



From Roses to Briars

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Magic, Retold Fairy Tales

The marriage of the king's son with Briar Rose was celebrated with much splendor and rejoicing. We will live happily ever after, she told him, Together and in love. And for a time, they were together. For a time they were in love.

The end began with a feast. Briar Rose had come to be with child, and the kingdom rejoiced once more at the prospect of an heir. The celebration was held with Briar Rose's entire household. The prince, however, was elsewhere, having been detained on a cold and lonely road on his way back to the castle. He arrived too late to join in the revels, making his way instead to the small tower room where his wife resided. All was so quiet that the breath of an insect could be heard. There she lay, in a slumber so deep that he could not wake her. He fell to his knees, begging her to open her eyes, but his pleas fell on deaf ears. The prince kissed Briar Rose, vowing to save her. He went on into the castle, frantic, and in the great hall he found the whole court lying asleep, and near the throne lay the king and queen, sleeping as if dead.

Deeper into the castle he went, the cook and maid in the kitchen alive only by the slow rise and fall of their breast. Even the flies upon the wall slumbered, unwakeable. The prince ran from the castle, fleeing from the nightmare that he had stumbled into. Behind him, a great wall of rose-bushes rose up, veiling the castle from the outside world with a curtain of pain.

He came to a village, numb with pain and shock. An old man came to him, inquiring to his health, and the prince told him the tale of what had transpired behind the rose-hedge. To his surprise, the old man began to laugh. Do you doubt me? The prince asked. No, was the reply, I laugh because your Briar Rose will not wake for one hundred years. You will try to reach her until the day you die, and your body will waste away with longing

for your princess, but you will not save her.

Why do you say such things? the youth cried, but the old man was gone. The prince traveled far and wide looking for a cure, but found none. When he had grown old and withered, he resolved himself to return to the castle one last time, so that he could die in the presence of his love. Unbeknownst to him, the wall of roses has grown higher each year, each year becoming more thorn-filled. When he made his return, the castle could not be seen through the briars. The old prince tried in vain to hack his way through the thorns, but he was ensnared and died a pitiful death.

Through the years, kings and their sons, having heard the legend of Briar Rose and the sleeping castle, attempted to force entry through the wall, each becoming trapped and dying. The thorn wall claimed dozens of lives, while behind it, the castle still slept.

After a century had passed, and the outside world had all but forgotten the castle and its legend, an old woman came to the castle, the daughter of the elderly man that had made his fatal prediction to the prince. Being one of the thirteen faeries of the kingdom, she was trained in the magical arts. Carrying with her an enchanted spindle, she caused the wall of thorns to part around her, granting her access to the castle. Up she climbed, into the tower in which the princess slept forgotten. She took the delicate hand of the princess into her own, gently pricking her finger with the spindle. With a gasp the princess' eyes opened for the first time in one hundred years. Slowly, the rest of the castle awoke as well, and the spell was broken.

The palace mourned the loss of the prince, but celebrated with great revels its awakening. Amidst the grief and the joy, the old faerie was forgotten, swept to the side. Enraged, she cursed the princess to first lose her child, then to die unloved by husband or son. Soon after she had made the magical decree, the princess fell to the floor lifeless. The king and queen wept and pleaded with the faerie to restore their daughter, but it had no effect on the heartless woman. She disappeared, never to be seen again in that country.

When the queen was bathing one day, a frog crept out of the water on to the land and offered the chance to erase the pain from their minds. The queen begged the frog to take away her torment, and the frog enlisted the other twelve faeries of the kingdom to erase the memory of Briar Rose and the prince, along with the memories of the hundred years that had passed. The king and queen forgot that they had ever had a child, and lived the rest of their days in solitude.

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