



Long ago there lived a King and Queen who said every day, "If only we had a child!" But for a long time they had none.



One day the Queen's wish came true and she fell pregnant with a baby girl. To celebrate the king prepared a great feast and invited all his friends, family and neighbours.



He invited the fairies, too, there were thirteen of them in his kingdom, but as the King only had twelve golden plates one of the fairies had to be left out. Nobody was saddened by this, as the thirteenth fairy was known to be cruel.



An amazing feast was held and after, each of the fairies presented the child with a magic gift. One fairy gave her virtue, another beauty, a third intelligence and so on -- with everything in the world that anyone could wish for.



After eleven fairies had given their gifts, the thirteenth suddenly appeared. She was angry for not being invited to the feast and called out, "When she is fifteen, the Princess shall prick herself with a spindle and fall dead!"



Everyone was horrified, but the twelfth fairy flew forward. Her magic could not remove the curse, but she could soften it so she said, "Your daughter shall not die, but instead shall fall into a sleep for one hundred years."



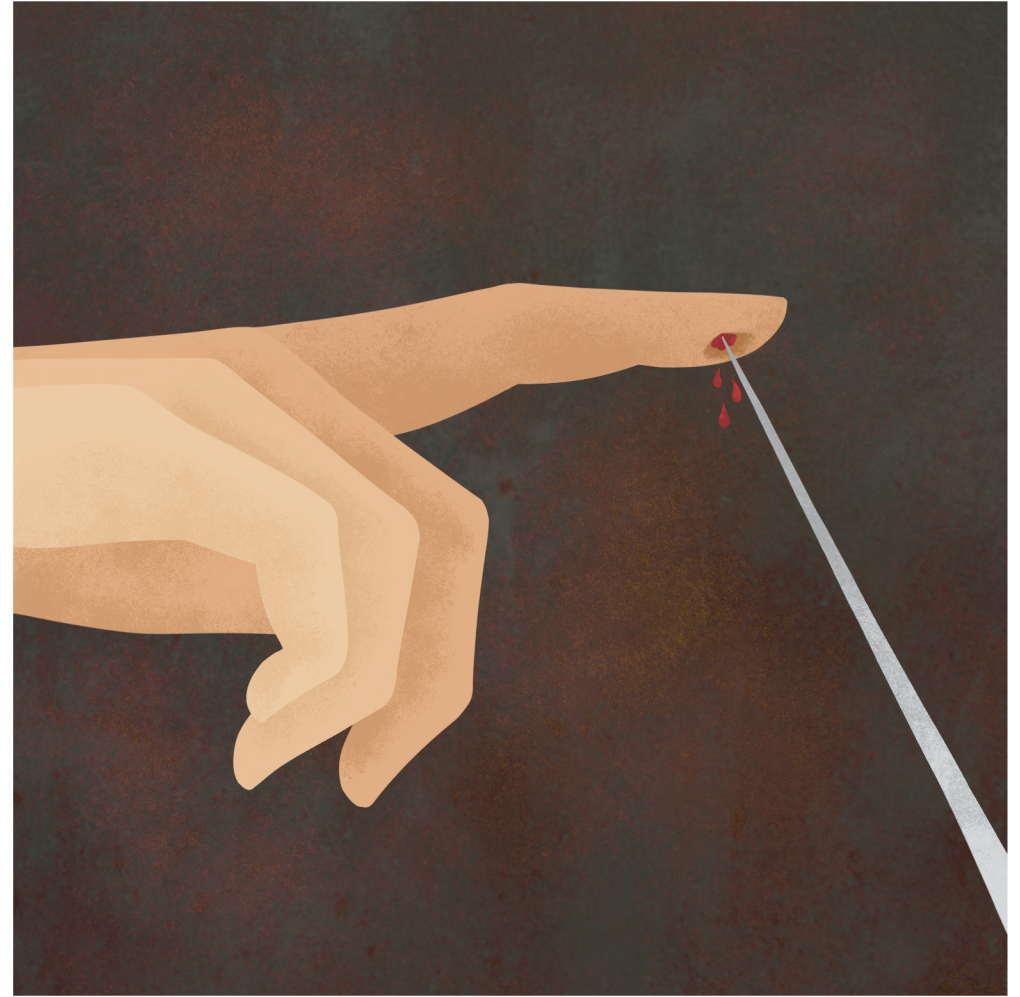
Over the years, the promises of the fairies came true -- one by one. The Princess grew to be beautiful, modest, kind and clever. Everyone who saw her could not help but love her.



The King and Queen wanted to stop the curse placed on the Princess and commanded that all the spindles in the whole kingdom should be hidden. No one told the Princess of the curse as they did not want her to worry.



On the morning of her fifteenth birthday, the Princess awoke early, she realised everyone else still slept, so she wandered the castle until she came to a spiral staircase where she could see a curious object at the top.



"What is the thing that whirls round so merrily?" thought the Princess and she took the spindle and tried to spin it too. But she had barely touched the spindle when it pricked her finger.



Instantly the Princess fell into a deep sleep. The King, Queen and servants had all started their morning routines, and right in the midst of them fell asleep too. The horses fell asleep in the stable and the doves on the roof.



Round the castle a hedge of brier roses began to grow. Every year it grew higher around the sleeping castle. Many men heard tale of this castle and tried to rescue sleeping beauty, but the thorns would not let them pass.



Exactly, hundred years later, a handsome prince was passing through the forest and heard an old man tell the tale of the castle and the sleeping beauty inside. He decided to go and try and rescue the Princess.



Now the hundred years were just ended. When the Prince approached the brier hedge it was covered with beautiful large roses. The shrubs made way for him of their own accord and let him pass unharmed.



The Prince explored the castle and finally reached the tower where the Princess slept. She looked so beautiful that he was instantly in love. He bent down and kissed her. As he touched her, Sleeping Beauty woke up and smiled up at him.



Throughout the castle, everyone and everything woke up and looked at each other with astonished eyes. Within the month, the Prince and Sleeping Beauty were married and lived happily all their lives.