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Sleeping Beauty Gets Woke

5 There lived a radiant and comatose princess named Briar Rose, who lay fast asleep in a castle far, far away. As a baby, Briar Rose had been cursed by the Evil Fairy after her parents forgot to invite the fairy to her Sip & See party. This is a bougie southern kingdom tradition where rich people get drunk on champagne and hang out with a newborn. Since literally everyone else in the kingdom was invited, the Evil Fairy found out about the bash and decided to crash the soirée. But instead of showing up for the free food and booze, she
10 showed up to curse Briar Rose as revenge for the social snub.

“On her sixteenth birthday, Briar Rose will prick her finger on a spindle and die,” she declared while snagging some cheese fondue. After three, maybe four, okay five spoonfuls of gouda, she left in a ball of fire. Fortunately, another fairy in attendance was able to alter the Evil Fairy’s curse.

15 “Instead of the way-harsh curse of dying,” blessed the Good Fairy, “the Princess and the entire castle will fall into a deep sleep and wake when she is kissed by her true love.” When confronted about the particulars of her spell many years later, the fairy would claim it wasn’t her fault because it had been “a different era.”

20 Fast-forward one hundred years, the kingdom lay asleep under the Good Fairy’s reverse curse. Because of the Good Fairy’s blessing, instead of looking like a decrepit centenarian corpse, Briar Rose looked flawless. A young prince from a neighboring kingdom, who was the captain of his varsity jousting team (a fact he found a way to work into every conversation) heard rumors of this sleeping beauty who could be woken by a kiss. And since locking down a sleeping princess sounded way easier than locking down an awake one, he
25 decided to search for the castle. There began his quest. Road trip!

When he found the hidden castle, he cut through the thorns that had overgrown the palace walls and slayed a dragon, which he couldn’t wait to brag about. (However, if he knew anything about dragons, he would have known this one was an extremely small dragon that couldn’t even breathe fire.)

30 The Prince searched every room of the castle until he found the unconscious woman.

“Never have I seen such a dime piece before me,” he announced to no one in particular.

35 He kneeled down close to the Princess.

“I have battled forest vines, an enormous dragon, and a blister on my foot to get to you, Sleeping Beauty. The evil spell shall end, with my kiss upon your super hot lips, which you probably don’t understand because curses are too complicated for women to grasp. A curse is a mean spell bad people do,” he mansplained. “Also, I brought you these flowers and a six pack.”

40 He began to lean in for a kiss—but before his lips touched hers, a tiny urchin boy cleaning the dungeon floors popped his head in.

“Excuse me, mister,” interrupted the boy, adjusting his newsboy cap. “What are you doing?”
45 The Prince jumped back, startled.

“I’m a prince here to break the spell. The better question is what are you doing? I thought everyone here was asleep.”

50 “They are, except for me. It’s my job to get the dust off their spooky dead-but-not-dead bodies. This fairy hired me a couple years ago when the dust had gotten out of control.”

“Ah, well, thank you for your hard work. Everyone looks dust-free!” “Thank you,” said the Urchin Boy earnestly.

55 “Would you like to know my exciting news?” said the Prince. “I’ll tell you! There’s a way to end the curse and I am here to do it. In fact, only I can break the curse. With a kiss! Also, have I mentioned I’m the captain of my varsity jousting team?”

60 He expected the Urchin Boy to be rather impressed that he was the one true savior of this kingdom. Instead the Urchin Boy cringed.

“But she’s sleeping,” said the boy. “You’re trying to kiss someone who’s sleeping?”

65 “Okay. After hearing that out loud I understand it might sound a little—” “—creepy!” interrupted the Urchin Boy. “Very creepy!”

“Look, she pricked her finger, it was a whole thing,” said the Prince.

70 “And if I don’t kiss her she’ll never wake up.”

“Let me get this straight,” said the boy, setting his mop down and taking a seat between the Prince and Briar Rose.

75 “You’re telling me you have to sexually assault a woman to break her from this curse? Because that did not come up in my job interview.”

“I’m pretty sure it’s not sexual assault if I’m trying to break a curse,” said the Prince, gesturing toward the unconscious Princess. “I think if she could talk she’d tell you that she’d want me to kiss her in this

80 situation.”

“But you don’t know that,” said the Urchin Boy.

“Because she can’t say yes. BECAUSE SHE’S SLEEPING!”

85 The Prince had come a pretty long way to break this curse and he wasn’t about to leave the Princess asleep because some little dude with a mop and a tweed vest was giving him attitude. Plus, she was super hot. Double plus, he hadn’t even cracked open his pack of Stud Light yet. The Prince tossed his cape to the ground.

90 “It’s really hard to be me right now!” he whined. “And it’s not supposed to be hard, because I’m a prince.”

“Look, mister prince guy, there’s really no way around this issue of consent so it’s best if you see yourself out.”

95 “My man, why are you trying to lip-block me?”

“I’m not a lip-blocker. I’m a good male ally.”

100 “But I’m her true love,” said the Prince.

“But she’s never met you,” pointed out the Urchin Boy. “So how are you in love?”

105 This was something that the Prince hadn’t considered. He assumed everyone was in love with him. After all, he made the match-winning strike last week at his jousting tournament.

“I mean, I don’t think she’d wear that dress if she didn’t want me to kiss her,” said the Prince, pointing at the Princess’s velvety gown.

110 “Golly gee! That’s just what she was wearing when she fell asleep!” said the Urchin Boy, completely appalled. “It’s what princesses wear when they hit the balls, because it makes them feel confident and stuff at parties.”

115 “I need a new plan,” complained the Prince. “This is an impossible situation and I have been set up for failure.”

“Welcome to my entire life as a poor urchin boy,” said the boy, staring off into the distance. But the Prince didn’t hear him. He was busy brainstorming and couldn’t multitask.

120 “I have an idea!” the Prince exclaimed. “If you’re telling me I shouldn’t do a real kiss, I’ll try a butterfly kiss. Maybe that will work instead.”

125 The Prince leaned in and started fluttering his eyelashes, lightly grazing the Princess’s cheek. Nothing happened.

“Damn. I can’t believe that didn’t work.”

130 “You have to respect her boundaries!” said the Urchin Boy, pushing the Prince away with his mop. “And that was a dumb idea.” But the Prince ignored him.

“Perhaps an eskimo kiss would be better?” he said. He leaned in again, this time rubbing his nose against the nose of her cadaverous body. It didn’t work either.

135 “You’re acting like an infected creepy boil!” said the Urchin Boy. “Please stop touching her.”
“I’ve got an idea I think will work this time,” said the Prince, brushing him off. “I’ll pretend my hand is a mouth.”

140 “No!” said the Urchin Boy. “She needs to agree every time you try something new. And, let me remind you, she hasn’t agreed to anything.”

But before the Urchin Boy could stop him, the Prince curled his hand into a puppet.

145 “I’m a mouth, I can talk,” he said in a high-pitched puppet voice, flapping his hand. “Have I told you that my varsity jousting team is going to the Realm Championship this year?”

The Urchin Boy sank his head into his palms as the Prince attempted to make out with the Princess using his puppet hand.

“Bummer,” said the Prince, when nothing happened.

150 “You really gotta stop touching her,” said the Urchin Boy. “She’s unresponsive and it’s clearly not working.”
“Maybe it didn’t work,” said the Prince. “But also, she didn’t, like, say no.”

“Whoa, whoa, whoa,” said the Urchin Boy. “Not saying no isn’t saying yes. Ever heard of enthusiastic consent? She needs to say yes and she needs to be excited about it. If she wanted you, she’d be grabbing at your fancy tunic.”

160 But the Prince didn’t want to go home now. He’d come so far! He had told his whole team he was coming home with a princess. Maybe breaking the curse was like the ten-second rule when you drop your meat pie on the ground: if you pick it up real quick it doesn’t count. He’d kiss the Princess real quick, but the kiss wouldn’t count. She would never know. It would be like it never happened!

“I’m only doing this to break the curse—no tongue!” he yelled as he went in for a peck on the Princess’s mouth before the boy could intervene.

165 As soon as his lips touched hers, birds began to sing, flowers began to bloom, and everyone in the kingdom raced to the bathroom, because after being asleep for a hundred years they really needed to pee. A glow surrounded the Princess as she opened her eyes and gasped for air. The curse had been lifted! The Prince felt totally vindicated.

170 “I’m awake!” Briar Rose marveled as she sat up. “Tell me, how was the spell broken, dear strangers?”
Strangers. Shit. The Prince didn’t expect her to ask that question.
“Oh, it doesn’t really matter,” said the Prince, trying to brush it off.

“I must know,” urged Briar Rose.

175 “I’ll tell you,” said the Urchin Boy, stepping forward as the Prince tried to hold him back. “He stood over you, drooling lustfully, and while you were passed out, he leaned in and kissed you!”
The Princess gasped.

180 “While I was asleep?!”

She stared at the Prince, while he failed to come up with a reasonable answer to this question.
“You must have been into it since it worked, which means I’m your true love,” said the Prince meekly, hoping this would calm her down.

185 “There’s an extremely low threshold for true love in this time period!” screamed the Princess. “Most people are betrothed at birth. If a squirrel kissed me, the curse probably would have been broken, but even a squirrel knows better than to kiss someone who is sleeping and can’t give consent!”

190 This was not how the Prince imagined this situation going down when he left his parents’ castle a few days ago to search for her.

“You know what?” said the Prince. “I am so glad you’re awake, but, I’m, uh, late for a, uh, sword-polishing hangout with my dad. Anyway. Ta- ta.” And with that, he ran off.

195 The King and Queen’s first proclamation post-wakeup was commanding the Prince to return to their castle to take a sexual harassment and consent workshop.

200 But the Prince never made it to the workshop. Not because he's entitled and privileged and found a way out of facing even minor consequences for a heinous act, but because on his way to the workshop he got stepped on by a dragon. One that could actually breathe fire.

(2020)