

# The Storyteller

*by Aslı Tohumcu*

The Storyteller was under the desk, moving around on the floor, making weird noises. His hands and feet were tightly bound with Rapunzel's thick blonde hair. His mouth was gagged with Little Red Riding Hood's cape. As he rolled angrily, the table shook. Dangerously.

But the crowded room couldn't care less if he was angry or moving around. Because he deserved it. With his pointless, stubborn attitude, he had asked for it himself. None of them had really chosen to do this, to eliminate him so miserably. They had tried to bring him round, telling him about their troubles one by one, time after time. Even Sleeping Beauty wasted the little time she gets awake from her sleep once every hundred years, trying to talk him round. And now, he ended up in this situation because he did not listen to anything that was said to him nicely.

Cinderella looked at him, disappointed. She said, "My sisters did not mind that I was their stepsister. But you didn't let them treat me well!" Her sisters hugged Cinderella, acknowledging that she was right.

Sleeping Beauty joined the conversation, hardly keeping her eyes open. “I have been sleeping for a hundred years for no reason, all because of you. Isn’t that a shame!”

One of the princes puckered his lips and got closer. Then, he put one of his arms around Sleeping Beauty’s shoulder. He said, “Calm down, darling.”

Sleeping Beauty’s eyes opened wide all of a sudden. She snapped at him and said, “Stop calling me darling, like I had a say when you kissed me!”

The prince took his hand back and scooted over.

The hunter threw down his knife, making a loud noise as it hit the floor. The gazelle hid under Snow White’s dress, frightened by the sound. Snow White tried to soothe the gazelle, stroking his back. With sadness in his eyes, the hunter looked at the gazelle. “You’re right to be afraid of me. But I beg you, please give me another chance. I know I have killed you for many years, but I carved your heart up with deep sorrow inside of me. Please, let me protect you from now on.”

The gazelle was surprised. As Snow White said, “Come on, go, don’t be afraid,” he got closer to the hunter.

The Queen watched this scene with tears in her eyes. She opened her arms and said, “Come on, come back to your palace, Snow,” to Snow White, with a tender voice. Snow White ran into her arms.

His hands and feet bound, his clothes covered in dust because of moving around on the floor, the Storyteller said, “If everyone acts their own way, there will always be chaos. You will have to untie me sooner or later. You need someone to put your stories in order. Don’t be childish and just accept it!”

The Queen said, “The Storyteller said something right for once. We do need someone to put our stories in order.”

Cinderella and her sisters yelled, “Great idea!” all together.

Hansel whined, “But how is that going to work?”

Then Cinderella asked, “Should we use the glass slipper?”

Gretel said, “What does that have to do with this?” all bored. Suddenly, she felt hopeless, thinking that they wouldn’t ever get rid of the Storyteller.

The Storyteller burst into laughter, with a fox-like voice. Rapunzel lost her temper and tied the Storyteller even tighter. She called for Little Red Riding Hood to gag his mouth again.

The Queen was walking back and forth in the room, whispering, “We need a new storyteller. Someone who really knows what literature is.”

Hansel just said, “Maybe we should ask your mirror, madam?”

The Queen said, “Oh, just let it go. That mirror is obsessed with beauty. We have to think of another solution.”

Rapunzel’s twins asked, “Maybe we can advertise on social media.”

The Queen frowned. “Where is this social media that you are talking about? I have been living in this dreamland for thousands of years, and this is the first time that I have ever heard of such a land.”

Rapunzel’s twins giggled, “You know, the place that the Storyteller checks on his phone... where you share pictures?” But the Queen shrugged her shoulders and walked away.

Just then, the bell rang. They all looked at one another in silence. Gretel rushed to the door after the Queen, with her sign. They passed through the living room and the corridor and reached the front entrance. Then they looked through the keyhole and saw a tiny person wearing navy sweatpants and a brick-red T-shirt, with her hair down her neck. She was tugging the strings of her backpack.

The Queen reached out and opened the door. The tiny person walked inside, with hesitation. When she saw the Queen, dressed in black with her white hair adorned with her crown, her eyes grew as big as basketballs.

The Queen said, "Hello, um... little person," smiling.

The little person said, "My name is Tomris."

Gretel added, "Who are you looking for, Tomris?"

Tomris frowned and said, "Um... I am here to have an interview with the Storyteller... for my homework."

The Queen noticed how unhappy Tomris was as she said her last sentence. "Don't you like homework?"

"No, the Storyteller..." said Tomris, looking at her little feet. "Actually, what he writes..."

Gretel grinned joyfully, and the Queen said giggling, "Great! Come in."

When all three of them reached the office and Tomris saw the scene, she started smiling. "Great move," she said finally. "Someone had to stop this man."

Sleeping Beauty's yawning jaw dropped. The princes anxiously looked at one another. The hunter winked at the gazelle.

Cinderella said, "If you help us, you can take my glass slipper."

Tomris stared at the narrow heels in Cinderella's hands, then looked at her own sneakers. "Thank you, but you can keep them," she said.

Snow White said, "You can have my dress if you want."

"And my crown," the Queen said.

Tomris gulped and said, "You don't need to give me anything. I will gladly help you. I want to, but... how can I help?"

Gretel said, "We need someone to put our stories in order."

Cinderella added, "We mean, a new storyteller."



The Queen continued, “We need a storyteller who will not torture us and put absurd ideas into readers’ minds. We know what kinds of stories we need, but we do not know how to write them. We live in the tales, after all—we don’t write them.”

Tomris said, “Wowww! I love reading and making up stories. But I don’t know if I can really do this...”

Snow White got closer to Tomris and pointed at the desk. “If you never try, you’ll never know.”

Tomris nodded.

Shaking with excitement, they all watched Tomris turn towards the desk, climb onto the chair and sit cross-legged.

Tomris put one of the blank papers in front of her. She took a pencil out of her pencil case. She nibbled the end of her pencil for a while. Then she stuck her tongue out and said, “Where to start?”

“I do not want to marry a prince just because he kissed me.”

“I would rather chop up and eat myself than eat a kid!”

“I do not want to be locked in a tower.”

“I do not want to go to balls, I want to visit new countries instead.”

“I do not want to rule countries, I want to write poems.”

The Queen stomped her foot. “Hey, stop! Calm down.” She thought for a while. “Let’s start with the worst: kings and princes. All they do is bring trouble. They are the ones kissing girls without consent, they are the ones fighting in wars...”

The princesses supported this proposal with applause. But still, there were complaints: “Seems like it will take ages for it to be our turn.”

“Ummm,” said Tomris in response. “I get you. It is terrible to be forced into a life that you don’t want.”

Yawning, Sleeping Beauty asked, “Wh-what?” Gretel pinched her to make her concentrate. Sleeping Beauty thanked the girl.

Without responding, Tomris started to write. “Once upon a time, there was a land where everyone could live their lives as they wish. A land with princes dancing ballet, princesses swinging through the treetops, kings thrilled to have daughters, queens loving their stepchildren as much as their own children, dragons having broccoli for dinner...”

One of the dragons interrupted, “*Ahem...* umm... Let’s not say broccoli...”

Tomris smirked. She crossed out the word ‘broccoli’. One of the princes added, “Can you also add singing after ballet dancing?”

The hunter interrupted, “Could you write in a farm for me? Where I can grow plants and take care of animals?”

“Maybe a witch could make a little trouble now and then?”

“And a sister might say something snide now and then?”

The old storyteller stopped groaning. Red Riding Hood and Rapunzel untied him. He stood and looked over Tomris’ shoulder.

Tomris kept on writing and writing.