

# The Sleeping Castle

by *Tania Kasian*

## Summer

**I**n the faraway Kingdom of Summer lived the curious and boisterous Princess. She spent her time in the library, sous-chefing for Cook in the kitchen and sharing advice from her favourite books with the Gardener of the castle grounds. In the evening, she could be found in her favourite tower, gazing at the stars and planets.

With a twinkle in her eye and a flash of golden hair, she flew along the corridors of the castle, knocking over vases and suits of armour. She even once knocked her own father down the stairs. “Summer, when will you calm down? You blow like a hurricane!” the King grumbled.

The fairies, who were in charge of preserving harmony across the four kingdoms, kept a keen eye on her.

“These behaviours are no longer acceptable,” frowned Bernadette, the purple fairy.

“Imagine what an inspirational leader she will be!” retorted the orange fairy, Valetta.

“If ‘Princess Hurricane’ survives! How can we allow our future leaders to behave like this—chaos will reign across the kingdoms. We must intervene!”

Valetta twirled her orange hair anxiously, its luscious colour fading.

“It is time to cast the Tradition spell. Princess Summer will fall into a long, deep sleep and on waking, she will be more like a ‘normal’ princess—demure, controlled and, most importantly, quiet.”

“What do you mean ‘normal’? Summer is supposed to be charismatic, intelligent and curious!” said Valetta.

“She is not queen material!” Bernadette rolled up her purple sleeves, pointed her wand towards the tower and whispered an incantation.

“No!” Valette cried, knocking the wand from Bernadette’s hand. The spell flew from the wand, missing the tower and crashing into the castle.

“Too late! It’s done,” Bernadette said, turned her wings and flew home. Valetta followed, her orange hair fading to a grey peach colour, neither noticing where the spell had landed.

Meanwhile, the unsuspecting Princess was scanning the sky for new planets through her telescope. Late for bed again, Summer rushed down the stairs and paused. “That’s weird.” At this time of the evening, the castle was usually filled with noise. But tonight there was not a single note of music, no chitter-chatter, not even a step on the stone floors to be heard—an eerie silence had descended upon the castle.

Entering the Great Hall, she almost tripped over a maid lying on the floor, fast asleep. “What on earth is going on?” She found her father slouched over the piano, her mother softly snoring in her armchair beside him. Summer shook her father’s arm shouting “Dad!” and prodded her

mother's shoulder "Mum!" Neither stirred. She ran to the kitchen. The pots were bubbling over, and the bread was burning in the oven. The whole castle had fallen into a deep, unawakenable sleep.

Summer ran to the library and logged on to the Fairy's Encyclopedia of Magic. "Everyone around me has fallen into an unexplainable sleep—what should I do? Search!" The encyclopedia search engine returned, "The story of Sleeping Beauty... The fairies cast a spell... The princess falls asleep... A strange prince wakes her by kissing her. Really? It's 2021! Do I still have to kiss a stranger to break this spell? The fairy magic world is clearly stuck in the past! There must be another solution.

"OK Google Maps, show me the way to these fairies." Summer printed out the map to the Magical Fairy Forest. She grabbed her leather satchel and headed towards the huge orchard at the edge of the neighbouring Kingdom of Autumn. Summer felt at home under the full moon and twinkling stars, with Jupiter illuminating her path. "Let me travel as fast as you spin, Jupiter!" Summer shouted to the sky.

Summer waved off a small creature who danced across the moon in front of her. The creature squeaked, "Hey! I am here to help! I heard you reading in the library." A little bat came into focus in front of her.

"Who are you? And how can you help me?" Summer asked in surprise.

"My name is Baron. But you can call me Barry!" it said, curtsying in the air. "I know my way through all the Kingdoms of Autumn, Winter and Spring. I travel at night across them to find my favourite moths to eat."

"And the Magical Fairy Forest?"

"That is my favourite feasting ground."



## Autumn

Talking of feasts made Summer realize she had left without supplies. As they crossed the border, they noticed a small castle with its lights on. She tapped on the window.

A dark-haired young man leaned out. “Who’s there?”

Barry whispered to Summer, “That’s Prince Autumn. He is a famous artist—his work hangs in galleries around the world. Maybe a kiss from him could fix everything?”

“Shush!” hissed Summer. She looked at the young man and said, “I am Princess Summer of the Kingdom of Summer. I’m on my way to the Magical Fairy Forest to save my castle from an unfortunate spell. I left in haste and forgot to bring supplies with me. I would be grateful of your help.”

“What kind of fool embarks on a long journey and forgets food?” the Prince grumbled and slammed the window closed.

“I wouldn’t kiss him either!” Barry said.

After a few minutes, Prince Autumn returned with bread, cheese and water, and a warm poncho. “You will need this when you reach the Kingdom of Winter.”

“You are very generous,” replied Summer with a smile, putting the poncho and supplies in her bag.

## Winter

They walked through the dark night and as dawn broke, the red and yellow fields of autumn had turned to white. Snow swirled around them. The winter sun shone through the trees as Summer wrapped herself in

her poncho and folded Barry inside her shirt against her chest for warmth. She giggled as she walked along the snow-covered trail listening to the sweet sound of Barry snoring.

Ahead, a hunter emerged from the forest, a bow and arrow across her back, and a horse with a deer draped over it. “What brings you to our Kingdom?” the hunter demanded. Summer noticed she was a similar age.

“I am Princess Summer, and I am travelling to demand that the fairies remove a spell placed upon my family!”

“I heard rumours of your predicament,” the hunter bowed her head. “I am Princess Winter. I can guide you to the border of our Kingdom. Please take my spare horse to hasten your journey.”

“Thank you, Jupiter,” Summer whispered to the sky.

They journeyed into the next night, sharing their hopes for their kingdoms. As darkness fell again, Barry poked his face out of Summer’s bag, asking, “Who is this?”

“The Princess of Winter.”

“Should you...?”

“Give it a rest! I won’t be kissing anyone—although she is enchanting!” Summer smiled as the bat stretched his wings and flew over her head.

Approaching the border at midnight, Winter bid Summer farewell.

“She gave you the horse. Perhaps Winter is enchanted by you too?” whispered Barry.

## Spring

Night could not hide the beauty of the Kingdom of Spring. The path was thick with cherry and apricot blossoms, their glorious scent filling the air. Summer had noticed a young man following them on horseback.

“I see another prince behind us—this is your final chance for salvation... although, you haven’t brushed your teeth in two days, so a kiss...”

“That’s enough. We are holding those that created this mess to account. The fairies must break the spell.”

Summer turned round to introduce herself. He was Prince Spring, an organic farmer who was himself travelling to see the fairies.

“We are losing our natural pest controllers like your bat friend here. Many farmers are turning to pesticides that poison such creatures and are destroying our ecosystems. I am hoping the fairies can enchant our farmers to protect the whole environment, for all our sakes.”

## The Magical Fairy Forest

“Not far now,” Barry said, pointing towards a tall tree in the large meadow ahead. “Can you see the fairies?” Summer galloped towards them.

“Good afternoon. Which one of you put my castle to sleep?”

Valetta twirled round in shock. “Summer? You are awake? How on earth did you get here?”

“By map,” she said exasperated. “And with the company of good people along the way,” nodding towards Prince Spring and Barry.

She continued. “I’ll ask again. Why did you cast a spell on my castle?”

“It was Bernadette! I tried to stop her. The spell was meant to bewitch you, not the whole castle.” Bernadette stayed hidden behind the tree.

“Bernadette, why did you want to put me to sleep?”

“To make you quieter, more demure,” said Bernadette defiantly. “You, my dear, are too boisterous. You smash everything in your way—you are so unqueen-like.”

Summer shook her head. “Your ideas are outdated! On my journey here, I met three very different princes and princesses—none of whom are quiet or demure. Prince Autumn is an artist, Princess Winter a great hunter, and Prince Spring here is an environmentalist and a farmer. We are as different as the kingdoms we live in, and we all bring different skills and passions. Just like autumn, winter, spring and summer.”

“Imagine,” offered Prince Spring, “if spring were to disappear... or summer... What would become of us? With no spring, we could not plant our crops; with no summer, the crops wouldn’t grow. We would all starve.”

“What have I been telling you?” Valetta shook her head.

Bernadette turned from purple to red with embarrassment. “I am most sorry. I was upholding tradition as it is written!” Bernadette waved her wand and whispered a reversing spell.

“Please forgive us,” said Valetta.

The Princess smiled and waved her hand.

“It is in the past. Perhaps it is time all four kingdoms came together and refreshed the Fairy’s Encyclopedia of Magic.”

Waiting for the fairies to give the Prince his enchantment spell, Summer reached into her poncho and stroked the sleeping Baron. She thought about how much she missed her parents and couldn’t wait to hug them.