Hundred years of slumber?
Are dreams not life,
Freed from scrutiny and scandal?
In the warmth my own chamber,
I lived a thousand lives,
The blessing of a single spindle-prick.

Of all the gifts from my christening,
The hundred-year sleep granted me the most:
A century of belonging to no one but myself,
To be pirate or priest,
Princess or poet.

To walk in the dark woods alone,
To wander unharmed, unclaimed,
Until awakened to become a prisoner
Bound to a single life.

Though thorns grew thick around me,
I danced naked under moonlit skies in winter,
Touched the horn of a unicorn,
Heard the sirens sing and birds talk.
I supped with ghosts by candlelight in
Abandoned castles; I was
Weaver, witch,
Laundress, lover,
Sailor, saint.

I fled to Fairie, swam with mermaids.
Rode upon backs of tigers.
I dived for pearls;
Wove tapestries of starlight,
Chose whom to kiss and whom to love.

Would but the fairies grant me a second
Hundred years blessed with bliss of slumber,
I would forsake prince and palace,
To live my lives,
In dreams.

ASH IN YOUR EYES

by Jo Niederhoff



Once upon a time, a fearful king ordered that all the spinning wheels in his kingdom be destroyed. He was not cruel, or did not mean to be. He did not think of the households which relied on spinning flax into thread, or of the weavers who bought the thread to make cloth, or of the tailors who bought the cloth to make clothes. He thought of his daughter, who would die in sixteen years if she were not protected.

He only wished to save her.

So before the princess was even a year old, the king's men rode to every village and hamlet to gather every spinning wheel they could find and destroy them. Most were hacked to pieces. The more suspicious of his men burned them, so as not to leave even a trace.

In one hamlet, by the forest, a spinner's daughter watched the flames. Wood dried and snapped until piece by piece the wheels fell apart, crumbling into white ash which caught in the breeze and blew around her face. She was not the only one to watch, but she watched most intently, unable to take her gaze from the fire.

To the side, her mother wept. Their industry was lost to them. Now they would have to find some new work, or they would starve.

The girl was not as afraid of starving as she should have been. She had been hungry before, and she did not imagine starvation could be worse than the end of winter, save in how long it lasted. What worried her was a lack of certainty. If she would not be a spinner, who was she?

Another breeze twisted the flames and sent ash into the air. The girl turned away, coughing, trying to wave it from her face, but a few flecks landed against her all the same. They cooled quickly and she brushed them from her skin, but the stinging smoke lingered in her eyes.

At her feet lay a warped and twisted spindle.

It had not burned entirely. It was still recognizable as what it once was, what it should be. The girl bent on a sudden thought to pick it up and hide it in the gray folds of her skirt. It was hot against her hand, even through the layers of linen, and she had to stop herself from looking around to make sure no one had seen her. She had not heard why spinning wheels were now forbidden, nor what the punishment might be for trying to keep even part of one. She only knew that she dared not risk it. With her older sisters married, she was the only child her mother had left at home. Her mother could not lose her.

And she could not lose this spindle.

It took hours for the fire to burn down. Before it did, the girl and her mother returned to their hut, where they ate no supper. Her mother was too distraught, and the girl was too distracted. The spindle had cooled, but it lingered in her mind as much as when she had first picked it up. That night, she slept with it under her pillow, hoping it would give her strange dreams or whisper secrets in her ear. It had fallen at her feet; that must have happened for a reason.

She did not dream. Instead she woke in the middle of the night, her heart racing, her breath quick and quiet.

The rest of the house was silent. Her mother was still asleep.

The girl crept out of bed, moving slowly down the hall and out the door. There was no moon in the sky, but the stars and the lingering embers gave her enough light to find her way to the very edge of the forest.

It wasn't until she reached the trees that she found she had the spindle in her hand.

A breath of wind rushed past the girl, carrying with it the scent of smoke and a few stray ashes that had not been cleared away.

Something moved within the forest.

The girl had been raised on tales of wolves and other fearful creatures, things that stalked through the forest at night, hungry for the flesh of unwary children. She had heard stories of beasts stranger and crueler still, trolls and witches and fey beings who would steal people from their very beds if it weren't for the iron hanging by the doors.

The girl was not afraid. She felt as though she were dreaming, but more than that, she felt as though she stood on the precipice of some great tale. She could not imagine she was one of the girls who would disappear, never to be seen again. She was instead one who would conquer the threshold and return victorious.

(Wasn't she?)

Whatever was in the forest drew closer, and closer still, until the girl made out that it was no wolf at all. The girl could hardly see the figure, but she knew it was an old woman, powerful and strange.

The girl's hand tightened around the spindle. She dug her toes into the earth, willing herself not to flee. This was her tale. She would make sure it was told well.

"Hello, grandmother," she said, her voice louder than usual in the night air. "You're abroad late."

The woman laughed like autumn leaves grating in the wind. "You're awake late, grandchild. Perhaps we're meant to meet so."

Shivers ran up the girl's back. They were. She was certain of it.

"In fact," the old woman went on, "I think you have something meant for me."

"What is it?" the girl asked.

"That spindle in your hand."

The girl glanced down at it. The spindle was a useless thing now, too warped by the fire to even be good enough to give away. The old woman wouldn't be able to do anything with it.

But she wanted it all the same.

The girl clutched her spindle (hers, it was still hers, for now) all the tighter, until the crumbling edges dug into her palm. “Why?” she asked.

For a moment, shadows gathered around the old woman, making the night darker still. The girl took a step back, ready to run, but then all at once the shadows vanished and the old woman stood calm and easy under the trees again. The girl thought she smiled.

“It will aid me,” she said, “in something I must do. It is bound up in my fate and another’s; it cannot be escaped.”

“What is that fate?” the girl asked. “Does concern the king, and the spinning wheels?”

The old woman said, and she held out her hand. “Come. I will show you.”

The girl held out her free hand and took the old woman’s.

Later, the girl would never be able to fully remember what she saw. She only knew that it was a story of death and rebirth, of a long night followed by a dawn, of insults repaid and hope for a new beginning. It was but one part of a much longer tale, and the girl’s part was small but vital. She could refuse it, if she wished. She could send the fate of kingdoms spinning from their paths.

Or she could play her part.

The girl began to offer the spindle but stopped. Her heart rose into her mouth, and she took a small step back. The old woman – the fairy, she knew now – gathered shadows about her once more. “Child,” she said, and warning ran all through her voice.

“I want to trade it,” the girl said. “The town’s livelihood was destroyed with the spinning wheels. Many towns’ were, but I won’t ask you to save all of them. I only want you to save my home.” The fairy would have no chance to refuse, not if she wanted her part of the story to be told as it should be.

The fairy slowly lowered her hand. “You are very bold,” she said.

“I am desperate,” the girl said. “Everyone will be if you do not help us.” Her grip tightened further on the spindle. She tried not to think of curses or a fairy’s retribution. “Please.”

The fairy held out her hand again, this time with fingers splayed. Shadows and light gathered in her palm, swirling like ashes and smoke. “I cannot save your people,” she said, “but I can give you the means to save them. Will that content you?”

“If you will tell me what I can do.”

“I will give you a story of your own,” the fairy said. “A blessing, or a curse... it is impossible to say until it has run its course. Come here, and I will give you what I can.”

The girl walked slowly forward until the fairy laid her hand upon the girl’s brow and tilted her face so that their gazes met. The fairy’s eyes were wide and dark and ancient, looking more like the night sky than anything remotely human.

“The ashes have blown into your eyes,” the fairy murmured. “By that sign, he will know you.”

“I don’t understand,” the girl whispered.

The fairy went on, as though the girl had not spoken. “Tomorrow, with the dawn, a lost prince will ride into town. He will see a girl who has gazed into flame, for she is meant for his bride. Aid him on his quest, and he in turn will protect your village.” The fairy’s smile turned strange and unsettling. “And in a little more than one hundred years, one of your descendants will cross a wall of thorns and wake a dead princess.”

It was not the answer the girl had hoped for, but it was all she would receive. She pressed the spindle into the fairy’s hand, and the fairy slipped away, disappearing into the forest as though she had never been.

The girl returned to her home, to wait for the dawn.

Enchanted Creators THE WRITING MAGIC of JANE YOLEN

by Kelly Jarvis

Jane Yolen is an American writer of fantasy, science fiction, and children's books. She is the author or editor of more than 400 books. For her books, stories, and poems, Yolen has won three World Fantasy Awards, two Nebula Awards, two Christopher Medals, three Mythopoeic Fantasy Awards, two Golden Kite Awards, a Caldecott Medal to name just a few. She has been given honorary doctorates for her body of work from six colleges and universities. She has collaborated on works with all three of her children.

You can learn more about her writing at JaneYolen.com



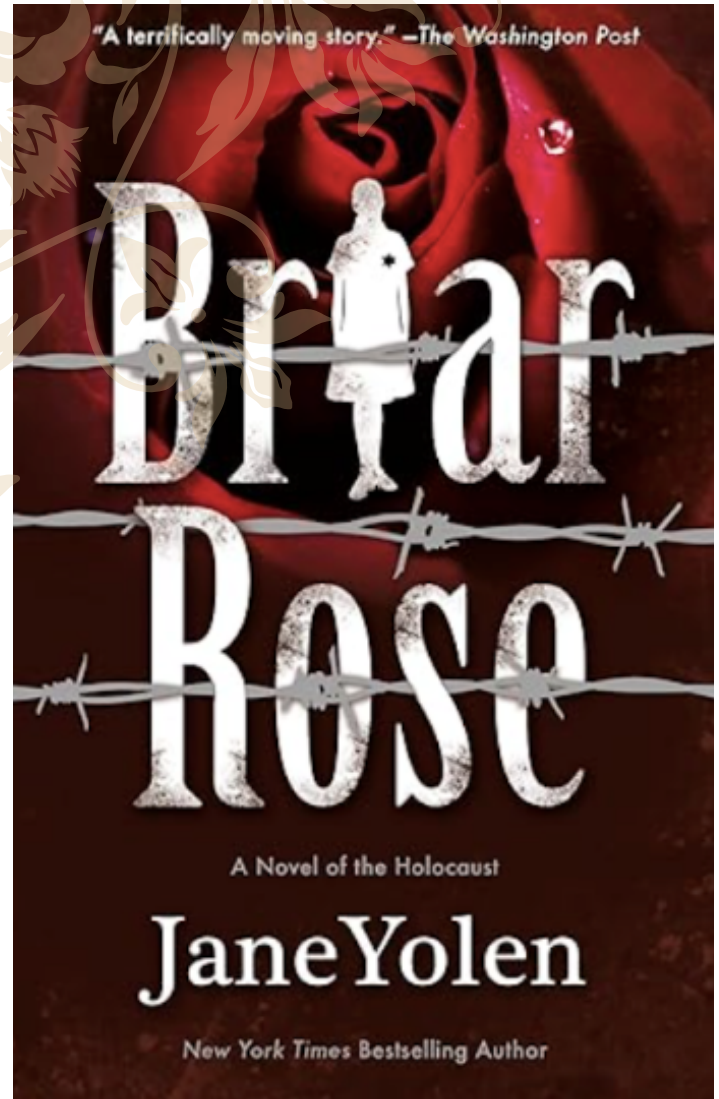
At its heart, *Sleeping Beauty* is a story about the power of stories; the prince hears tales about a sleeping beauty in the wood, and these tales motivate him to find her, igniting their happily-ever-after. Perhaps no writer knows more about the power of stories than Jane Yolen, the esteemed poet and essayist whom *Newsweek* has dubbed the “Hans Christian Anderson of American children’s literature.” Yolen has published more than four hundred books for children and adults, and her work is steeped in fairy tale and folklore. Her stunning novel *Briar Rose*, which won the Mythopoeic Fantasy Award and was a finalist for the Nebula Award for Best Novel, uses the Brothers Grimm *Sleeping Beauty* fairy tale, “*Briar Rose*,” to explore the horrors of the Holocaust.

The Fairy Tale Magazine is thrilled to recognize Jane Yolen as the Enchanted Creator for our *Sleeping Beauty* issue. Read on to learn more about Yolen’s writing magic!

In Briar Rose, a young woman discovers that her grandmother was a Holocaust survivor through the coded message of a fairy tale. What inspired you to pair Sleeping Beauty with your narrative about coming to terms with the painful truths of history?

Fairy Tales have been part of my life from the time I was very young. It's a kind of storytelling that seems to fit me. Even when the storytelling is about something so horrifying as the Holocaust—maybe especially then. So, when I started to think about the story that eventually became Briar Rose, it, pretty quickly, became a fairy tale. One reason, perhaps, that I lean into the fairy tales when I am telling tales of horror, is that the classic fairy tales are often quite dark to begin with. This makes heading into a horrifying place—one I was lucky enough to not ever actually been in (the Holocaust)—a much more comforting and comfortable journey.

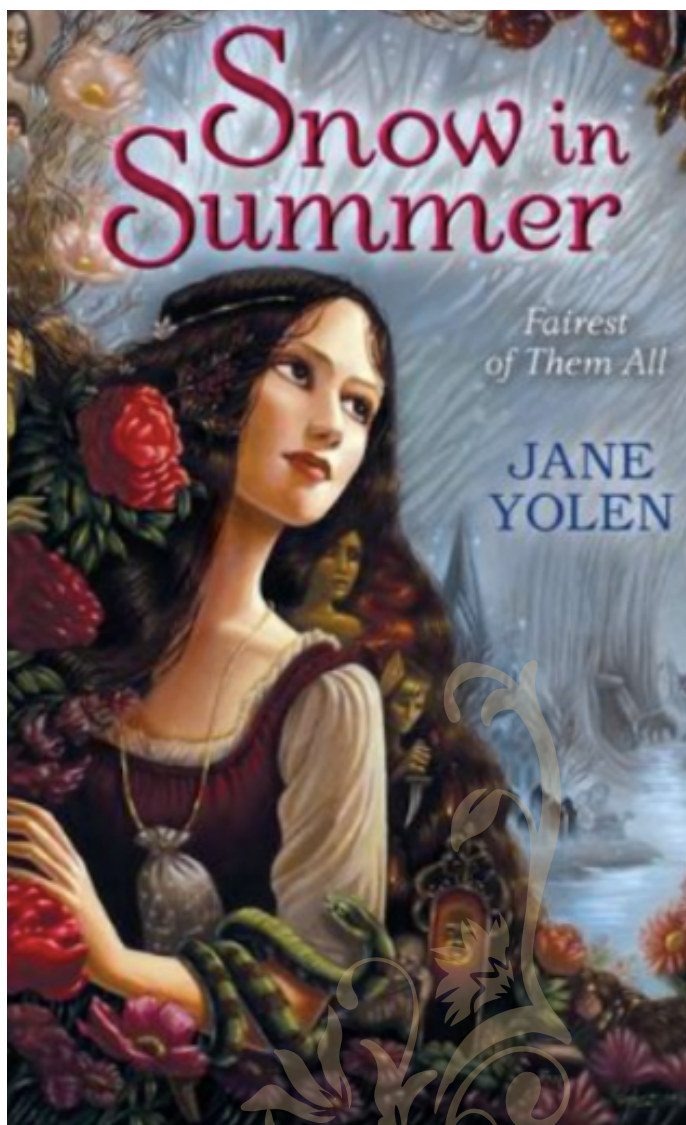
As for Sleeping Beauty, in the real world, if you fall asleep for a week or a month or a year, you're likely dead. But, in the fairy tale world, you can arise from this sleep and you can make a life—continued or new—after that. So, by combining both things—fairy tale and real—and using Sleeping Beauty as an armature, it gave me permission to use both real and unreal in the same book.



Briar Rose is not your only fairy tale inspired work. You have returned to fairy tale and folklore again and again to create your picture books, novels, short stories, and poetry collections (Mapping the Bones, Snow in Summer, Finding Baba Yaga, Grumbles in the Forest and The Last Selchie Child to name a few). Why do you retell fairy tales and why do you use myth and legend as a launching pad for your own creative works?

I read and fell in love with the fairy tales very young, so those tales have stuck with me. My parents, both big readers, gave me quiet permission to read anything that they had on their shelves. Both their large Jewish families were from places that I have always thought of fairy tale places—Ekaterinoslav and Ukraine. And even though I have never physically been to either (and I'm in my 80s), in my mind, imagination, and in my heart, I've been there for years.

In addition to using folklore as an inspiration for your creative works, you have penned Touch Magic: Fantasy, Faerie & Folklore in the Literature of Childhood, a collection of historical and analytic essays that uncover the hidden messages passed on by traditional tales. Why is the preservation of faerie stories so important?



Fairy tales combine realism and hope. I think the best stories are the ones in which, at their most hopeless, the young person in the story, (or the young person reading) turns around and is able to rescue, save, change, or reinvent, their life or the lives of others. That in itself is a fairy tale. But, a good one.

Many of your books fall into the category of children's literature. Your Caldecott Medal Winning classic, Owl Moon, was inspired by the trips your husband took with your young children, and your "dinosty" of picture books illustrated by Mark Teague, which began over twenty years ago with the publication of How Do Dinosaurs Say Goodnight?, is still running strong. What drew you to writing children's literature? Have you ever been surprised by the way illustrators have depicted your characters and stories?

I write for children because in some ways I am still a child. In many ways I still prefer children's books. I carry fairy tales I read as a child along with me. I can recite "The Jabberwocky" and I frequently do. So one part of me is stuck (happily) in my childhood, reading all those wonderful tales over and over. I was also a children's book editor before ever writing children's books and I learned how wonderful and long lasting those books can be.

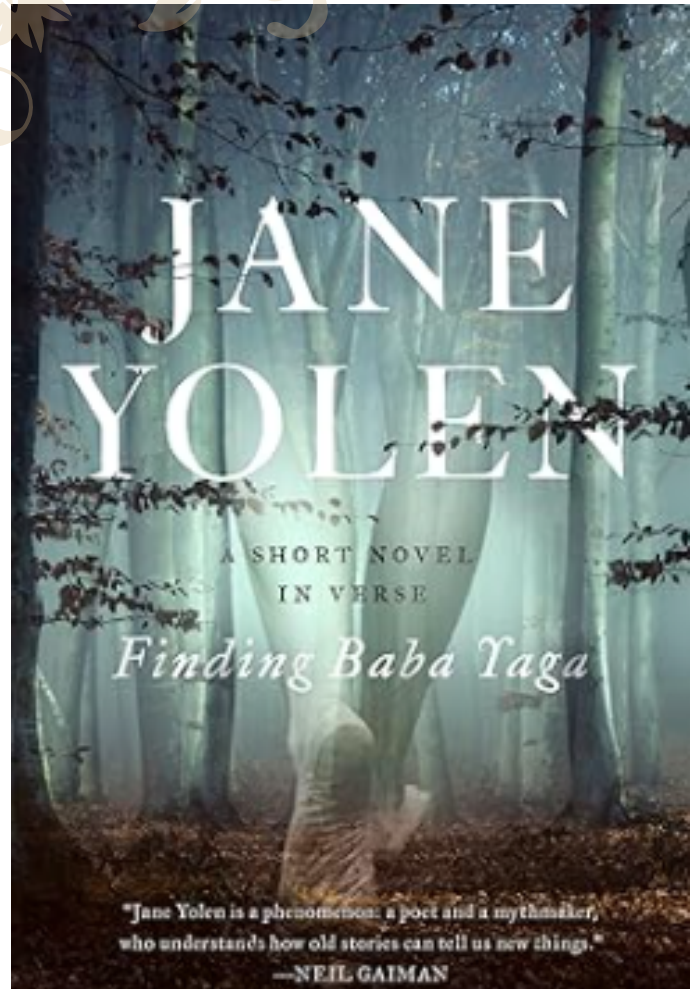
As for illustrations, I am always surprised by how an illustrator depicts my stories. I am usually thrilled and surprised, occasionally horrified and surprised, but always, I am happily surprised because illustrators come up with something I would never have guessed (or even intended) in the book I wrote.

When it comes to writing family stories—either real family stories or stories that have come out of real ones, I am often surprised. For example, I had always been told by my father, who was a great storyteller (though less of a truth teller), that he was born in New Haven, CT. I just took it as my family history. But, after he died, his younger brother told me that they had all been born in the Ukraine. I wondered *how that could be*? How could it be that this is the first time I am hearing this? How did I not know? If I had looked more closely at the picture of my father's family in which he is standing, second from the youngest, a young boy in a fur coat with a rising fur hat on his head—I should have seen the clues. It was clearly from "the old country." But I had never noticed. It changed the way I felt about my father and all that he had accomplished.

You have been writing all your life, selling your first book, Pirates in Petticoats, on your twenty-second birthday. Tell us a little bit about what writing means to you. What advice do you have for those who hope to step into the fairy circle of writing?

In many ways, writing has been my entire life. By that, I mean I wrote for fun when I was younger, I was the class poet in high school and college. Then I started writing for a living. Eventually, I was becoming well known and even winning prizes for it. It started as the love of books and the love of story and it had become a career. But, I was also lucky. I was able to sell my books and stories and poems. A lot of people who are just as talented, aren't able to sell their work.

You asked about advice: I hate to destroy the illusion, but the fairy circle of writing isn't magical at all. For me, the writing, itself, is the true magic.



You can learn more about Jane Yolen at her website, www.JaneYolen.com, which features over four-hundred of her published books along with resources for writers and teachers. Whether you are looking for fairy tale inspired narratives, children's books, poetry, essays, or adult novels, Jane Yolen's beautiful writing will help you to touch magic, and pass it on.

'*B*riar Rose'

In Lisbeth Zwerger's

by Rachel Ferriman

I was in that picture once.
It feels like a hundred years ago.

I was in that picture.

Once upon a time.

I was in the original watercolour
On the soft thick sheet of white paper
Taped and stretched on the artist's board.

I was not with the young princess at the window,
Her back turned on the picture,
Her skirt as bright as the spindle whorl,
Feeling as trapped as the burnished leaves on the ceiling.

I was not in the framed pictures of her prison on the wall,
Nor in the golden curtain freed
And billowing in the breeze,
Nor on the wind that blew the door open to her destiny.

I was not in the patches of light, the cool shadows,
Nor the rich red tiles that led like footsteps to the staircase
To the top floor where the spindle stood skew,
Cocked to prick.

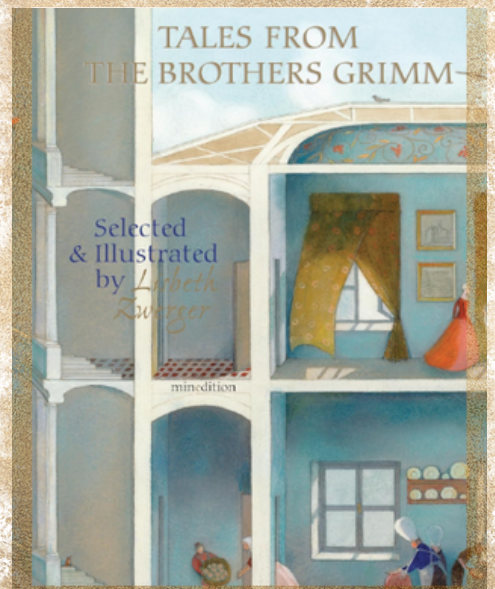
Neither was I with the different-sized plates on the shelf
On the bottom floor,
Nor the basket of potatoes brought by the man in the hat
To the kitchen hand in the bonnet
For the three cooks in tall bulbous toques.
I was not in the sack of flour
Even though the head chef seemed to see me there.

I was not the bird on the roof nor the second bird soaring.

But, perched on the sixth step,
I was the little silent cat,
The sort that is there one moment and gone the next.

I was there once, in that picture.

Once upon a time.



(The illustration that inspired the poem)



Let Me Sleep

by R. Haven

*‘Picturesque’ is the word they use for my home,
and ‘beautiful’ the word for me –
these words whispered by a fluttering choir.
The faeries
murmur,
Briar, Briar.*

*My simple life is a fragile fit
like trying on slippers made of glass,
using them to walk upon a wire.
Destiny
calls me,
Briar, Briar.*

*I wind up needing a stranger and a dance
to remember the world is meant to grow,
the horizon expand and the sky climb higher.
He learns
my name;
Briar, Briar.*

*Sixteen years I have yearned, alone.
I fall in love with what could be.
My hopes are thrown upon a pyre.
The crackling
taunts,
Briar, Briar*

*I’m ferried from one cage to another
to meet my parents, my kingdom, my place.
I’ve been a puppet of fate’s desire –
Certainty
beckons,
Briar, Briar.*

*And this prophecy, this spurned witch’s spell,
has swung like a pendulum over my head,
a threat I never knew was so dire.
This sorceress
curses,
Briar, Briar.*

*Perspective sours each lonely piece of my past,
Pricking the heart I never learned to protect.
It sucks me down into a dark mire.
Despair
cackles,
Briar, Briar.*

*Faced with a future I couldn’t prepare for,
stripped of my comforting naivete,
I desperately weaken. I let myself tire.
The faeries
scream,
Briar, Briar.*

*Sleep is a pleasant dream within a dream.
No sharpness or lies to draw out my blood.
I don’t have to play pretend like I did prior.
But his kiss
tears through
Briar, Briar.*

*The only thing I thought was my choice
was part of a story I did not write.
My agency was never mine to acquire –
I’m a fable
warning,
Briar, Briar.*

*Everybody wants a rose.
Not the ugly
briar.*

*Next time,
let me sleep.*

Upon a Dream

by Jon Negroni

They found her by the ceiba tree, in a slant of afternoon light. Rosa had been missing for twenty years, and yet there she was, asleep in the grove like she'd never left. Her hair, still a braid of river-black and adorned with tiny shells, unbothered by time and tide. Mateo hesitated before stepping closer. He couldn't explain why, but the air told him that if he reached a hand, lightning would strike him down.

"She's hardly aged," he said, barely above a whisper. His voice could've been mistaken for wind.

Next to him, Tía Iliana tightened the cord of her shawl. She spat into the soil. "Don't touch her."

"Why not?"

"She might die." She stared at the girl—no, the woman, though her skin was smooth as a gourd. She folded her arms tightly. "It's unnatural. No one sleeps that long without consequence. To her *and* us."

Mateo had no choice but to listen. His aunt's voice had grown thin over the years, yet still sharp as a drum, a percussion of warnings he'd learned not to dismiss. "She's been cursed, hasn't she?"

Iliana didn't answer. But Mateo knew she wasn't the kind to believe in coincidence. Not here, in the hills where the gods placed themselves in the trees. The same hills where he had once raced barefoot as a boy, chasing the wind. The same hills where he had lost sight of a girl who had vanished like smoke into the twilight.

"Then we have to help her," he said.

"She didn't ask us to."

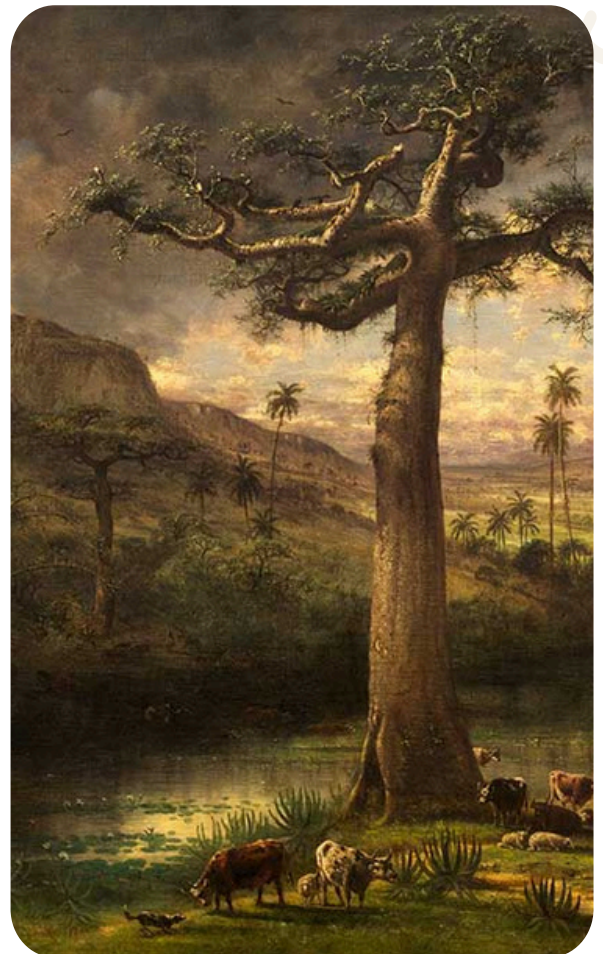


The truth unraveled later, bit by bit, like frayed threads pulled loose from an old fishing net, while Iliana stood at the stove, coaxing a potion from bitter herbs and rainwater.

"It was the zemi," she said, eyes on the boiling pot. The wooden effigy of the storm god Yúcahu hung on the wall above her, his face smooth and stoic as always. "He came disguised as a man. A sailor, perhaps. Rosa met him in the village. Fell for him. Hard. He was her dream. She always did have a weak heart."

Mateo sat at the table, one leg bouncing. "And?"

"And he wasn't who he said he was. She followed him to the ceiba tree one night and disappeared. I warned her, but you know how young girls are." She poured the dark liquid into a clay mug and set it down. "He took her to Coaybay, the land of the dead. What you saw there...what we saw today... that wasn't her. Not entirely."



He didn't touch the drink. "You think her a ghost."

"I think her trapped. Between this world and that one." Iliana's hands shook, just slightly. "And if you wake her the wrong way, she'll never leave."



Rosa had always been the story of the town: the beauty, the bold one, the girl who could climb trees faster than the boys and dance like fire at the festivals. Mateo remembered her vaguely from his childhood, though she'd been older, the sort of presence who felt like sunlight, too far to touch. And now, seeing her asleep beneath the tree, her limbs curled like roots, her face serene as the surface of a lake...he couldn't reconcile it.

What did twenty years of sleep feel like? Did she dream? Did she know what she'd left behind? Would she want to know...

Mateo found his way back to the grove that night, where the moonlight dripped through the canopy in liquid silver, pooling around the base of the ceiba tree. Its roots sprawled over the ground, tangled and relentless, gripping the earth like an ancient fist. Rosa remained where he'd left her, untouched, as though the tree had claimed her for its own, a quiet offering to something older than the stars.

He knelt, close enough to see the faint rise and fall of her chest. "What happened to you?" he murmured, though he didn't expect an answer.

The wind veered, carrying with it a shell's hum. Mateo's gaze snapped upward. In the branches of the ceiba, shapes flickered. Small, human-like figures. Mateo froze. He'd heard the stories as a boy. The opíás, spirits of the dead, often lingered in these sacred trees. They were said to guide the living. Or lure them astray.

"Leave her be," one of them hissed. The voice was weak, as though it came from behind a veil.

"She's my cousin," Mateo said, ignoring the cold creeping up his spine.

"She belongs to Coaybay now," another voice chimed, softer but no less unsettling. "Do you think you can bring her back? Don't be stupid. Stop being stupid."

He felt a wave of heat rise in his chest. "S-she's not yours to keep!"

The wind died abruptly, leaving a ringing silence. Then, as if in response, Rosa stirred.



When Rosa's eyes opened, they were clouded at first, like heat against glass. Mateo stood back, heart thundering, as she blinked up at him.

"Where..." Her voice was a thread, barely audible. "Where am I?"

"You're home," he said, as if all was well.

But her expression darkened, and she sat up too quickly, her hand clutching her chest. "No," she whispered. "No, I am not."

"What do you mean?"

She turned to him, and for the first time, he saw the change in her. Her eyes weren't the same. They reflected the moonlight like a cat's. Her movements, too, were strange, too elegant for someone who had been asleep for decades. She glanced at the ceiba tree behind her, her face wrinkling with fear.

"You shouldn't have woken me," she said, almost a growl.

"You were trapped," Mateo protested.

Rosa's laughter splintered. "Yes. That was the point." Her fingers hovered over her hair, her face, tracing the contours as if they belonged to someone else. "It wasn't just sleep. It was a bargain."

"With who?"

Her gaze shifted past him, to the dark hills in the distance. "Not who. What."



Iliana scolded Mateo fiercely when he brought Rosa home. But her anger dissolved the moment she saw the girl step inside.

"It's really her," Iliana said, clutching a hand to her mouth. And for a moment, Mateo thought they'd succeeded. That they'd done the impossible.

But Rosa's transformation became evident as the days passed. Her voice, once warm and honeyed like sunlight draped over sugarcane fields, now held a sharpness, like the hiss of the trade winds through frail palm fronds. Her laughter, rare and fleeting, echoed like a conch shell's call. Haunting and empty.

And at night, she would fix her gaze on the horizon, where the sea met the stars. Her eyes glinting with the shadow of something old, something Mateo could not shape, like the ghost of a hurricane lingering on the air.

"She can't stay," Iliana said one night, pacing the kitchen. "Whatever she brought back with her...it's dangerous."

"She's still Rosa," Mateo argued, but even he wasn't sure.



The ending came in the grove, where it had all begun. Rosa stood beneath the ceiba, her hand pressed against its bark.

"They'll come for me soon," she said, her voice heavy as a stormcloud.

"Who?" Mateo asked.

She turned to him, her expression softening for the first time since they were young. "The ones I belong to. They're already here. I can feel them in the roots, in the wind. I made a mistake, Mateo. I took something that wasn't mine. Now they want it back."

"What did you take?"

Rosa hesitated. "Time," she said simply. "More than I deserved."

The opías appeared then, their shapes rippling like moonlight on water. They moved with an uncanny grace, their presence both ethereal and oppressive, like the thick stillness that clings to the world just before the heavens break open.

Rosa didn't resist as they closed around her, their whispers mingling with the rustle of the ceiba's branches. Before the shadows swallowed her whole, she reached for Mateo, her touch fleeting but deliberate, and placed something cool and smooth into his hand. A small, polished stone, glimmering faintly as if it held a secret.

“For you,” she said. “A gift. For what you tried to do.”

“What does it mean?” he asked, but she only smiled. A bittersweet thing, like rain falling on a dry field.

Rosa was gone. Lost to the twilight.

Mateo kept the stone on his windowsill, where it caught the light each morning. It wasn’t until years later, when his first child was born—healthy, against all odds—that he understood the gift she had left behind.

Rosa had traded time, but in the end, she’d given him something far greater. A piece of her dream.

Note: "Coaybay" and "Opia" do not have easy links to their own respective pages, but you can find their meanings in the first paragraph of a page for "Hupia." (Coaybay & Opia)

Gifts *for* Girls

by Sara Cleto and Brittany Warman

They were never
Practical,
My sisters,
Never
Tactical.

They dreamt of human romance,
Soft lips brushing wrists,
Metaphorical wings when
They could, of course, fly by
Dragon chariot, by
Their own power.

But power scared them,
Their own
Just as much as that of
Princes and
The potential of pitchforks, and
Who can blame them?

They loved weddings,
Funerals, christenings -
Anything to mingle with or
Manage mankind.
They ate flattery
Like sugared strawberries.

I loved them, and so with them I
Cooed over the newest royal baby.
The span of an evening,
Saw the poor child from
Gurgling to gilded as
I sighed into my soup.

Beauty, grace, docility,
The ability to laugh off insults,
To make foolish men seem smart -
These were the gifts my sisters
Gave girls, the gifts they thought
Important.

When our eldest sister
Arrived at the christening hall to a
Chorus of feeble excuses -
Lost mail, miscounted settings,
Of course they hadn't meant to exclude her -
All she did was make the implicit explicit:

"You are afraid of us," she cackled at the king,
The queen, "Afraid enough to invite these fools,
As long as they promise to bless,
Afraid enough to pretend
The unpredictable doesn't exist,
Is dead."

She was not mistaken,
Not until she cursed the child anyway,
The child who hadn't yet
Learned compliance,
The art of smiling with no teeth
From her toothless godmothers.

Well, no child -
No matter how perfect,
Cloying, polite -
Deserves to die at sixteen,
Before she even knows
What she wants.

No, child, I will not
Sit by this time,
Fret nervously, mumble sorrowfully.
This time I will be
Practical.
Tactical.



HEIRLOOM ALCHEMY

by Amy Trent

A knock woke the old man from his comfortable doze. He rose with a sigh to answer the door. Interruptions couldn't be helped on a day like today. Still, he had hoped the nonsense wouldn't start until sunset.

An uncommonly handsome lad, no older than a score of years, stood on the front stoop with a channery slung over his shoulder. "Jesse Baker?"

"Yes," the old man said warily.

The lad bent into an elegant bow. "I've heard you're quite the storyteller."

"And quite busy today to entertain the likes of a peddler."

The lad held the door open. He was stronger than he looked, but the young always were. "Perhaps we might trade. One of the treasures from my sack for one of your stories."

"I'm not interested in strong drink. I've eaten my share of fine birds, and I've soured on even the sweetest preserves. Good day." Jesse shut the door firmly. He too was stronger than he looked, but as everyone underestimated centenarians this was an easy achievement.

"A cake!" the lad shouted.

Jesse opened the door. Slowly. "What sort of cake?"

"Heirloom recipe. The type that has fallen out of favor now, but was quite popular in my grandmother's time."

How promising! "The flavor?"

The lad smiled. "Cream and honey."

Jesse knew hope was for fools, but today was his birthday, and cake was his favorite. "Come in. Come in." His step was surprisingly spry as he ushered the peddler into the kitchen of his humble home. "That's a good lad."

The young man unpacked a tin from his channery. He carefully removed the paper wrapping to reveal a golden-brown cake topped with slivers of glazed almonds.

The old man's breath caught. "Wonderous. What sort of flour did you say?"

"Almond meal, sir."

"I'll get the plates. Yes. Oh, this is a treat! Sit down, sit down. You know, my mother used to make cakes like these." Jesse grabbed two yellow plates and a knife from his cupboard. "For years I've searched for the like, but homely almond meal and honey cakes have fallen quite out of fashion. She offered to teach me once." He cut a slice from the tin. "You don't know how I've regretted not learning her recipe when I had the chance." He cut a second slice for the young man. "It's still warm," Jesse observed with delight.

"I made it just this morning. I'm afraid I didn't wait long enough before adding the sweet cream. It's all but melted."

Jesse lifted his slice of cake to his lips, reveling in the smell of honeyed almonds and the sticky texture of the crumb on his fingers. "No matter." He took a bite and smiled as the simple childhood pleasures of sweets and summer sunshine enveloped him like old friends.

"How is it?" the young man asked.

"Good. Not as good as my mother used to make. But good."

"Good enough for a story?"

The old man smiled. "Quite. But I think you should start, your highness."

The young man sighed. "What gave me away? I tried so hard."

"When you're as old as I am you see things as they truly are. Now, tell me where you found this cake. Out with it. Today is a busy day."

"I told you. I made it this morning. My grandmother taught me. Why do you frown, sir?"

"Queens do not bake cakes."

"But miller's daughters do." The lad bit into his cake.

Jesse's lips twitched into a small smile. "They do indeed, and if rumors are true, raise kind sons."

The lad swallowed. "What do the rumors say about their grandsons?"

Jesse chuckled. "Prince Lionel, is it?"

The young man bowed. "I've heard tales all my life about a prosperous valley where elders live uncommonly long lives. Peace and harmony abound. The wellspring of this good health and good fortune is rumored to be an ancient castle with a princess bound to eternal youth by a sleeping curse. For years noblemen have tried to free her. All died in the process, ensnared by a wilderness of deadly thorns and briars that pierced them through the heart before consuming them in a grave of vine and branch."

Jesse helped himself to another slice of cake. "No one ever died, but I do understand the embellishment." Coming away scratched and itchy was not a fate befitting a prince.

Prince Lionel's brows furrowed. "So it's true?"

Jesse licked his thumb clean. "Would you have journeyed to our fair valley, if it wasn't?"

"I am to be king one day. I wish my reign to be one of peace and prosperity, but wishing is not enough. I must learn the secrets of how such good fortune unfolds. I came to this valley to study and learn, but..."

"But the nights are long and you dream of a princess who is as beautiful as she is kind."

"I'd be lucky to woo such a maiden."

"And the cake? How did you know to show up at my door with a cake?"

"I overheard the innkeeper discussing a celebration tonight at sunset. Is it true you are one hundred and eleven years old?"

"No. Until sunset I am one hundred and ten years old."

"Grandmama cared for nothing but sweets in her dotage." The prince brushed the crumbs from his fingers. "I helped myself to the innkeeper's kitchen early this morning."

"You're a curious, careful lad." Not at all like the others Jesse had rescued from the woods over the years. "Come with me. Best to walk and talk after eating sweets."

Jesse took his shepherd's crook and led the way out of his kitchen to the pasture behind his home. They walked until they reached a small pen at the edge of the wood.

"Goats." Jesse explained to the prince. "Henrietta and Jocelyn. Expectant mothers. Voracious appetites. Now, you mind Joceyln, that's right. I'll take dear Henrietta, and we will head into the wilderness. Come on, ladies."

The two men drove the goats out of the pen into the dark wood.

"Step exactly as they do," Jesse said. "They'll eat us a path forward. Mind the brambles and thorns. And don't touch the ivy; it's poisonous."

"So the stories are true?" Lionel unsheathed his sword. "About the princess?"

"Quite," Jesse said.

"And the deadly wood?"

"Welts and boils never killed a man."

Lionel sliced at a low-hanging vine. "An impenetrable, living fortress. They grew as part of the curse?"

"They grew because I planted them."

Lionel paused. "You?"

Jesse herded the goats forward with his crook. "When I came back from the village on my eleventh birthday, the entire castle was asleep. Everyone. Everything. You'd think with eighteen years' notice, the king would have done something to prepare, but his majesty didn't believe in magic. He did nothing to protect his daughter or his court."

Jesse sighed. "I lowered the portcullis. Locked every door and gate. But I knew it wouldn't be enough to keep the lecherous and power-hungry away. So, I burned all the bridges. Planted black berries, briars, and poison ivy in the ashes. Felled trees over every road and footpath that led to the castle, and planted more poison ivy, berries, and briars when the ground grew soft with the autumn rains."

"But you were just a boy."

Jesse chuckled. "The work grew easier as I got older."

"Such devotion to king and country."

"I didn't do it for my king or my country," Jesse said quietly.

"But?"

Jesse stopped and leaned on his crook. "My mother is in the castle, got a job as a kitchen maid the winter before the curse." Jesse's mouth set in a hard line. "I was only eleven but I knew what men like my good-for-nothing father might do if they found her. I wasn't going to let anyone take advantage of her ever again. Even if Mama wasn't inside, she raised me right. I'd never disappoint her by doing nothing when good people needed help."

They pressed on, following the goats that ate the brambles and poison ivy without pause.

“Didn’t you try to wake her all this time?” the prince asked.

“I tried. I brought every witch I could find to this place. ‘One-hundred years,’ they all said. Not a day sooner. ‘One-hundred years and true love’s kiss from the lips of a nobleman.’”

“Some curses are steadfast,” Lionel observed. “How did you keep the castle safe as the ivy and brambles were growing?”

“I told stories. They took root and spread faster than any bramble I ever planted.” The ground began to slope downhill. “Sometimes I was the sole survivor of a deadly plague that killed everyone in the castle. Other times I fell off the battlement as the castle was ascending to the clouds. Mostly, I told the truth of the curse. Noblemen came, determined to wake the princess, and I led them a merry dance through the oldest, thickest parts of the forest where the poison ivy and briars grow natural. Made sure they touched all of it, while I fed them tales of the other men who had been strangled by the vines, pierced by the brambles, consumed in their sleep by the slow painful spread of roots growing into their flesh. By morning they were covered in welts and were fleeing for their lives. Spreading tales of their own as soon as their pride would allow, about a wood so deadly it ate men alive. Ah, here we are.”

Jesse used his crook to part the wall of ivy in front of them. A stone wall with an iron door lay hidden behind.

Lionel sheathed his sword. “The goats found the door?”

“Such smart goats.” Jesse unlocked the door. “They know an abundance of tall, sweet grass awaits them on the other side.”

The trees thinned and soon they reached the grassy courtyard of the castle. Jesse unlocked the door of the castle keep and led the prince into the kitchens. “The princess is in the topmost chamber. I’ll wait here with Mama.” Jesse took a seat in a rocking chair beside his mother’s cot where the young woman lay sleeping soundly.

Lionel twisted the tassels of his cloak. “I am but a stranger to the princess.” He straightened. “I insist you accompany me as a chaperone.”

“Me?” Jesse frowned.

“I do not wish to alarm her.”

“And you think an old man standing awkwardly in the corner will help?”

“You’re right,” Lionel bit his lip. “Wake your mother!”

“What!”

“Then you both can accompany me.”

“I can’t.”



“Why not?” Lionel demanded.

“I’m not a prince.”

“But you are a very noble man, Jesse Baker. A king’s son could not love his mother more.”

“She won’t recognize me!”

“Nonsense.” Lionel said. “Go on. Today is a busy day, and you have a party to attend at sundown.”

Reluctantly, Jesse knelt down beside his mother. His knees cracked and he winced with the effort, but he managed. Jesse took his mother’s hand and squeezed it between his own before placing a kiss on her rosy cheek.

The young woman’s breath caught before her eyes fluttered open. “Oh, my Jessie!” She embraced the old man. “I knew you would save us.”

“Mama!” Jesse held her tight.

“And who is this lad?” Mama gestured to the prince. “A new friend of yours?”

“Prince Lionel. He wants to wake and woo the princess, but insisted we accompany him.”

“How very right and proper.” Mama took Jesse’s hand and rose slowly to her feet, before pulling Jesse up with her. “And what shall we do afterwards? Is today still your birthday?”

Jesse nodded, too overjoyed for words.

“Wonderful! I made your favorite cake as a surprise.” Mama laughed. “I suppose it will be horribly stale now.”

Jesse laughed too. “That’s alright, Mama.”

“Maybe we can make another together. After we introduce your friend to the princess?”

Jesse beamed. “I’d like that very much.”



Fairy Tale Dreams

by Emily Kramer



The Valiant One slept restlessly on a hard bed
Sword kept near, for his dreams were haunted
And evil was at hand often enough to be wary
Tossing and turning his blankets wildly asunder
With quiet mumblings and sleepy murmurings
Joined on occasion with a thrash or outcry
For the days were heavy and he knew no peace

One night he dreamed that a fae had watched
His fitful sleep from the moonlit window's edge
She listened to understand his mumbled words
She was captivated by him, his dreams and stories
His tortured unrest made her anxious wings flutter
Yet she sat there watching his restless stirring until
The departure of the moon brought the light of dawn

The very next night he dreamed again of this fae
This time she entered the room and sat on his bed
Mischievously, she touched his hair and giggled
With a corner of unruly blanket, she covered him up
Singing quietly, she kissed his eyes to reach his soul
She whispered words of hope and harmony in his ear
Tales of lore and whimsy, like the tales only fairies tell

As the sun proclaimed the end of the night, she arose
Before she left, she kissed his cheek with morning dew
He awoke having slept more peacefully than ever
Putting a hand to his cheek where he dreamed her kiss
Startled, he moved his hand to look, for he felt the dew
Hand to cheek again in disbelief, wondering how it could be
Still warm from her lips, a glimmering drop of fairy proof

Awaken



by Angela Rega

Brambles and blackberries. Thistle and thorn.

The blackberries are tart and the brambles are full of prickles. They mock her with tiny spindle pricks of her gloved fingertips. The thistles have darkened in the fine mist that cloaks the copse but still Tempest pushes forward. She must get to the sleeping princess in the castle.

Tempest hacks with her secateurs at the gnarled thorny branches; in the dim light they are like outstretched twisted arms that warn her away, and hard to cut through. Long ago, before she had said *those* words, she'd had a wand to magic such things out of the way. The price to pay for losing her temper. Even magic has its limits, her elder fairies had said. It hadn't really been a curse, she replied, but they did not believe her.

Snip! Snip! A thorn pierces her thumb through her glove. It stings. When she removes her glove, she sucks her thumb to find her blood tastes as tart as those blackberries. Her words, said in anger, had been tart, too. Words, like some spells, could not be reversed.

It had not really been a curse, not really. All fairies - and mortals, too - sometimes say things in anger, sometimes say things they don't mean. She didn't really mean for it to go this far.... she said what she said...well...she did say that the Princess should die by piercing her finger on the spindle, and then...because little storm clouds like herself often like dramatic endings, she swirled her cloak and spun around three times and disappeared. Voila! Just like that! (For special effect). Everyone thought she meant it.

Snip! Snip! She brushes the brambles past her face and pushes forward. The thorns catch on her clothing, ripping the hem of her long skirts. *Look what you made me do*, they seem to mock.

Snip.

Snip.

Sibling rivalry.

Her sister, Soleil had made it worse. She was sunshine where Tempest was storm and had that habit that some siblings do of always having the last word. Soleil said to the King and Queen she would change those angry words. To change death to sleep...sleep for a hundred years for everyone - not just the Princess. Soleil should have known her better. Should have known her sister's outbursts were just that, and those words were not the curse they sounded to be. She should have said to everyone in the castle, "Don't worry, she'll get over it, she's just like that, sharp tongued is all."

Instead, Soleil created a counter spell for one that never was - so strong that nothing could break it. Anything to make her look like she was the better sister. Sleep the Princess would. Sleep for a hundred years and only the kiss of a prince would wake her. Huh! As if that was a good alternative!

Thwack! Snip! Tempest mopped her brow with her sleeve and shook her head. Her sister was such a terrible romantic. That kind of love only existed in fairy tales! What happened ever after? No. The thought of who might end up kissing her and claiming her for their own was too much. A girl should be given choices. And there were the other sleeping maidens, too.

The scullery maids and the scullions. The laundress and the nursemaids. Sleeping. All Sleeping. Waiting for a prince to rescue them all? To wake to their same fates?

Snip. Snip. Snip. Snip. Snip. She had to get in there. Snip, snip, snip, snip.

Words. They were just words. Not curses. Curses are summoned. Curses are strategic and come from a different place. They all believed the worst of her. Believed she was capable of wishing death and cursing the Princess instead to enchanted sleep.

The blue rose.

Thwack! Now, the castle gate. Wrought iron rusted with the tangle and copse of vine. Tempest sees shadows of something - someone-tangled inside the squabble of branches and thorns. She moves closer, her steps crunching beneath her. The faded morning mist reveals a dead blue - blood prince. His crown still atop of his head where birds have made a rusty nest. He had tried to make it through the tangles of prickles and spines and cure the curse with a kiss. Claim the sleeping maiden as if she were a piece of property. Blue blood. Blue faced. If she still had her magic she would have turned him into a blue rose. A symbol of what is attainable. For him. For her.

"I am sorry," she whispers to him. "But your solution was not the right way, either."
She still has the key to the gate. She puts the key into the lock, it screeches and the gate wheezes open.

Snip! Snip! There are more brambles, more bracken, more briar and thorn.

Sorrows.

The door is ajar, and branches grow as if the forest dwells inside. A branch gashes her thigh and bleeds her sorrow onto her long skirts. She rips a piece of fabric from its hem, wraps it tightly around her thigh and continues onto the tower room. After all these years, she hasn't forgotten where it is.

Up the cold stone circular staircase.

Around and up, around again.

The door is ajar and Tempest pushes it open with her shoe. She stops and the sight makes her hold her breath.

Sleeping maidens.

Around the princess are her three ladies in waiting, the nurse and the laundress. They drape the bed like eiderdowns. Cobwebs dust their long hair, and the dirt and cinder remnants of time pool in the folds of the princess's gown. They should be free. Tempest pulls the curtain back to let in the dappled sunlight and brushes the cobwebs from the princess's hair. A small spider crawls up her finger and then jumps away.

"I'm sorry," she says and the tears fall from her cheeks and onto the princess's hand. Tempest's bottom lip trembles.

"I never meant those words. I was angry, is all. It was not a curse. It never was!"

The cold stones of the castle walls rumble as if they have been sleeping, too. They groan like grandfathers not wanting to be woken and the clocks of the castle all start to chime as if all keeping different time. The room shakes and Tempest grabs the bedpost. The most important words she would ever say were the hardest and she realises that sincerity is the most powerful magic of all.

Dust.

It powders down from the chandeliers and curtains and white coats the ladies in waiting's hair. They stir, the nurse coughs and the laundress stretches her arms and yawns.

And then the princess. She flutters those long lashes and wakes to see Tempest's tear-streaked face.

"Where is my prince?" she says and sits up.

"I'm sorry," Tempest says and strokes the girl's arm and smiles at her. "Good morning," she says. And she means it.



The Truth That Sleeps

by Kim Whysall-Hammond

They never told you this
never mentioned the real story.
The beauty that slept
for all that long time
is always assumed human.

Ah, my children, oh my loves
she was not one of you
not a gallumping great thing
all fitted into the world.

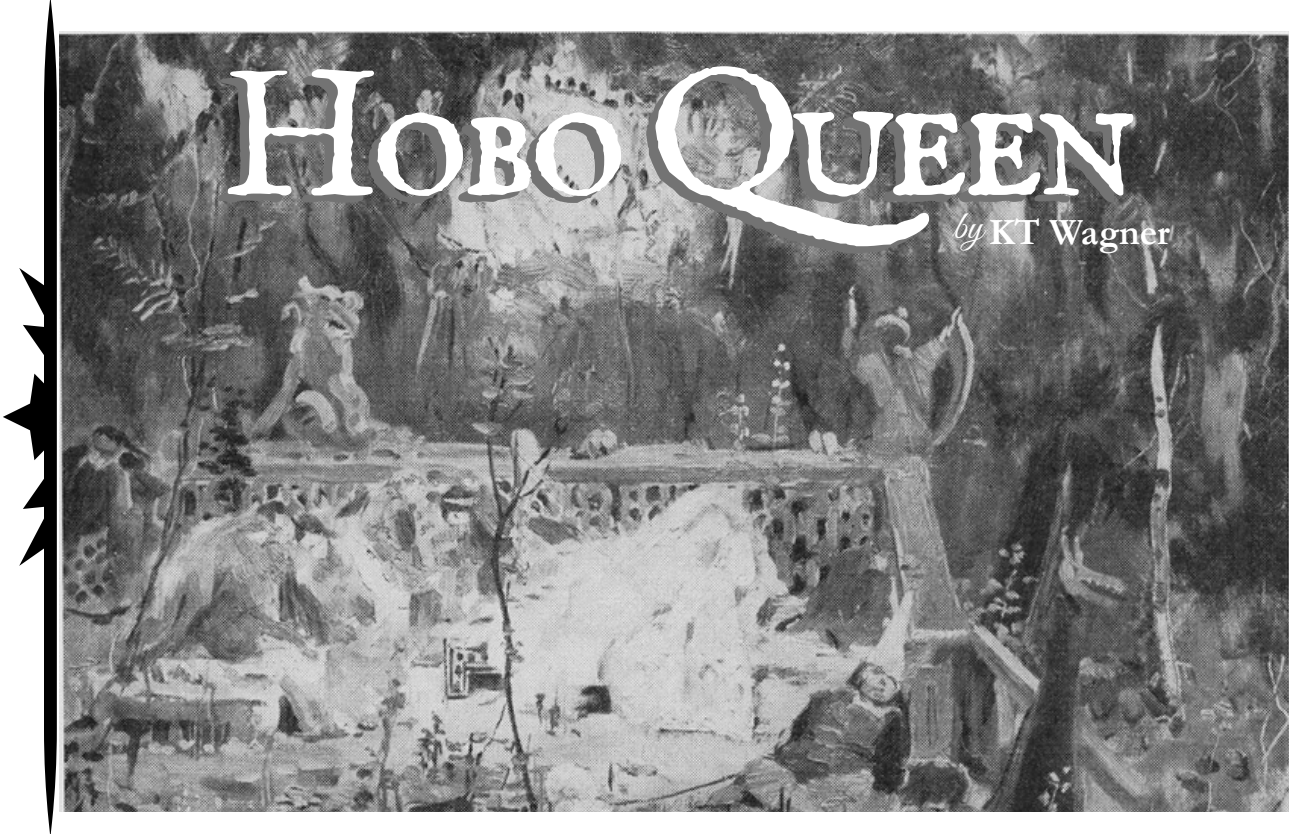
No, my petal was a tiny creature
who danced on blades of grass
tiptoed across gossamer threads
spun by spiders.

She was beautiful,
as sharp as an ants tooth
as light as a moonbeam
as lithe as the breeze.

She shone like the stars
sang like crystal wind chimes
spoke to the flies of the air
and the worms of the soil.

My pretty slept deep and dark
through a bad winter
woke cold and sparkling
kissed he who woke her up
and ate him right down in an instant.

Bet they never told you that.



Once upon a time, below towering cedars deep in a town park, a royal couple ruled a sprawling encampment. Rosewater Betty, an ample ageless woman, charmed hobo spiders. Her consort, a weathered eloquent man named Scarecrow Joe, carried an ancient wooden soapbox.

In her deep, resonant voice Rosewater constantly assured Scarecrow, “Together, we can find a way to make anything better.”

Scarecrow would wrap a thin arm around her. “Come my lady, let’s spin a web of good that will trap those who refuse to grow.”

Queen Rosewater and King Scarecrow cherished and protected those without homes. Every morning, they emerged from their canvas castle atop its pallet-platform to speak words of encouragement and strength. Each afternoon they dragged the soapbox around town and tried to enlighten the residents. The dispossessed revered them. The residents, not so much.

The hobo spiders lived, as spiders do, tucked into dark areas spinning funnel webs for their beloved queen.

Come the freezing rains of winter, the couple prodded the town to set up a warming centre for those without adequate shelter. In response, the council deployed bulldozers and knocked down tents. They named the unsettled an infestation.

Slackers.

Drifters.

Curses.

The town erected a barbed wire fence around the park. They binned possessions, demanded identification, and took down names.

In protest, Queen Rosewater chained herself to a tree. The street people painted cardboard signs and gathered with Scarecrow in front of the town hall. He climbed onto his soapbox and begged the town for compassion.

Vigilantes circled and muttered.

The cameras loved Scarecrow and his soapbox. Over that long night, they captured images of Scarecrow, angry townsfolk, and scolding politicians. Social media buzzed with outrage and denial. Vigilantes skulked in the shadows.

In the broader world, nothing changed.

The next morning, the king found his queen still chained to the tree.

Cold.

Lifeless.

Burned.

Beneath the stench of gasoline, the ghosts of her spells echoed. Scarecrow's grief howled through the forest. The unhoused gathered and carried Rosewater to the river. On a hidden bank, they laid her to rest on a bed of hemlock boughs inside a discarded cooler, her face serene beneath the glass door.

Scarecrow gathered her spiders and released them nearby. "Please watch over our queen."

The town didn't want street people living under the bridge. They hounded and hassled them. "Move around," Scarecrow advised. "Stay safe." His subjects drifted away.

The disaffected marked the town's intersections with three diagonal lines and other warnings of danger. Scarecrow built a shack at river's edge. It was just beyond the bridge, outside the town line but near his beloved Rosewater Betty.

He encouraged blackberry brambles to scramble over his abode and her grave. He constructed a tunnel to provide access to his new shelter. By the time he turned to build a tunnel to Rosewater's grave, the brambles had claimed her casket.

The years passed. Scarecrow worked to enlighten the townsfolk. At best, the town tolerated him because they had no other options. "A tragic, sad figure," they said, and went about their lives.

Every local election, he ran for mayor. The cameras still loved him. The voters did not.

The brambles preserved Rosewater and were impenetrable except to the spiders. Scarecrow invited the spiders to nest in the crooks and crannies of his home.

She's at peace, they assured him.

Her steel and glass coffin gradually sank into the brackish mud, and over the years green-rust ate through the metal. The brambles pushed their way inside, wrapping her body in thorns.

The hobo spiders approved.

Scarecrow grew elderly, his soapbox rickety. Crawling through the tunnel hurt his joints. It pained him more that he'd failed to teach the townspeople compassion. Rosewater would have succeeded, if only she'd lived.

The soapbox fell apart. Scarecrow scattered the pieces near Rosewater's grave.

More and more, he stayed inside his shelter talking to the spiders. Where had he gone wrong? What might he have done better? The spiders had no answers.

One morning, he couldn't get up. He couldn't get up the next day either, or the day after. When he did sleep, he cried out for Rosewater.

Knowing it was time, the Hobo spiders scurried from their dark places and gathered. They numbered in the thousands. Together they guided the longest brambles through the tunnel to Scarecrow. He struggled weakly, but the brambles were strong and determined and quickly immobilized him.

The thorns pierced his body, liquified and extracted his essence, and transferred it to Rosewater. A slow and bloody process. Partway through, Scarecrow's hands ceased clenching, and a smile curved past the thorns in his mouth. He was reunited with his love.

Rosewater stared through lidless eyes at the murky glass above. Backlit by the light of a waning crescent moon, eight-legged shapes skittered across it. She sensed Scarecrow with her. Invited him to again join with her. He accepted.

Iron claws tipped the fingers of Rosewater Scarecrow. As one, they reached up, pressed a thorny hand against the glass, and drummed a metallic tattoo inside the coffin's lid. The glass shattered.

The brambles parted. The hobos swarmed up their arms and caressed their face. The dark embraced.

Silent.

Implacable.

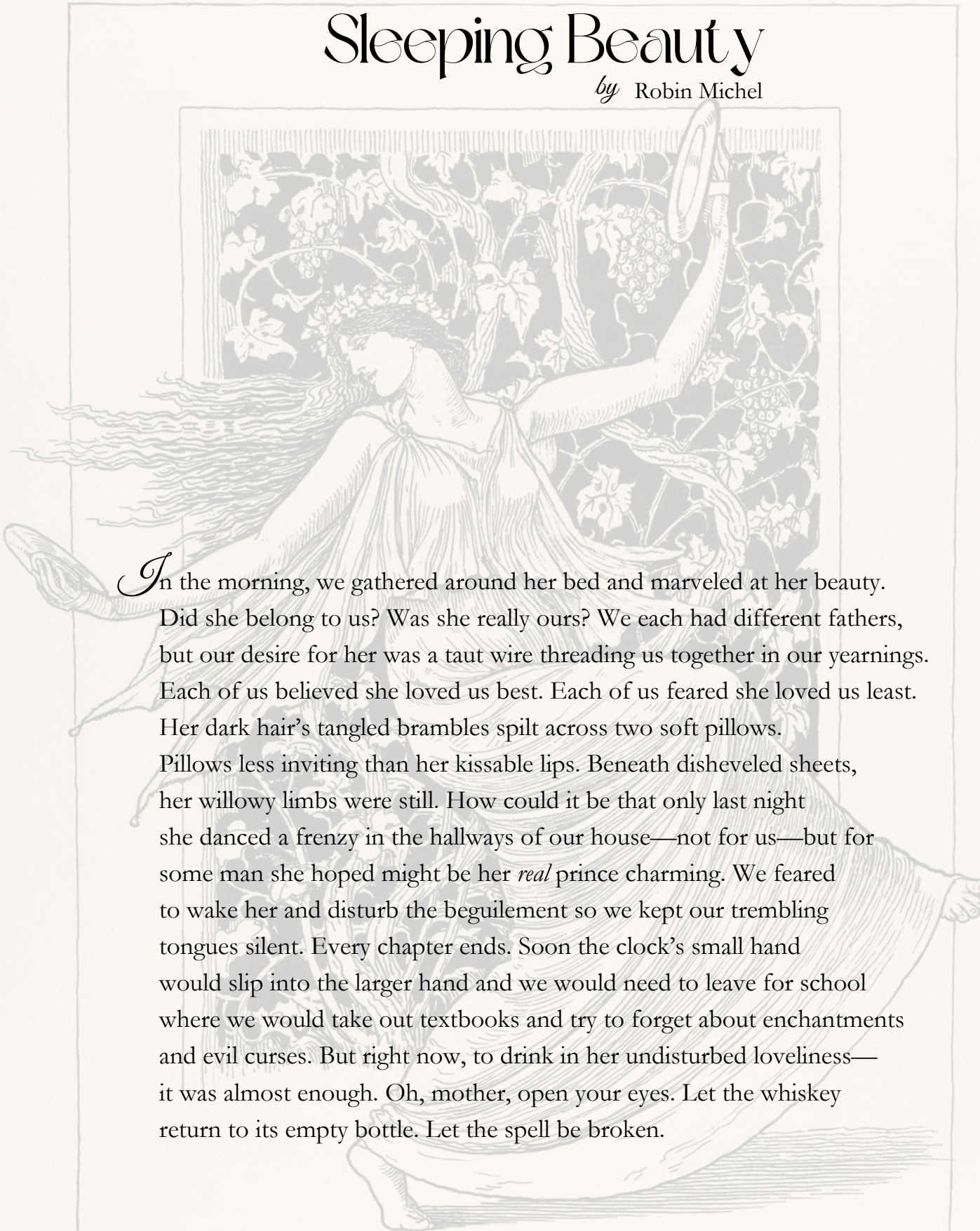
Rage.

They stood, scanned the night, and twisted toward the glow of lights. Their claws curled around a soapbox shard.

Time to reintroduce themselves to the town.

Our Mother as Sleeping Beauty

by Robin Michel



In the morning, we gathered around her bed and marveled at her beauty. Did she belong to us? Was she really ours? We each had different fathers, but our desire for her was a taut wire threading us together in our yearnings. Each of us believed she loved us best. Each of us feared she loved us least. Her dark hair's tangled brambles spilt across two soft pillows. Pillows less inviting than her kissable lips. Beneath disheveled sheets, her willowy limbs were still. How could it be that only last night she danced a frenzy in the hallways of our house—not for us—but for some man she hoped might be her *real* prince charming. We feared to wake her and disturb the beguilement so we kept our trembling tongues silent. Every chapter ends. Soon the clock's small hand would slip into the larger hand and we would need to leave for school where we would take out textbooks and try to forget about enchantments and evil curses. But right now, to drink in her undisturbed loveliness—it was almost enough. Oh, mother, open your eyes. Let the whiskey return to its empty bottle. Let the spell be broken.



A woman in a long, flowing blue gown with a matching cape stands in a stone archway. She is looking down, and her cape is trailing behind her. The archway leads to a staircase and further into a building with more arches. The background is a soft, painterly illustration of a woman in a blue dress, similar to the one in the photo, standing in a similar archway. The overall style is whimsical and ethereal.

THE TAPESTRY

by Kelly Jarvis

*Joy & Woe are woven fine / A clothing for the soul divine
Under every grief & pine / Runs a joy with silken twine
– William Blake, “Auguries of Innocence”*

She had started weaving to pass the time. Hours spread around her, each one as potent and as terrifying as a winter's night, and she had needed something to occupy her mind while the rest of the kingdom slept.

She hadn't always had so much time to fill. When she was a young mother, living alone with her twins in her woodland cottage, life had been busy. Her boy, fair-haired and bright-eyed, would awaken with morning's first light, while her girl, whose features were as dark as raven's wings, would blossom when the sun set each evening. Her husband had given the children royal names, of course, but she always called them Sun & Moon, for they were the source of her light and her love.

“When will you bring us to the palace?” she would ask her husband each time he visited the cottage.

“My father is a difficult man,” he would reply, as if that answered her question. He would kiss the hollow at the base of her neck. “You understand, don't you, darling?”

She didn't understand, not really. All she remembered of her own father was his stern command that she never touch a spindle, a command she had willfully broken at the tender age of sixteen.

She had not been able to sleep since she had risen from the hundred-year slumber that had followed her disobedience. She had awakened at the very moment the Prince, bright in his Shining Armor, had entered her chamber, though she had graciously allowed him to attribute her arousal to his true love's kiss whenever he entertained his courtiers with stories of their romance. Her wakefulness had been a blessing in the early days of marriage and motherhood when so much had been expected of her, but, before long, she yearned to dream again. She remembered fragments of the beautiful dreams that had danced through her enchanted sleep. She envied her children for the dreams that made their eyelids flutter and sent their giggles tumbling across the cottage while they slept, though her heart broke in two each time she saw their drowsing, dimpled faces twist into masks of deep despair.

She remembered those kinds of dreams, too.



It wasn't until the old King finally died that her husband, the new King, announced their marriage, bringing his family home to the palace in grand procession. She could hardly blame her mother-in-law for the awkwardness of their introduction. The dowager's son had chosen a wife one-hundred-years his senior, a wife whose royal line had been lost to the annals of time, a wife who was little more than folklore on a peasant's dirty tongue.

The dowager, her broad back draped in black, the color of her grief, had frowned. Then she licked the spittle from her lips.

"The girl, at least, looks like her father," she said, her voice hungry. It was half an insult, and the new Queen did not respond, though the children bowed their heads in deference to their grandmother at their father's dutiful command.

Living in the palace had required adjustment. The Queen's chamber alone was bigger than the whole of her cottage in the woods, and she missed the coo of mourning doves, the bright notes of forest wrens, the swirling spirals of skylarks swooping through the trees. The Queen begrudgingly allowed her Ladies-in-Waiting to attend to her every need, but she put her foot down when the dowager tried to banish her twins to the Nursery.

"You are Queen now, darling," her husband admonished. "We have servants to look after the children."

But the Queen, who had once touched a spindle just to thwart her father's authority, refused to give in. She had two little beds brought into her chamber so she could watch her children sleep, like she used to do when the three of them lived in their woodland cottage. The dowager insisted the children be supervised by governesses and tutors during the day, and the King agreed, reminding his wife that the children's education was, after all, under his purview. The arrangement had satisfied everyone until one winter's night when the twins did not return from their lessons as usual. The Queen had run through the palace, calling out their names. A footman told her that her children had been sent away, and the frantic Queen burst into the throne room, falling to her knees in supplication.

"What's done is done," the dowager hissed, silencing her son's sympathy with an icy stare. She had refused to relinquish her political power in the court after her own husband had died, and she curled her lips in disgust at the Queen's histrionic display.



The King waved his hand to clear the room, and when he was alone with his wife, he kissed the tears from her cheeks in apology.

“Surely, I can find a way to cheer you,” he whispered, trailing his fingers over the curve of her waist. “It is our duty, after all, to create an heir.”

Her body went rigid.

“You have an heir,” she said. “You have two.”

He wrinkled his brow and straightened his broad back before responding.

“No one will question the legitimacy of an heir born within the palace walls.”

So, he had the children’s things, their little beds, Sun’s wooden sword and painted shield, Moon’s porcelain dolls and smocked dresses, removed from his wife’s chamber. Then he returned to his rightful place in her bed, making love to her each night with the passion of their newlywed years. He never realized that when he rolled off her and fell asleep, she roamed the empty palace halls, crying for her lost children.

“Where have you been?” he demanded one morning after he had awoken alone. He was sitting on the edge of the bed when she returned, spittle clinging to the bottom of his lip. When she told him she had been studying the tapestries in the grand hall and requested that a loom be brought into her chambers, he frowned. It had been more than two years since the twins had been sent away, and no new life had yet quickened in her womb. He would have preferred she make vows and take pilgrimages to hasten her conception rather than waste her time with weaving, but, he knew marriage required compromise, so he acquiesced to her desire.



It took her years to perfect her craft. She began by working backward, using mirrors to copy the designs of the masters until she built the confidence to create compositions of her own. She learned the importance of stretching the sturdy warp threads across the loom before winding the decorative weft strings back and forth, weaving patterns of endless variety from the finite material that unspooled from her shuttle. And, because she could not bear to bring new life into the gilded cage of the palace, she stitched the children of her dreams into the millefleur backgrounds of her tapestries, swaddling them in silken twine to hide them from the dowager’s sight. She named each pair of woven babes birthed by her loom; Starlight & Sunrise, Dusk & Dawn, Moonbeam & Evening Star. She hung their tapestries in the throne room, the banquet hall, and up and down the long corridors that connected them, and, at night, when everyone else in the palace was asleep, she ran her fingers over their tiny, flax-patterned faces, telling them about their flesh-born siblings, Sun & Moon, who had been so cruelly taken from her.

She didn’t know she was weaving magic until one night when, as she was scattering blue weft threads across her woven landscape, drops of rain began to splash against her chamber windows. Curious, she traded her azure threads for golden strings and wove a glorious sunrise which followed in the morning sky. She supposed that her fingers still carried a sheen of magic leftover from the fairy’s curse, so she stitched the dowager onto the deck of a ship setting out for foreign seas. She had never forgiven her ogress mother-in-law for sending Sun & Moon away, and she wished to banish her to a far-off land from which she could never return.

That night, the dowager died, choking on a bone, her bloated face as colorless as a drowning sailor’s. The Queen pricked her fingers bloody in an attempt to reverse her fatal design, but although her art had the power to shape the future, it could not change the past.

“What’s done is done,” she said to assuage her guilt. Then she covered the woven ship in threads of black and vowed never to play with fate again.

Instead, she turned her attention to the enchanted dreams that still twirled on the edges of her memory, weaving them into her midnight tapestries, for surely dreams could do no harm.

She wove princesses as white as snow and mounds of straw spun into gold. She wove wolves prowling forest paths and wives trapped behind blood-stained doors. She surrounded each story with borders of pink silk briar-roses, leaving secret gaps between the petals and thorns so her dreams might escape and fill the weary world with dancing fairy light. She wove princesses as white as snow and mounds of straw spun into gold. She wove wolves prowling forest paths and wives trapped behind blood-stained doors. She surrounded each story with borders of pink silk briar-roses, leaving secret gaps between the petals and thorns so her dreams might escape and fill the weary world with dancing fairy light.

Her husband grew tired of her endless weaving. He declared war on a neighboring kingdom.

“Will you pray for me, darling?” he asked as he departed, tying her favour to the hilt of his sword.

She did not respond. She knew she could stop his pointless war with her enchanted art, but the kingdom’s fate was no longer her concern.



Years later, when a sharp pain pierced her heart in two, she knew her husband had fallen in battle. She began to weave a tapestry for his funeral shroud, the pattern telling his favorite tale, the one about how he had awakened her with true love’s kiss. By the time the official news of his death reached the palace, her tapestry was already complete. Thousands came to view the fallen King’s remains, and each mourner circulated the story she had woven into his shroud, ensuring he would be remembered as the Prince who had rescued the Sleeping Beauty. It was her parting gift to the man she had once loved.

Sun, who had grown into a stranger, returned to the palace to claim the throne, his own wife and children in tow. The Queen became the new dowager, and her tapestries were rolled up to make room for the new Queen’s love of paintings. The dowager retreated to the palace’s highest tower with nothing but her loom to keep her company. Still unable to sleep, she wove her own life’s story into a thousand different tapestries, the unwavering warp threads always the same, the weft threads leaping and pirouetting across their flaxen frames, each plié of the shuttle crafting something new.

By the time the monarchy fell, she had become the old woman she should have been one hundred years before. Her lifeless body was discovered among her baskets of twine when the new government transformed the palace into a tourist attraction. Her tapestries were put on display. Generations of scholars tried to deconstruct their meanings, but the warp and weft threads were woven so tight, the tapestries’ meanings elude them still.



Today, children visiting the palace on field trips often see what scholars miss. They stand beneath the tapestries, reading them like storybooks, studying the silk-swaddled babies hidden in the millefleur, inhaling the fairy magic that wafts through the gaps in the briar-rose borders.

“It is love,” a young girl says one winter afternoon, reaching past the velvet ropes to touch the forbidden artwork.

A piece of flax pricks her finger. A drop of her blood falls on the stones.

And, in the palace graveyard, where the ghosts of the past still gather, the specter who was once the Sleeping Beauty closes her phantom eyes and begins to dream once more.



Sleeping Beauty Returns The Goddess To The World

by Caitlin Gemmell

sleeping, I was magnificent
the curse from Maleficent
a gift empowering me
to traverse the land of dreams
spinning threads of rose
scented enchantment

but when the spindle pricked
blood from my body
while I dreamed, the world
tipped, unbalanced, became
full of masculine greed

until a prince in search of gentleness
brought my palm to his lips
with a prayer invoking
the feminine divine I awakened
to return home the goddess
for she belongs to the manifest world



STEADFASTLY WAITING

by Sergej Pavlović



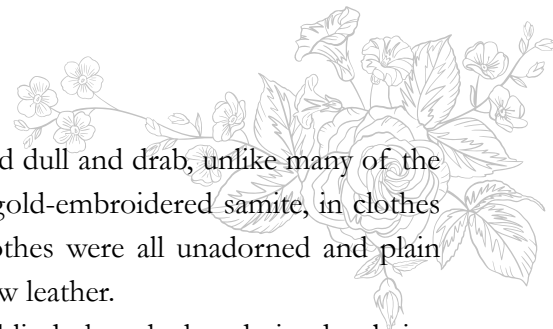
The prince slept at Maricia's house.

That was not so surprising. True, the trickle of the royalty had slowed down in the last few decades, just as the streams and rivers have been reduced to nothing more than sun-hardened mud, but the old tale still held its appeal.

The few others stranded here with her, either chained down by loyalty or too desperate to see themselves making home anywhere else, hadn't recognized him as a prince. They would laugh at her if she mentioned it, silly old Maricia, but that suited her just fine. Silly was underestimated, and pitied, and given undue sufferance, and Maricia felt entitled to finding ways to ease her conditions of the living.

But through the years, she had developed a nose for these things. To her people, the idea of royalty had grown more grandiose and mystical with each year, until they expected each prince to be two meters tall, coated in dragon's blood, capable of healing plague by simple touch of his hands. Of course this boy, sixteen and still unripe and awkward, didn't measure up, and only Maricia noticed how well-bred his horse was, how gracefully he rode it, and the strange polished accent he had, the way he stumbled over their common dialect.

(The princess had been sixteen too, Maricia remembered. She had pitied and envied her when she was of the same age as well, and cursed her when her own sixteen year old daughter had died, and then turned back again to pity as she grew older and older.)



Young as he was, he wasn't careless or lacking in cunning. He had dressed dull and drab, unlike many of the princes Maricia had known: little peacocks all of them, strutting around in gold-embroidered samite, in clothes painted with pigment made out of crushed lapis lazuli. But though his clothes were all unadorned and plain brown, Maricia noticed the high quality of wool he wore, and the smell of new leather.

(She didn't blame anybody who assaulted those princes and robbed them blind, though she admitted to being puzzled by their actions. What use was gold, in this land where seeds refused to germinate, where summer and winter had both forgotten them, where ground and sky were both dead and gray for as long as she could remember?)

Maricia observed the princeling with distant, lazy interest. She didn't care to remember his name, but it didn't matter that much. They were all the same, all of them just notes in endless song, variations on the same theme. Maricia, who had dubious honor of being older than even the curse itself, had suffered time to wash out both hope and resentment from her, and now only silently compared the latest addition to her ever expanding catalogue.

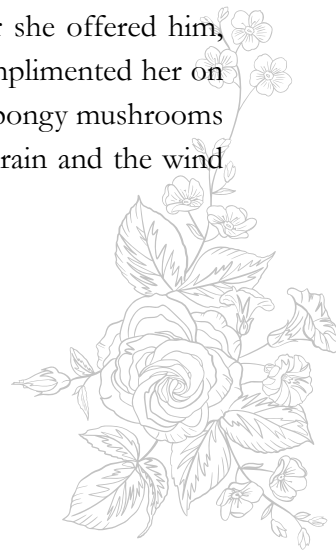
The one before him had been older than most, nearly forty, and had set out on the quest because, for all his bold shouting, he did not dare attempt a coup against his brother the king. He had sneered at Maricia's shaky hands, and rolled eyes at her limping gait, and complained how long it took his hostess to serve a simple dinner....

The one before him had been twenty and one (and oh, how small that number seemed now to Maricia, who could barely recall what it felt like, to live without aching bones and ailing eyesight), and he had meant well, Maricia wanted to believe, but he was so dour, and didn't understand why people were angered when he told them that they should be grateful for their poverty, as it brought them closer to God, and talked at length about new cathedral he would build as king, and how he would chase out the last of superstitions that plagued the country, and after he was gone, Maricia offered the last of milk she had preserved to the soil, because she was good God fearing woman, but Thirteen Ladies had proven themselves important of consideration....

The one before had been the youngest, fifteen at most, and he had arrived with large company attending to his every need, but Maricia managed to find employ with them, by washing underclothes of guards in exchange for bread, and when she dared speak to the prince (for his eyes were the same colour as those of her own long dead grandson), to beg him not to undertake foolish quest, to think of his poor parents, he had slapped her...

And so it went, all way to the very first, who had been heir of neighbouring kingdom, and a distant cousin of princess, and the city- for it was still considered capitol, back then- cheered on him, as he waved to Maricia and other children gathered to watch him, as he promised that the curse would be dealt with swiftly, that his royal blood and strong bond with princess would tame the thorns...

This one was very quiet, and well-mannered. He thanked Maricia earnestly for the water she offered him, though it was so hard it almost hurt to swallow, and left chalky white lines on the lips. He complimented her on the dinner, though it was but one stringy bird, barely more than bones and gizzard, with few spongy mushrooms on the side. He even fixed up her roof for her, though she told him there was no need; the rain and the wind had ceased to be over forty years ago.





Over the day, he inspected the perimeter of the hedge. It must be impressive for newcomers, Maricia supposed; the forest of the deepest emerald, adorned with thorns as long as arms and roses as red as bloodied mouths, rising from the bare stony ground unto the veiled sky. Perhaps the blood of the questers fed it, giving it nourishment to thrive when all the else had withered.

And perhaps that was the true curse of the old age; that everything became dull, lifeless and bland to you. But Maricia continued with her age-old schedule, observing the princeling in her detached way, until three nights in, he had asked her a question.

“Have you known somebody from the castle?” And she heard the second, true question underneath it: *is there somebody you are waiting for?* And she did not cry, for the years had dried up even the tears, but she retreated into her small cubicle, like long gone snails of her childhood retreating into shell, and no amount of prince’s apologizing, nor meals he cooked for her, would change it.

But three days later, she spoke to him herself.

“I was three years old when the curse had fallen. I remember, oh yes I do. And I alone remember that in three weeks it will be the princess’s birthday. Only then, the curse can be broken.

The king and the land are one, they say. This is true, that I know; as long as the princess sleeps, so shall the land, and nothing within our soil shall flower, and seasons shall remain still. But if the sovereign is the land, then land is sovereign too, no? And that which grows must be propelled by her heart and mind, asleep as they are.

For this I alone remember. The thorns were raised not to hold the princess captive, but to protect her. You must not breach the hedge by force; but offer it a drop of your own blood, so that the dreaming princess may know that you are sincere and safe, and offer you passage.” And he kissed her elderly, knobbed hand, and set out to make camp at the edge of the thorns, so that they may get to know him.

And when the skies released purifying rain, and air was filled with breeze perfumed with spring time, and when clouds parted and jewel-bright rainbow was painted over the skies as thorns dissolved in ash with arrival of burning dawn, and ground turned soft and rich brown, and trees and wheat and flowers and fruits burst in being, as if to make up for all their absence, Maricia thought that was it.

She did not expect the royal host, bearing banners unseen for hundred years, to show up at the door of her lonely cottage. She didn’t expect the prince to lead the princess to her, and for her to kiss Maricia’s hand. And least of all, she hadn’t expected the woman who came with the host, dressed as chambermaid, woman more beautiful than the princess, than the sunrise, than Maricia’s own memories, the woman whose soft eyes settled onto Maricia’s ancient frame and impossibly, filled with tears of recognition, as bawling Maricia threw herself in her embrace.

“Mama!”



CENTURY'S REST

by Thomas R. Keith



A hundred years gives ample scope
for dreams. Ice floes drift from end
to end of her subconscious.
Islands ripen with mysterious flowers
whose scents are full of longing.
Great birds sweep pink skies,
crying in nearly human voices.

Her eyelids flicker, stirred
by a half-heard music: the cries
of countless knights errant
who have tried the thorns, failed,
and now hang suspended, declaring
their agonies to the uncaring sky.

They are the dreadful lullaby
that ensures she will not wake.
The warp and weft
of her dreams' loom.
The cradle in which she rocks,
her safety bought with blood.



Sleeping Girl

by Laura Matney

The queen's daughter drifted to sleep. She gripped her mother's hands in hers, kissing them both with her soft lips. Her eyelids fell, losing their battle in increments. When the child was asleep, the queen stayed and watched over the girl. She waited. She grieved.

After a brief burst of soft sobs, the king wiped at his face abruptly. He stood, pushing his chair over and stomped to the door. He slammed it closed behind him, leaving the queen alone with their slumbering daughter. A servant arrived later and whispered to the queen that the king had donned his armor, taken a horse, and set off into the woods. It appeared not all kings had the constitution for grief.

Still, she sat by her daughter's side. Walking away felt like a betrayal. The girl's breathing was steady, but her eyes remained closed. The silence stretched for minutes, hours. Days.

In the silence, the queen could hear the murmurings of an unsettled kingdom. Winter was upon them, and people were worried about feeding their families and staying warm. Even a witch's curse could not stop the steady march of time. The queen rose, pulled by the anxious whispers. She tucked her daughter safely in under the softest blankets in the realm. With a promise to wake her daughter, the queen turned her attention to the safety of her people.

Once upon a time, a girl didn't fall in love. Let's be honest. Marriages were a matter of politics, power, and invisible borders that didn't allow love to enter. Her match was promising, so she was told. The girl's father grinned, pleased with himself, as he informed her. Her mother stood beside him. Her silence spoke volumes.

The wedding day came. The girl sat as her hair was perfectly sculpted for the grand day. Out the window, she saw the mountains. She dreamed of climbing down the trellis, taking a horse, and riding off into an adventure. She could become a pirate or a musician. Or cross all those ethereal borders everyone found so important. She could forge her own path, determine her own fate.

Someone helped her climb into her monstrous wedding dress. She could barely move without help. She stood at the window, a picture of beauty, looking to the vast wilderness outside of her betrothed's castle. The wedding bells chimed. The bride wished for a path of adventure.

The king remained gone, hunting the witch that had cursed his daughter. Without him, the kingdom turned to their queen. They asked her for answers when the grain ran short, when the snow didn't melt, and when a dragon set itself up in a cave and helped itself to the livestock. She worked to solve their problems, and they spoke of how improved their lives were. The queen smiled for the first time since before her daughter went to sleep.

She spent her remaining time at the sleeping child's bedside. Since she had no hope of finding the witch, the queen instead searched for a way to wake the girl. It was on a night when she was leaving the girl's bedside that she received her answer. She had just finished reading a story about a misunderstanding between a wolf and a girl in brightly colored clothing. Snow blew at the windows. As she walked out of the bedroom, her breath crystalized in the air, her tears froze on her cheeks.

Her advisor ran up to her, breathless. True love's kiss, he wheezed. Only true love's kiss could break the curse.

Somewhere in the distance, she thought she heard a witch cackle.

Once upon a time, a girl learned not to regret her choices. What would be the point of it? She no longer looked out the window, wishing for an adventure. Now, when she looked out, she saw all the kingdom's promise, and all the ways it fell short.

Motherhood shifted the view into finer focus. She watched her child grow and thrive, and became more acutely aware of the realm's families that didn't have the same opportunities. The queen watched the king and his advisors rule far removed from the realities those families faced. She stood by, listening, and knowing she would do things differently.

As the little girl blew out her candle on her first birthday, the mother made the wish. For a kingdom better serving its people.

The queen's rage echoed throughout the kingdom. True loves kiss, she screamed. She threw the good dishes and tore at the lace curtains. True love's kiss when her daughter was yet a child. An impossible, clever curse. One the queen could not wake her daughter from.

She sent messengers to the king and the band of royal hunters that traveled with him, still searching for the witch. They were the only hope. Months passed, winter refused to release its grip. The hunt continued, and the kingdom held its collective breath.

In the end, it wasn't the hunters. The witch delivered herself. The queen sat, eyes unseeing, on her throne. An old, gnarled woman approached her in the empty room.

"My dear Queen. I see you have done admirably with all I have given you. But you are too focused on finding me to see the rest. So I have come. To help you."

"You," the queen said. The Witch cackled happily. At the queen's signal, the guards came running and cuffed the woman. She looked at the queen with more than a hint of disappointment.

"Lift this curse off my daughter."

"It wasn't a curse I gave you," the witch said. "More of a gift. Fulfillment of wishes."

"Your gift," the queen said with sarcasm at the words, "took my daughter."

"It gave you a chance to save her." The witch's mouth curved up into a half smile. "And did you not save your people along the way?"

"I don't understand."

The witch nodded, because she understood. She understood the fierce ache of longing and the power it adds to wishes. She understood that sometimes even longing wasn't enough. Sometimes, to change fate, a push was required. But only for the greater good.

“Once, you desired to find your own path, but you were afraid. You wanted to find the right path for your people. A noble notion that caught my attention. I heard those wishes, but I also heard your silence. Fear held you back. I gifted you an opportunity to see for yourself what you could do. To see that you could love, lead, and save not only your family but your kingdom.”

The queen leaned against the wall, eyes wide and blood rushing through her body. Her daughter was in an eternal sleep so she could learn to run the kingdom. A flush of anger swept through her.

“You sacrificed my daughter for that,” she said. Her voice was a whisper.

The witch frowned, wrinkles overtaking her face.

“Would I go through all that trouble and leave your daughter in an eternal slumber? If you were the only one to learn from this, what good would that do over the long term?”

“But to break the curse we need...” the queen began trailed off as the witch shook her head.

“True love’s kiss,” the witch finished. She rolled her eyes. “Why does everyone assume that means a romantic kiss? Who loves your daughter with the purest of heart?”

With a gasp, the queen was on her feet. She ran to her daughter’s chambers. The ground thawing beneath each step. Inside, she approached the bed reverently. She sat next to her daughter and picked up her hands, holding them tightly in her own, and kissing them as her daughter had kissed hers all those months ago. She bent over and kissed the small child’s forehead.

The girl’s eyes blinked open.

“Mommy.”

The queen smiled. She climbed into bed and snuggled in with her daughter. She had much to teach her about kingdoms, love, and why a witch’s curse can sometimes be a gift.



I Woke Up One Day and Found Me

by Yukti Narang

Like a fazed deer, I found myself—
little by little, in a bed;
I admit I was struck by my beauty,
a jellyfish, in a bed;
of soft cushions and new background colors,
in sheets sewn by my own hands;
a prince, I kissed my soft lips,
I remember asking myself if I could;
laid across the sun's heavy beams,
growing by the morning hour, in a bed;
I was growing, a fetus, a face, and limbs,
and gooey flesh, and blood, and a second skin,
and memories;
I crumbled in my salty sweat,
splashed by the sun's old sins;
my house, a lofty spirit of many moons,
was tired of waking me, it cried enough to drown itself;
I built a boat with tiny hands, and woke anew, in a bed;
goosebumps formed, hair grew on my pupils,
I could not see the light as I woke;
shaved, I ached, brave;
a cautionary tale in old books translated many times over;
whisper, I woke a third time, again;
I was a grown-up, smiling, childlike;
I was a new morning curtain, a person, unaltered.

A Way Through The Briars

by Lynden Wade

My anger's fresh; theirs is old and weary, barely alive now a winter's passed since the spell was cast. I've ranted and raved, and my old neighbors look back at me with dull eyes.

Therese, who was to marry a guard at the palace. She'd finally found someone who saw past her pasty face and into her tender heart.

Old Francine, who'd depended on her son's job as castle butler, forced now to move in with her spiteful daughter.

True, Sylvie had been relieved of a violent husband. He wouldn't be able to raise a fist to her again for another ninety-nine years. And Frederique was content that his mother slept along with the princess and the rest of the royal court: her mocking tongue was still.

I take my fury to the castle. It's exactly as my neighbors told me: a palisade of thorns bloats the stronghold to twice its former size. Thick and dense, it won't even let in a ray of sun. I doubt any animal forages there. One turret pushes above the briars.

I fill my lungs, scream, "Seraphine!"

She materializes before me. Looks at me coolly. "Denise. You've returned."

I struggle for calm. "I always said I'd come back for my son."

She nods at my gown. "You were able to make a living across border, just as you said you would. It was not my idea, you know, to destroy all the spindles in the kingdom."

We had this argument sixteen years ago. Twelve of us called for the fairy Seraphine, to beg her to intervene as the king destroyed every machine, and with it our means to make a living. I was the only one who wouldn't give up the argument until I'd had a concession. Seraphine would cast a glamour over the eyes of the princess's nursemaids, so they'd accept my baby son into the nursery. That way, if I couldn't make a living across the border, it would only be me that starved.

"But—Jehan! I've come back for him."

"I'm sorry, Denise. He sleeps, like all the rest of the court." She smiles dreamily. "Even the flies on the wall sleep."

"Why?" I shout.

"You know why." Her eyes grow cold. "It was the only way to save her from the spell. She's my god-daughter. As a mother, you must understand."



“Why must all the others sleep too?”

“So they’ll be there when the princess awakens, of course. Can you imagine how it would be, otherwise? Her parents would grow old and die, and she’d wake alone and friendless.”

“You never thought how the rest of us might feel?”

She sniffs. “If *you* had to choose between your own child and someone else’s, wouldn’t you put yours first?”

My fury collapses into grief. The hope of seeing Jehan again had sustained me for fifteen years in a country with a strange language and strange customs. I sob and fall on my knees. “Please! Do something!”

She shakes her head. “If I wake them up, the princess will die. Remember, I can only alter the spell of my angry sister, not revoke it.”

“There must be something!” I wipe my face with a corner of my cape, but new tears spurt.

Seraphine chews her lip. I peer at the thicket behind her. “Give me something to cut through the thicket!” My neighbors told me that none of their ordinary tools will do it.

“Nothing will. The only way in is to be the chosen prince.”

“Or a vole,” I say bitterly.

“You want me to turn you into a vole?” Seraphine’s face brightens.

“No! Yes!”

The briars are tight but there are spaces you could thread through. If you were a vole.

“Very well,” she says, as if conferring on me a great boon. “How long for? An hour? Two should do it, yes.”

“Wait! Is this a trick? How will I get him out?”

She narrows her eyes. “Anyone can get *out* of the castle. Provided they are awake. Shall I proceed?”

I nod. She threads her fingers together, blows into the hollow, casts them wide. Something silvery falls over me, and everything explodes. I look down and see dainty vole feet below. Scents and sounds assault me; fear pins me to the ground. I crane my neck to look into Seraphine’s face.

“Go!” She waves me away. “Every predator can spot you here in the open.”

I dash for the thicket, scurrying under her skirts to reach it. She exclaims. I dive into the thorns.

The ground falls away rapidly. The briars grow out of the moat that once girded the palace. Ten minutes of scrambling and I’m up by a wall, its scent hard and cool. I follow it round till it’s interrupted by the softer whiff of wood. The gate slats are old and scuffed from being dragged over paving, and there’s a triangle here I can slip through.

Inside, a forest of weeds grow up between the paving stones. They curl round sleeping forms whose snores reverberate loudly in my big ears: the Swiss Guards of whom the king was so proud, useless now as they sprawl behind the gates. Just as bizarre are the bees I pass, curled in slumber under dandelions.

The search for Jehan is exhausting. Most of the doors are open, but the corridors are long and the stairs steep. Everywhere, I have to scramble over sleeping forms. My vole instincts scream at me to run away, but deeper sounds my mother’s heart, beating for my son.

He’s not in the princess’s chambers. I run across lace and velvet, shrieking his name. He’s not in the king’s room or the queen’s. I try the banqueting hall, where beetles sleep in the floor rushes and spiders on the wall, the stables where horses whicker in their dreams...there’s only the kitchens to try.

Here, the men and women mostly slump against the walls. From the floor it's a forest of legs. I scramble up the back of a beefy servant whose face and arms press into the table in the middle, where I can look around.

He's here! Jehan! Although I haven't seen him for fifteen years, I know the curve of that nose better than my own. Didn't he get it from his dead father? But...he's dressed in greasy clothes like a kitchen drudge, and the cook leans across him, fist still clutching my son's hair close to his head. Jehan's eyes are squeezed tight—in sleep or in pain? This isn't the protection I thought I'd won for him! He's been relegated to the kitchens.

Though I long to leap at the cook and bite him, I haven't the time. I scurry off the table and up my son's trouser leg, cling to his ear and shriek, "Wake up! It's Maman!"

I scream. I tickle. I bite. Nothing works. My tiny heart beats painfully, at such speed I think it will burst out of me—then slows and swells, as everything round me shrinks. As I turn back into a woman I lose my grip and fall.

Again I try everything—even pinch his arm. The sunlight's fading. I think about lying down next to Jehan like a loyal dog whose master's died. But that will help no-one. I leave the castle, unbarring the postern gate beside the main ones, put a tentative hand to the branch blocking my way. Like a barrier, it folds back. A tunnel forms through the thicket. At each step they snap back behind me.

Seraphine hovers a foot above the ground, the hopeful look on her face fading.

My chest heaves as sobs burst from me. "Let me try again! Turn me into something stronger!" Seraphine sighs. "Nothing bigger than a fox could slip through that barrier."

"Make me a fox, then!"

Seraphine shrugs, performs the charm in some subtly different way. Again, the world shoots up around me and new scents and sounds assail my twitching nose and perked ears. Away I dash, through the briars, straight to the kitchens.

Oh, the wonderful scents that call to my black nose! So much free food! No, I must concentrate.

But my fox powers are no greater than my vole powers. I bark, tug, scratch for hours till I'm hoarse, only to find I'm shooting up again, back in my woman's body.

I caress his cheek and murmur in his ear. His eyelashes flutter and my heart leaps...nothing. I realise I'm waiting for a smile to curl his lips, as it did before he woke as a baby...the memory rushes in. It wasn't when hunger woke him, but when Minouche climbed into his crib and settled by his side, her tail flicking his nose. How he loved our cat! I had to leave her with Sylvie when I left the country, and I've learned she died last year, totally deaf but very loved.

I run from the castle, through the briar tunnel.

"Turn me into a cat! Please!"

Seraphine frowned. "I don't have to grant you any wish at all. But...as a mother myself—yes, yes, a godmother—I understand your heart. One more chance."

The world explodes round me for a third time. With one mew of thanks I bound away once more.

Oh, the stink that assaults my nostrils in the kitchens! Soured milk; rancid butter; foul, decaying meat...*Concentrate, Denise. This is your last chance.*

I dig my claws into the cook as I climb up him in leaps and bounds, then across to Jehan's shoulder. There, I purr into my son's ear and flick his nose with my tail—which, I note, is as silky as the finest royal garb. I rub my face against his neck, and, just to make sure, I pat his cheek with one gorgeous, pink-beaned paw. Purr, flick, rub, pat, purr, flick, rub, pat...

Eyelashes flicker once more. A sigh from his lips. PURRRRR, flick, rub, slap! He laughs. He quivers. His eyelids rise...

He stares. “Minouche? I thought you were dead!”

He’s so delighted to see my cat form that I can only hope I’ll not disappoint him when I revert to being his mother. I must get him out of here before darkness falls. I leap down and walk towards the door, glancing back to encourage him to follow. He does.

At every step he exclaims at the sleepers behind him. I mew, then hiss, at his slowness. He’s dismayed at the darkening thicket, but I stretch up to tap a branch then twist round to check he understands. He does. Touch by touch—he doesn’t have my cat sight for after sunset—he makes himself a tunnel out of the castle, following me. I ignore the mice rustling round me. Ahead, I see night sky blue between the black of branches—then—a blow to my head, and I’ve lost my sight!

Jehan gasps. I stumble, right myself, scrape my cheek on a branch. I realise the spell has finished. I am human again. I’ve not lost my sight, simply my cat abilities to see in the dark.

Two, three more branches fold back, and we stumble into the open, under a sliver of moon. Seraphine’s gone. I don’t need her now. Although I’m still frightened. I turn slowly.

“Jehan? You remember your mother?”

He regards me wonderingly. With those dark eyes. I want to wrap my arms round him, but I need him to acknowledge me first. Slowly, his face relaxes. “Maman? It’s really you?” Two steps, and he’s seized me in a huge hug. “I knew you’d come for me one day!”

I lean my head on his shoulder. I don’t know what we’ll do next. I don’t know where we’ll rest our heads tonight. Or even if Jehan will need any sleep for a week. None of that matters just now. I’ve saved my son.



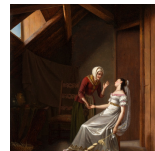
CONTRIBUTORS



TO SLEEP, PERCHANCE TO DREAM: THE ENDURING APPEAL OF SLEEPING BEAUTY – 5

Kelly Jarvis works as the Contributing Writer for *The Fairy Tale Magazine*. Her work has also appeared in *Blue Heron Review*, *Corvid Queen*, *Eternal Haunted Summer*, *Mermaids Monthly*, *Mothers of Enchantment*, and *The Magic of Us*. Her debut novella, *Selkie Moon*, publishes in 2025. You can find her at Kellyjarviswriter.com.

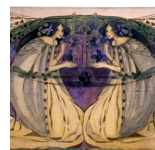
Images: Marie Antoinette Victorie Petit-Jean, Sleeping Beauty; Kay Nielsen, Rosebud; Theodor Kittelsen, White Bear King Valemon; Arthur Rackham, Snowdrop; Joseph Edward Southall, The Sleeping Beauty



BRIAR-ROSE REFLECTS ON HER LIFE – 9

Deborah Sage is a native of Kentucky, USA. She has been most recently published in *Eternal Haunted Summer*, *Fairy Tale Magazine*, the 2022 *Dilsen*, *Rosebud*; *warf Stars Anthology*, *Amethyst Press All Shall Be Well* anthology for Julian of Norwich, *Eye to the Telescope* and *Lothlorien Poetry Journal*.

Image: Frances MacDonald, Spring



ASH IN YOUR EYES – 10

Jo Niederhoff has loved storytelling since she asked her kindergarten teacher to move out of her forest. Learning to write just helped her put down her stories on paper instead of having to act them out, which she still does on stage. She can be found at [@eliza-writing.bsky.social](https://twitter.com/eliza-writing).

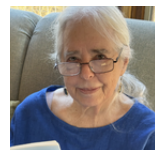
Image: Eero Jarnefelt, Under the Yoke (Burning the Brushwood)



ENCHANTED CREATOR: THE WRITING MAGIC OF JANE YOLEN – 13

Kelly Jarvis

Images: photo of Jane Yolen



IN LISBETH ZWERGER'S 'BRIAR ROSE' – 17

Rachel Ferriman was born and raised in Johannesburg and has a Fine Arts degree from Wits University (2001). Like many people, she has experienced significant loss over her lifetime but believes that even the slightest sliver of light cuts through the deepest darkness, and creativity is light.

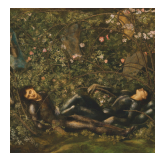
Image: Lisbeth Zwerger, Cover Art for Tales from the Brothers Grimm: Selected and Illustrated by Lisbeth Zwerger



LET ME SLEEP – 18

R. Haven has been mentored by Yvonne Blomer, poet-in-residence with Arc Poetry. He hails from Toronto, Canada. His debut horror novel, *The Other Face of Sympathy*, comes out September 2025, and he is represented by Kaitlyn Katsoupis of Belcastro Literary Agency. His website is theirritablequeer.com.

Image: Sir Edward Byrne-Jones, The Prince Enters the Wood



UPON A DREAM – 19

Jon Negroni is a Puerto Rican author of fantasy and Caribbean folklore based in the San Francisco Bay Area.

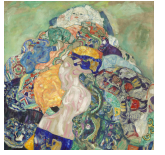
Image: Henri Cleenewerck, *Una ceiba en San Antonio de los Baños*



GIFTS FOR GIRLS – 23

Dr. Sara Cleto and Dr. Brittany Warman are award-winning folklorists, teachers, and writers. Together, they founded The Carterhaugh School of Folklore and the Fantastic, where they teach creative souls how to re-enchant their lives through folklore and fairy tales. Their fiction and poetry can be found in *Enchanted Living*, *Uncanny Magazine*, *Star*Line*, and others.

Image: Gustav Klimt, *Baby*



HEIRLOOM ALCHEMY – 24

Amy Trent is a storyteller, mother, cookie-lover, and award-winning novelist. She delights in writing novels and short stories that explore identity, whimsy, and love through the lens of fairy tales and folklore. To learn more about Amy, or to find the recipe that inspired this story, please visit amytrent.com.

Image: William Harnett, *A Lunch*



FAIRY TALE DREAMS – 29

Emily Kramer is a romantic in pursuit of wonder. She is the creator and host of The Modern Romantic Podcast, a photographer, glass artist, and occasional poet. With a background in fashion and costume design and a love for romanticism, Emily explores themes of beauty, stillness, and storytelling through art.

Image: Evelyn De Morgan, *Night and Sleep*



AWAKEN – 30

Angela Rega is a writer and teacher based in Canberra. Her short stories have been published in Australia, Canada, United States, United Kingdom and Norway. Her publications include *The Year's Best Australian Fantasy and Horror*, *PS Publishing* and *South of the Sun: Australian Fairy Tales for the 21st Century*.

Image: Rosa Brett, *Thistles*



THE TRUTH THAT SLEEPS – 33

Kim Whysall-Hammond is a Londoner who now lives elsewhere. Her poetry has appeared in *Fantasy Magazine*, *Eternal Haunted Summer*, *Dreams and Nightmares* and others. She won Third prize in the 2023 Dwarf Star Speculative Poetry Award. Her debut chapbook, *Messages from the Road*, is published by Palewell Press.

Image: Donna DeBeasi



HOBO QUEEN – 34

KT Wagner writes speculative fiction, loves to knit and collects strange plants, weird trivia and obscure tomes. Her work is published and podcast with *Pulp Literature*, *On Spec*, *Flash Fiction Online*, *Cosmic Horror Monthly*, *Toasted Cake* and more. KT organizes writer events and works to create literary community. www.ktwagner.com <https://bsky.app/profile/ktwagner.bsky.social>

Image: Viktor Vasnetsov, *Sleeping Tsarevna*



OUR MOTHER AS SLEEPING BEAUTY – 37

Robin Michel's poetry and prose appears in many journals. She is the author of the prize-winning chapbook *Things Will Be Better in Bountiful* (Comstock Review 2024) and one full-length poetry collection, *Beneath a Strawberry Night Sky* (Raven & Wren Press, 2023). Born in Utah, she now lives in San Francisco.

Image: Walter Crane, *Dancing Nymph*



THE TAPESTRY– 38

Kelly Jarvis (bio above)

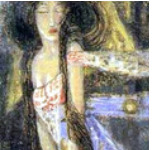
Image: Donna DeBeasi



SLEEPING BEAUTY RETURNS THE GODDESS TO THE WORLD – 42

Caitlin Gemmell is a poet who dreams of becoming a fairy godmother and relocating to the seaside. Her poems have been widely published, including by *Bella Grace*, *Green Ink Poetry Press*, and in *Elizabeth Royal Patton Poetry Prize Anthology*.

Image: Frances MacDonald, *The Sleeping Princess*



STEADFASTLY WAITING – 43

Sergej Pavlović is a young writer from Montenegro, Balkans. Though he is twenty four years old, he remains in love with fairy tales and considers them an endless source of inspiration and captivating material for study.

Image: Arthur Rackham, *Sleeping Beauty*



CENTURY'S REST – 46

Thomas R. Keith currently resides in his hometown of Austin, TX. His poetry and short fiction have appeared in various journals and anthologies.

Image: Albert-Emile Artigue, *Sleeping Woman*



SLEEPING GIRL – 47

Laura Matney is a fiction writer, ghostwriter, and Author Accelerator certified book coach. She writes fantasy that uses folklore and mythology to shine a light on modern day issues. She is a captain of chaos, managing one small child, two giant dogs, and, occasionally, her husband.

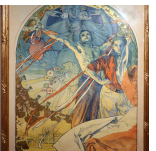
Image: Thomas Musgrave Joy, *The Protected Sleep*



I WOKE UP ONE DAY AND FOUND ME – 50

Yukti Narang (she/her/hers) is an emerging Indian creative writer, screenwriter, and dramatist. Her work has been featured in renowned literary magazines and anthologies, and forthcoming with several others. Her debut poetry collection is *There Is A Home In All Of Us* (2023). Yukti is currently working on her literary and film titles.

Image: Alfons Mucha, *Fraternita Slava*



A WAY THROUGH THE BRIARS – 51

Lynden Wade neglects her family to spend time in the worlds of folklore and magic. She's had stories published in a range of publications, including *BFS Horizons*, the journal of the British Fantasy Society. She is still hoping for a house elf. Find her on Instagram @lwadewrites.

Image: John Gerrard Keulemans, *Bank Vole*

