

## Short Story

A gust of wind blew in through the window; the stained, wool curtains fluttered stiffly as moonlight shone in like sunrays lighting the small, unfortunate room. A little girl woke up, eyes wide with apprehension. Annoyed by the unpleasant cold, she rolled over in her red, plaid pajamas and tried falling back to sleep. As nightly tradition, the crazy old man who lived across the street began shouting random words out his window. Sighing, she shivered and rolled over to the other side of the bed. She had been dreaming her favorite dream and wanted to return to the world she loved. She knew dreams were far better than reality. Eyes closed, her mind drifted from her alcoholic mother to her abusive father, then far away her thoughts wandered forever in the dark. In her mind, the dresser faded into green pasture, her bed disappeared into smoke, the walls sinking into the dirt. Everything became fuzzy until the entire bedroom transformed. Suddenly she stepped, again, onto the fresh, dewy grass she called home. Her head snapped up impatiently to witness the stunning vision of a luxurious stone castle shining in the dark. The edges of her tiny, pale-pink lips exploded into a wide grin. Here she was wanted. Here she was princess. She couldn't believe in fairy tales when she awoke, but while she slept she couldn't help but become part of an unreal fantasy.

She ran along the side of the stone covered walkway until she reached a pair of great, wooden doors. Her plaid pajamas had transformed into a small, purple silk nightgown, which rippled like waves against her tiny legs. Slowing down, she strode confidently up to the three night guards who stood steadfastly in they're steel uniforms, but with eyes scarcely open. Murmuring a good evening, the guards started at her voice, but relaxed at the sight of the innocent child. She grinned at them, dimples forming in the middle of her cheeks. Each guard smiled warmly, shifting so they could create a path through they're giant-like statures. One turned and opened the door. "Princess Sarah." He spoke with esteem. "Thank you, Sir." She said cheerfully.

Sarah darted swiftly to her dressing room, heaving open the large armoire door. She gazed greedily at the continuous rows of dresses, each more beautiful than the last. Her eyes glistened in the radiance of the moon as she snatched a purple gown from the rack and promptly shrugged it on. Grinning to herself, she glided her hands along the silk, smoothing out each unnoticeable wrinkle. Sarah glided out the door heading towards the Kings quarters. Turning into the hall she ran into a blur of bright blonde and blue. He smiled warmly, chuckling to himself as Sarah's shocked face turned into a smile. It was the young prince's friend who visited the castle many times a month. Happy to see him, she gathered him into a hug. "Adrian, what are you doing out so late?" She questioned. One of her eyebrows raised into an inquiring expression. Adrian laughed, "I couldn't sleep. I was just on my way to the gardens." Sarah's eyes lit up. "Oh, can I join you?" He smiled and nodded.

They slowly strolled through the deserted stone halls towards the castle gardens. Sarah felt as though her world was beginning to twirl as she conversed with Adrian, her tiny heart tingled with happiness. They found a vast opening in the garden with a grand fountain in the center. To one side, a beautifully engraved bench was placed elegantly between vegetation that twined around it. Adrian amused her with silly games he had learned from the courtyard guards, who had the reputation to be quite childish. These were the only times Sarah enjoyed herself to this extent. As she laughed and giggled at Adrian's jokes her head became fuzzy and cold. Her dresser emerged by the fountain, a bed formed underneath her legs, walls lifting out from the dirt. She was awake. The thin covers continued to let the wind through its minuscule threads. Beginning to cry, Sarah glanced at the watch on her makeshift, plywood nightstand. It was time to climb out of bed and begin her day.

This dream continued for years until her 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. This world she lived in while she slept was one that gave her a real family and a kind of happiness she had never known. Disappointed and confused, Sarah had no other place to turn to when she felt so out of place or hurt.

## Five Years Later

It was growing late when Sarah could finally drive home from the campus library. Her favorite part of the day was when she could scurry to her 1984 Honda, Civic she named Fred, and go home to bed. The crazy old man across the street from her former house gave it to her as a graduation present. It was the only present she had gotten in her entire life and she treasured it for that reason alone. 'The rust sort of blends in with the burgundy color.' She would say to friends who made sly comments about her vehicle. Sarah wasn't proud of Fred's appearance, but she was grateful not to be taking the city bus along side the many drug-addicts.

The sun slowly drew a blanket over its golden face, setting the earth in a state of darkness. Coming close to her apartment, her car began to shake viciously, and then it stalled. Unable to start Fred again, she put it in neutral. Pushing it to the side of the road, she lifted the emergency break. She would have to walk from here. As Sarah scaled the stairs to her room she realized how sleepy she had become in the past few minutes. After unlocking the door she flung it open, the hinges flying off and the door landing in the center of the shabby hall with a 'THUD'. Shouts and cries poured from the surrounding rooms. Ignoring the commotion, she picked up the thin door and shoved it back in place. Sarah slumped her way to the bedroom and dragged on the closest pair of pajamas. After crawling into bed, she fell asleep only too quickly.

It seemed she hadn't even closed her eyes when the dresser faded into green pasture, her bed disappeared into smoke, and the walls sunk without warning, into the dirt. Everything became fuzzy until the entire bedroom transformed. Unexpectedly, she felt dewy grass under her feet. Her jaw dropped with awe and wonder and she slowly raised her head in disbelief. Eyes wide, she couldn't soak in the aroma enough. The

stunning vision of a luxurious stone castle twinkled in the daylight. Her open mouth burst into a wide grin. She lifted her arms above her head in glee and began shouting and jumping in extreme joy. Even if for only a night, she was more than happy to reunite her old fantasy life.

Hearing her loud cries of delight, courtiers and other folks came to see what had happened. Many of them came to ask her who she thought she was, coming onto the King's land so inappropriately. Looking down, Sarah was wearing a purple, silk nightgown. Many times she had appeared in pajamas, but no one had been aware of her presence. She apologized and told them her name and explained that she was looking to speak with the king, prince or a close family friend. "Ah! Alas I recognize you my dear, dear girl!" A middle-aged woman dressed elegantly spoke with tears in her eyes. Walking closer to Sarah, she took her hand and grasped it tightly. "You are the princess who has been lost these long five years." Her voice shook with joyful sincerity. "You know who I am?" Sarah stood in awe at her remembrance. "It is those beautiful eyes and your golden hair that shook something inside of me, but I knew at once by the sound of your voice. It has the same mysterious sadness that sung in your voice your entire childhood." The woman told her. Sarah felt terribly that she could not remember her name or who she was. "Are you sure this is her, Bessie?" A man came up to them and gazed at Sarah with amazing skepticism. "Oh! Dear, I forgot who you were!" Sarah spoke with both sorrow and gratefulness. "You were the Lady who read to me at night because I could never sleep!" tears came to Sarah's eyes as she realized who she had been reunited with.

At this realization, the crowd that surrounded them all understood that Sarah was truly the long lost princess they had all mourned. "Princess," One woman spoke above the noise of the people. "The king should see you at once!" The throng exclaimed a round of hurrahs and led Sarah to the castle.

They walked in the front doors of the castle and headed towards the King, who was talking with a man from the village. As Sarah continued towards the King she noticed his conversation was jolly, laughing often at other's jokes. The crowd pushed her towards the King and one woman bowed to him. "Excuse me for disrupting, your grace, but you need to see something." Her voice was serious as she looked at the King with wide eyes. "Of course, if it is important." The King replied, excusing himself from his conversation. The woman came over to me and nudged me forwards.

"This is Sarah."

The King stood silent, taking in his surroundings. At first he looked confused, unsure of what the woman was meaning. Then he realized this was his daughter; I was his daughter. Tears began to stream down his face and he ran over to me, crushing me in a giant hug of bottled-away love. I sighed with joy.

“This reunion deserves a celebration!” The King shouted to the surrounding people. “Prepare the food! Put on your finest clothing! Tonight will be a night of bliss!” The entire group began buzzing around, the noise rose and I continued to smile.

Then a young man with exquisite dress walked into the room. His hair blonde, his eyes their bright blue as the day she met him. It was Adrian. A look of confusion covered his face as he gazed around the bustling room until his eyes fell on Sarah. His jaw dropped. He zoomed towards her and tackled her in a massive hug.

“Sarah! Oh, I have missed you so!” Adrian exclaimed. She grinned with delight as she hugged him back. Coming away from each other, he grabbed her hand. “I have to show you something.” He said, dragging her out of the room. “I didn’t know if you would ever come back, but I always hoped you would.” He explained as they walked.

Adrian stopped in the garden. The same garden when she last dreamt with him. “I’m not sure what you will say, but…” he cut off, still holding my hand. He knelt down on one knee. My jaw dropped. “Will you marry me?” his voice was smooth. I almost missed the shake in his breath.

She didn’t know what to say. If this was a dream, it was the best dream she could think of. What else would she want?

“Yes! Of course!” She giggled as he picked her up and swung her around. The garden swirled around her. Sarah was relieved she hadn’t disappeared when her feet hit the ground again. She didn’t know how long they had been standing their smiling and talking, but it soon began to get dark. They gasped and hurried to the castle to get changed for the celebration. “I’ll announce it tonight.” Adrian whispered before she left to her room.

Sarah opened the doors to her dresses and slipped out a light shiny turquoise gown that modestly flowed to her feet. She slid on a pair of matching turquoise slippers. Smiling gleefully, she sashayed into it and put her hair up into a curly bouquet of golden locks. Pleased with the way she looked, Sarah walked out of the room and towards the banquet hall.

Entering the room, she saw silhouettes of dancers playing tag along the walls. A courtier greeted her as she walked towards the King. His jolly aura sent waves of delight bouncing from face to face around the room, creating an atmosphere of pure enjoyment. Sarah curtsied at the Kings feet and looked up to him with a huge grin. “Welcome, my dear! Go! Have fun tonight!” He said shoing her into the crowd. Sarah walked away and began talking to a few ladies.

“Ladies and Gentlemen,” A strong voice came from the back of the room. Sarah swiveled to see who it was. Adrian stood tall and handsome against the beige tapestries on the castle walls “Tonight we celebrate the return of a very beloved young lady, who was greatly missed. Cheers to Sarah!” The crowd cheered and clinked glasses together. “Ladies and gentlemen, I have one more announcement to share. In my joy and excitement I am proud to inform you that our Princess Sarah has agreed to be my bride. We are getting married!” Hollering at the surrounding people, Adrian jumped from where he was standing and walked quickly and gracefully towards Sarah, enfolding her in a smothering hug and kissing her on the cheek lovingly.

”I love you.” He whispered.

Sarah gasped with pure joy and looked back at him smiling. Her vision unfocused, making everything around her become incoherently fuzzy. The party tables faded into wall hangings, the many dancing guests smoked into standing lamps and a dresser, a bed materializing underneath her and walls lifted out of the floor. “I love you too.” She spoke, suddenly full of sorrow and despair. Was she going crazy? Even if she was it didn’t matter, these dreams were the only part of life she enjoyed.

Sarah looked at the alarm clock on her bedside table. 9:45 AM. Rolling her eyes she had no desire to try to sleep again. It was Saturday. No work. She got up, still upset with leaving her lovely dream world.

After she had showered she got dressed into lazy-day clothing and curled in front of her 9-inch television set with two separate bowls of chocolate and fruit. While she sat, there was a knock on her door, which almost made the whole door fall over. Sarah got up curiously, but slightly annoyed to be bothered on her day off.

Opening the old, wooden door there was a young man: blonde and dressed quite well for this day in age. Sarah gasped. There, before her stood a man who looked identical to her fiancé, Adrian in her dream land. He looked shocked at her appearance but seemly happy at his discovery. She choked back her tears; truly she must be going crazy.

“Yes?” She asked, holding the door in place to keep it from falling to the floor. He chuckled; bringing one arm up to his head to brush his hair back uncomfortably.

“Hey, I live about 523 miles from here and you might think I’m crazy, but I have to just ask you.”

Sarah stared at him completely confused.

“Alright, go for it.”

He cleared his throat. “I have been having these wild dreams for my entire life. And you have been in them a lot. Ahh... what I mean to say, is your name Sarah?”

Unable to speak, she nodded, her heart beating faster each moment that he stood there.

“Really? I am so surprised. Maybe it’s a fluke but I have this feeling that we have a connection. Oh, I’m so sorry. I must be freaking you out. I’ll go now.” He turned around and began to sulk down the hall.

“Wait!” Sarah shouted. He turned looking at her, his eyes filled with hope. “Is your name Adrian?” She asked him. He smiled. She ran down the hall towards him. “What is the last thing you remember? Don’t worry about being crazy.” She insisted.

“I love you. That is the last thing I remember.” He said shyly, looking intensely into her eyes. She grinned wilder than she had ever in any of the dreams. “I love you, too. That’s mine.”

“I knew it was you! It had to be!” He gathered her into a gigantic, breath-taking hug. “I must be insane,” he said. “But I brought this with me.” He took out a ring from his pocket. “You’re my best friend, Sarah, you always have been. Will you marry me?”

Sarah didn’t even think, “Yes, for real this time.”

THE END