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The Story Of Sleeping Beauty The Original

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The Origins of a Fairytale Classic

The tale of a beautiful princess cursed to sleep for a century until awakened by true love is one of the most iconic stories in the Western canon. Most people are familiar with the sanitized Disney version, complete with singing animals, a benevolent fairy godmother, and a conveniently timed kiss. However, **the story of Sleeping Beauty the original**is far stranger, darker, and more complex than the animated classic suggests. To understand the full tapestry of this narrative, we must look back centuries before the 1959 film, into the folklore and literary traditions of pre-modern Europe. The journey from a grim cautionary tale to a beloved children's story reveals as much about our evolving cultural values as it does about the power of storytelling itself.

Giambattista Basile: The First Known Written Version

When we talk about **the story of Sleeping Beauty the original**, we must begin in Naples, Italy, in the 17th century. Giambattista Basile, a courtier and poet, published a collection of tales titled *Lo Cunto de li Cunti* (The Tale of Tales) in 1634 and 1636. Among these stories is *Sun, Moon, and Talia*, which is universally recognized as the earliest known literary version of the Sleeping Beauty narrative. Here, the princess is not named Aurora or Briar Rose, but Talia.

A Prophecy of Danger

In Basile's telling, a great lord invites astrologers to predict his newborn daughter Talia's future. They foretell that she will be endangered by a splinter of flax. The father, desperate to prevent this fate, orders that no flax or hemp be brought into his house. However, youth is curious, and fate is inexorable. Years later, Talia encounters an old woman spinning flax and, fascinated, asks to try it. A splinter lodges under her fingernail, and she falls down dead—or so it appears.

The King and the Unconscious Princess

Her father, unable to bear the sight of her body, places her on a velvet throne in a secluded country house and locks the door, abandoning her. This is where **the story of Sleeping Beauty the original**takes a turn that modern readers find shocking. A king, out hunting, discovers the abandoned house and finds Talia. Believing her to be dead but overcome by her beauty, he carries her to a bed and rapes her. He then returns to his kingdom, forgetting the entire incident. This non-consensual encounter is a far cry from the chaste, romantic kiss of later versions.

Tragedy and Awakening

Nine months later, Talia gives birth to two children while still in her deep sleep. A fairy appears and names them Sun and Moon. One day, one of the infants cannot find his mother's breast and instead begins to suck on her

finger, drawing out the flax splinter. Talia awakens, suddenly a mother of two, with no memory of the assault that brought them into the world.

The story does not end happily ever after immediately. The married king, upon remembering Talia, returns to visit her. His wife, the queen, discovers the affair and, in a fit of jealous rage, orders the children to be killed and served to their father in a stew. She then prepares a fire to burn Talia alive. However, the king discovers the plot, rescues Talia and his children, and orders the queen to be thrown into the same fire. Only then does the story conclude with a wedding and a peaceful reign.

Charles Perrault: The Grimms and the Refinement

Basile's version, while vividly imaginative, was too savage for the literary salons of France. In 1697, Charles Perrault published *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*, which included *La Belle au bois dormant* (The Sleeping Beauty in the Woods). Perrault softened many of the tale's edges while retaining its essential structure. **The story of Sleeping Beauty the original**by Perrault is the version that most scholars consider the direct ancestor of our modern adaptations.

The Seven Fairies and the Spinning Wheel

Perrault introduces the now-familiar elements: the christening of a princess, the invitation of seven fairies, and the arrival of an uninvited eighth fairy (the wicked one) who curses the princess to prick her finger on a spindle and die. A young fairy softens the curse, turning death into a hundred years of sleep from which a prince will awaken her. The king bans spindles from the kingdom, but the curse fulfills itself when the princess explores an old tower and encounters an old woman spinning.

The Sleep and the Prince

Perrault's princess falls into a deep sleep, and the good fairy puts the entire castle to sleep, surrounding it with a thick, impenetrable forest of thorns and briars. After a hundred years, a prince arrives, the thorns part for him, and he enters the castle. He finds the princess and, amazed by her beauty, falls to his knees before her. He does not kiss her; rather, the curse simply ends at the appointed time. The princess awakens, sees the prince, and immediately asks, "Is it you, my prince?" They talk for hours, get married, and live together in the castle.

The Second Half of Perrault's Tale

Critically, Perrault did not end the story there. He wrote an entire second part in which the prince hides his marriage from his mother, who is of ogre lineage. When the prince becomes king, he brings his wife and children to court. The queen mother, an ogre at heart, schemes to eat her grandchildren and her daughter-in-law. However, she is foiled by the kindly steward, and the story ends with the queen mother throwing herself into a vat of vipers. Perrault's tale, therefore, retains a significant amount of the original darkness, though he frames it with moral verses advising girls to be patient and not rush into love.

The Brothers Grimm: Briar Rose

In the early 19th century, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm published *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales), which included their version, *Dornröschen*(Briar Rose). The Grimms, German folklorists and linguists, were deeply interested in preserving what they believed to be authentic German folk culture. They were also devoutly Christian and aimed to create stories suitable for children, which meant further purging the narrative of its most objectionable elements.

The Ommission of the Queen Mother

In the Grimms' version, the story ends with the prince's kiss. There is no cannibalistic queen, no secret birth, no attempted murder. The curse is lifted by a single kiss, and the entire court awakens to celebrate a grand

wedding. This is the version that most directly influenced the Disney film. The Grimms removed the long,

The story of Sleeping Beauty the original as collected by the Grimms is the most widely recognized "original" in the popular imagination, largely because it is the one that has been most frequently reprinted and translated.

The Symbolism of the Thorn Hedge

One notable addition by the Grimms is the vivid description of the thorn hedge that grows around the castle. In their telling, many princes die trying to break through, their bodies caught in the thorns. This serves as a powerful symbol of danger, virginity, and the passage of time. The hedge thickens over a hundred years, and the prince who succeeds arrives at precisely the right moment—not through bravery alone, but through the alignment of fate. The thorns turn into beautiful flowers as he passes, symbolizing the transformation from danger to union.

The Deep Historical and Mythological Roots

Scholars do not believe that Basile invented the story from scratch. **The story of Sleeping Beauty the original** in its folkloric form may be much older. It contains motifs that appear in Norse mythology, such as the story of Brynhild, a valkyrie who is pricked by a thorn of sleep and placed in a ring of fire, awaiting a hero to awaken her. Similarly, in the Arthurian cycle, the tale of the "Sleeping Knight" or the "Waste Land" motif involves a kingdom that falls into decay waiting for a hero to arrive. The core pattern of a long sleep, a dangerous barrier, and a destined awakening is a fundamental human myth—a metaphor for winter giving way to spring, for the passage from adolescence to adulthood, and for the power of grace or destiny to overcome mortal limitation.

The Cultural and Psychological Significance

Why has **the story of Sleeping Beauty the original**endured for over four centuries? On one level, it is a simple wish-fulfillment fantasy: beauty is rewarded, evil is punished, and love conquers all. On a deeper level, it is a story about the transition from childhood to adulthood. The spindle, which pricks the finger and causes a sleep that lasts a hundred years, is a powerful symbol of menstruation, sexuality, and the biological awakening of womanhood. In many older cultures, young women were sequestered during puberty. The story, in its original context, may have served as a cautionary tale about the dangers of curiosity and the power of female biology.

Psychoanalytic critics, particularly followers of Carl Jung and Bruno Bettelheim, have interpreted the deep sleep as a period of introspection, necessary for the integration of the self. The prince is not merely a rescuer but a symbol of the active masculine principle that can awaken the passive feminine principle. In the romantic versions of Disney and the Grimms, the kiss is a symbol of mutual recognition—the moment when the soul sees its counterpart and is brought back to life. Despite the trauma and violence present in the earliest texts, the core of the story remains a profound meditation on waiting, hope, and the inevitability of transformation.

From Folklore to Global Icon

The 20th century saw **the story of Sleeping Beauty the original**undergo its most radical transformation: the Disney adaptation of 1959. While the film retains the basic plot of Perrault and the Grimms, it entirely removes the darkness. There is no queen mother, no cannibalism, no rape, and no ogre. Instead, the conflict is simplified into a battle between good fairies (Flora, Fauna, and Merryweather) and the evil Maleficent. The princess, Aurora, is a passive, ethereal figure who is literally put to sleep for most of the action. The prince, Phillip, is an active hero who fights a dragon to win his bride. This version, though sanitized, is the one that has made Sleeping Beauty a household name worldwide. It is a testament to the adaptability of the fairy tale form that it can survive as both a dark cautionary tale and a bright romantic fantasy.

Modern Revisions and Reimaginings

Maleficent reimagined the story from the villain's perspective, attempting to justify the curse as a response to a personal violation (the theft of her wings). Novels like *Briar Rose* by Jane Yolen used the story as a frame for a narrative about the Holocaust, showing how the core metaphor of awakening from a deep sleep can be powerfully adapted to speak about history, trauma, and survival. These modern works demonstrate that **the story of Sleeping Beauty the original** is not a static relic but a living myth that continues to evolve with each generation.

How the Story Has Changed Over Time

To fully appreciate the journey of this narrative, it is helpful to track the key changes across the major versions:

- Basile (1634): The princess is raped in her sleep, gives birth to twins, and awakens when a child sucks the flax from her finger. The story includes cannibalism and murder.
- Perrault (1697): The princess is cursed by an old fairy. She falls asleep for a hundred years. The prince arrives, the curse ends, and they marry. The second half includes an ogre queen mother who wants to eat her grandchildren.
- Grimm (1812): The king bans spindles. The old woman spinning appears. A single kiss breaks the spell. The story ends with the wedding and no epilogue.

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