Every Rose Has its Thorns

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Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, there was a prince. The prince was quite literally the poster child of royalty. Tall, fair, straight teeth, charming personality. We'll call him Adrian. Adrian was the heir to the throne; a promising future ruler. Since he was little, Adrian had been taught that eventually he would get his chance; his chance to save the day, become the hero, get the girl. Just like his father, and *his* father, and on and on since forever. This was the way of the world. When Adrian's chance finally came, he was ready.

He was summoned and soon stood before the king, who was a wizened, but strong and level headed old man. “My dear son,” the king beckoned the prince closer, “I grow more weary of this heavy crown upon my head every day; I have decided you are ready to embark upon your journey to prove your worthiness.”

“Of course, father!” exclaimed Adrian, “this is the day I have trained for my entire life; I will make you proud.”

 The king chuckled heartily. “Of course you will. I wouldn't expect anything less from my son. Now, you’ve heard of the beautiful Briar Rose, I presume?”

“Naturally! Everyone has heard of the fair princess. A wicked, bitter fairy cursed her to prick her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel on her 16th birthday, causing her and the entire kingdom to fall into a deep sleep for the past 100 years. Though, they say that if she is awoken by a kiss from her true love, she will wed them and all will be well, don’t they?”

“You are correct my son. Please be mindful, many princes, not unlike yourself, have journeyed to the torn covered castle and were never seen again. But I am confident that you will be the one to wake the trapped maiden and win her hand; I believe in you, Adrian.” The king pulled his son into a hug.

“Don’t worry, father,” Adrian promised, “I won’t let you down.”

Adrian prepared and set out the next morning at first light, his stallion carrying him with haste. He rode all through the day, and finally arrived at the kingdom where the fair Briar Rose resided. His loyal steed carried him to the crest of a tall hill. He saw the fabled castle peaking through its prison of thorns. The tendrils wrapped and ensnared the palace, wicked looking thorns glinting in the dying light of day.

The prince dismounted and wandered down to the entrance of the castle, but was unsure how to proceed; he could not climb over the brambles, and it was much too thick to safely move through them. He was about to turn around, when he stumbled over a rock; he careened toward the vines and braced himself for the sharp pain of the thorns, but was surprised when all he landed on was hard ground. He looked to see the briars recoiling, clearing a path for him to enter the castle.

He traipsed through the palace, seeing all of its residents slumped to the floor in a deep sleep, frozen in time for the past 100 years. After wandering through the many halls, he finally came to the tower in which they say that the princess had pricked her finger and fallen comatose. He climbed the stairs and came to the room at the top tower, the ornate door lying ajar. He quietly slipped into the room, expecting to find Briar Rose lying asleep in her bed, fain to be awoken and swept off of her feet by the noble prince that rescues her. But this is not what the prince saw; instead he discovered the princess herself, indubitably awake. She sat in a cushioned alcove, barefoot, reading a book. The princess looked up from her book to see Adrian standing in the doorway, deep confusion written across his features. The only emotion that Adrian could glean from her expression was… annoyance?

“Couldn’t you have waited a moment longer to interrupt my reading?” Briar Rose demanded, “I was just getting to the good part! Why are all of you princes *so* fit that you can climb the stairs *so* quickly? Every. Single. Time…” The last part was said with more of a growl under her breath, so Adrian wasn’t sure if he heard correctly.

Adrian finally snapped out of his daze. “Excuse me?” his exclamation had come out sounding more like a squawk than he would have preferred. “I’m here to rescue you! And why aren't you asleep?!”

Briar Rose rolled her eyes. “Despite common belief, princesses aren’t nocturnal.”

Adrian stuttered, “No, I mean- you’re *supposed* to be asleep! The wicked fairy cursed you and you fell asleep; I’m supposed to wake you with a kiss!”

The princess merely sighed, and came to stand in front of Adrian. “Okay, here’s the story quickly, because I would like to get back to reading my book. Auntie didn’t curse me, just gave me an opportunity: make everyone who tried to stamp me down fall asleep, become immortal, take over and become ruler of as many kingdoms as I like in my newly infinite life-span. For the past 100 years-ish we’ve - myself and Auntie, she’s out grabbing some groceries right now- been luring princes here under the pretense of ‘rescuing me,’ so that when I *do* take over, all of the neighboring kingdoms will be with less or, even better, no heirs, just to make the process a bit easier. So, you’re probably wondering, ‘Are you going to kill me?’ No, I’m not; that would be messy and a waste. I will simply do this.” With that the fair Princess Briar Rose snapped her fingers, and the last thing that Adrian heard was, “Sweet Dreams.” and he slumped to the floor, asleep.

The End