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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Fairy Sleeping Beauty

Once upon a time, two little fairies from Magic Land ventured out into the wide world. Thistledown was dressed in green, with a purple cloak and a beautiful feather in his hat; he was truly a handsome little elf. But in Magic Land, they didn't like him very much; because he, just like the flower, the Thistle, from which his name came, had many flaws and sharp thorns were hidden beneath his beautiful clothes. He was lazy, selfish, and mean.

His friend Lily-Bell was completely different from him, for she was so kind and friendly that everyone loved her. She usually spent her time fixing the damage caused by the naughty Thistledown with his mischief. That's why she followed him today, because she was afraid he would get into trouble. They flew side by side over hills and valleys until they arrived at a beautiful garden.

"I'm tired and thirsty," said Thistledown. "Let's rest here and see what kind of fun we can have."

"Dear Thistledown, be kind to these flowers and don't tease them. See how they spread their petals to give us a resting place, how they offer us their



honey to eat, and their dew to wash us. It would be very ugly of us not to treat them well after such a warm welcome," Lily-Bell replied, as she lay down herself to take a nap. Thistledown laughed and then he took the honey from the violets and shook the purple bells vigorously to get all their dew for his bath. Then he crumpled up a lot of leaves before he had a bed to his liking, and after a short nap, he was already awake again and went out to have some fun. He scared away birds, tore down spider webs, and stole from the bees. Finally, he came to a very lovely rose bush, with one rose in full bloom and a bud.

"Little rosebud, why do you grow so slowly? You are now too old to stay rocking in your green cradle. Come out and play with me," said Thistledown, and he climbed up the bush, ready to cause even more mischief.

"No, my bud is not strong enough to be exposed to sun and air," replied the rose mother, bending over her baby while all her red petals trembled with fear, because the wind had told her how much harm this naughty elf had already done in the garden.

"Foolish little flower, waiting so long," cried Thistledown and he pulled the bud open so roughly that all the petals broke and fell to the ground.

"It was my first and only bud, and I was so happy and proud of it. Now you have destroyed it, and I am alone," sighed the mother, while her tears fell like raindrops. Thistledown was ashamed, but he didn't want to say he was sorry, and flew away until the clouds gathered and a heavy rainstorm came. Then he hurried to the tulips to find shelter, assured that they would let him in,

because he had praised their beautiful colors and they were vain flowers. But when he stood there soaking wet begging to be let in, they laughed and shook their broad leaves until the drops fell even harder than the rain. "Go away, nasty elf! We don't know you and we don't want to let you in," they shouted.

"So what! The daisies will gladly give shelter to such a handsome elf as I," said Thistledown, as he flew down to the little flowers in the grass.

But all the little leaves were tightly closed, and he knocked in vain; for even the daisies had heard of his tricks and didn't want to take any chances. He tried with the buttercups and dandelions, the violets, lilies, and honeysuckle, but no one let him in.

"No one wants to be my friend and now I will suffer in the cold. If only I had listened to Lily-Bell, then I could be somewhere warm and safe like her," sighed Thistledown, as he shivered in the rain.

"I don't have a bud to protect anymore so you can come in," said a soft voice above him; and when he looked up, Thistle saw that he was under the rose bush. Although sad and ashamed, the elf was happy to take advantage of the warm shelter among the red petals, and the rose mother held him close to her heart, where no rain or chill wind could reach him. But when she thought he was sleeping, she sighed so sadly over her lost child that Thistle couldn't rest and only had sad dreams. Soon the sun started shining again and Lily-Bell went to look for her friend; but he was ashamed to see her and slipped away. When the flowers told Lily-Bell about all the mischief, she was very sad and tried to

comfort them. She healed the wounded birds, helped the bees he had stolen from, and watered the poor rose bush until more buds sprouted from its stem. When they were all happy again, she went to find Thistle and left the garden full of grateful friends.

Meanwhile, Thistle was invited to eat in a bee hive by a friendly bee one day, and the elf loved it in that beautiful little house, with floors of white wax, walls of golden honeycomb, and the air full of flower scent. It was bustling: some collected food in small cells, some cleaned, some cared for the eggs and fed the young bees, and others served the Queen.

"Do you want to stay here and work with us? Here, no one is lazy and this is a much happier life than playing all day," said Gonzer, the friendly bee.

"I hate working," answered lazy Thistle and didn't want to do anything.

Then they said he should leave. That made him angry and he went to some bees he had made dissatisfied with his descriptions of a lazy life and said to them: "Come, let's celebrate and have fun. It's not



winter yet, and in the summer, you don't have to work. Come, let's be cheerful while those busybodies are gone, and the nannies take care of the little ones in the cells."

Then he brought those lazy bees as a band of thieves into the hive. First, they locked the Queen in her royal chamber so she couldn't do anything. Then they chased away the poor housekeepers, scared the little bees terribly, and stole all the food. They stayed as long as they dared, and made sure they were gone before the workers returned and found their beautiful beehive destroyed.

"What fun we had," said Thistle as he went to hide in a big forest where he thought the angry bees wouldn't find him.

Here, he made friends with a cheerful fly, and they had a lot of fun. For a while, Thistle did no harm and could have had a happy time if he hadn't quarreled with his friend over a little fish. Thistle had been very mean to the fish and the fly didn't like it. He said he would tell the Forest Spirits.

"I'm not afraid of anything," answered Thistle. "They can't harm me."

But in reality, he was very afraid, and as soon as the fly went to sleep that night, he called a big ugly spider and asked the spider to wrap the fly up completely so that he couldn't move a leg or wing. Now he couldn't tell the Forest Spirits anything!

But the Forest Spirits know everything that happens in their land. While Thistle was sleeping in a flower, they sent a message through the wind that Thistle should be held captive until they arrived. The purple petals closed around the sleeping elf, and when he woke up, he couldn't get out. Then he knew how the poor fly must have felt and wished he hadn't been so unkind. But it

was too late because soon the Forest Spirits came, and they tied his wings with strong blades of grass and said as they led him away:

"You do so much harm that we will hold you captive until you repent, because in this beautiful world, no one can live unless they are kind and good. Here you have time to think about your deeds and learn to be a better elf."

So they locked him in a large crevice in the rock where there was no light except for one small ray, and there sat poor Thistle, lonely and longing to be free again, sighing over all the pleasant things he had lost. Slowly he stopped crying and said to himself, "Perhaps if I am patient and cheerful, even in this dark hole, the Forest Spirits will set me free." So he began to sing, and the more he sang, the better he felt; for the sunbeam shone brighter and the days grew shorter.

All that time, Lily-Bell searched for him and found his trail through the mischief he had done. But Lily-Bell first helped all of his victims get back on their feet. Then she went on to look for him and was very curious where he could be. She would never have found him if he hadn't sung so loudly. There in the sun, flowers shot up and looked at him with happy faces, while fresh green moss crept up along the sides of the rock, as if it wanted to join in the concert too. When Lily-Bell arrived at this lovely spot, she thought there was a party going on because the birds sang, the flowers danced, and even the old rock looked cheerful. When they saw her, the birds stopped singing and the flowers stopped dancing, so she could hear a sad voice singing.

"Where are you?" she cried and flew up among the flowers; for she could see no opening in the rock, and could not understand where the voice came from. She got no answer, for Thistle could not hear her, so she sang back.

Then a pair of arms stretched out through the narrow opening, and all the little flowers danced with joy at finding Thistle. He told Lily-Bell that he was sorry for all his mischievousness, and she decided to go and seek the Forest Spirits and ask if he might come out of the rock.

Thistle waited a long time for her return, but she did not come back, and he cried so terribly hard that the Forest Spirits came and took him out.

"Everything is all right with Lily-Bell, but she is in an enchanted sleep from which she will not awaken until you bring us the following things: a golden magic wand from the Earth Nymphs, a sunshine cloak from the Air Spirits, and a diamond crown from the Water Nymphs. This is a difficult task, for you have no friends to help you. But if you really love Lily-Bell, then you must be patient, brave, and kind in order to succeed. And then she will awaken."

Then the Forest Spirits brought him to a green tent, and inside it, stretched out on a bed of moss, was Lily-Bell in a deep sleep, just like Sleeping Beauty.

"I'll do it!" said Thistledown, and he flew away.

"The flowers will probably be best acquainted with the Earth Spirits, I'll ask them," he thought and began his investigation at every clover or buttercup he saw, at

every wild violet or dandelion he came across. But they all refused to answer him. They all remembered his rough treatment of them before and shied away.

"I will go to the rose, I believe she is my friend, for she has forgiven me and sheltered me when the others left me in the cold," said Thistledown, a little afraid to ask a flower he had hurt so much for a favor. But when he came into the garden, the rose mother welcomed him warmly and proudly showed him the large family of buds growing on her stem.

"I will trust and help you because I love Lily-Bell," she said.

"Ah!" he thought to himself, "if I had only been kind, like Lily-Bell, then everyone would love me and trust me and be happy to help me. I must do my best to show them that I am sorry, then they will believe me and tell me how to find the crown."

At night, when the flowers slept, he watered them. He sang lullabies for restless young birds and carefully covered the little flowers under leaves so the dew could not harm their beautiful petals. He rocked the smallest buds to sleep when they became impatient before it was time to bloom. He made sure that aphids could not damage the young flower petals.

The rose was always kind to him, and when the other plants were curious who was doing all these kindnesses, the rose said: "That's Thistle. He has changed so much that we can trust him. During the day he hides because no one is kind to him, but at night he works, or he sits alone sighing and crying so sadly that I cannot sleep from pity."

Then they answered, "We will love him and help him for Lily-Bell's sake."

They called him over and said they wanted to be friends with him, and he was overjoyed that they had forgiven him. But he didn't forget his mission, and when he told the flowers about it, they called Donsrug the mole and asked him to show Thistle where the Earth Nymphs lived. He thanked the friendly flowers and followed the mole underground.

"Here they are, now you can go on alone, have a safe journey!" said Donsrug as he crawled away, because he loved the darkness the most.

Thistle arrived at a great hall made of jewels, shining like the sun, and a multitude of nymphs danced here like fireflies to the music of silver bells.

One of the nymphs came to him and asked why he was there, and when he told her, Shimmer said: "You must work for us if you want to earn the golden wand."

"What must I do?" asked Thistle.

"All sorts of things," answered Shimmer. "Some of us guard the roots of the flowers and keep them warm and safe. Others collect drops and make springs that then gush out of the rocks, where people drink the fresh water with joy. Others dig for diamonds and help miners find gold and silver hidden in dark places. Can you be happy here and faithfully do all these things?"

"Yes, for Lily-Bell, I can do anything," said Thistle bravely. It was hard and boring for the cheerful little elf, who loved light and air, to live like a mole in the earth. And often he was very sad and tired and longed to spread his wings and take a rest. But he didn't, and

finally Shimmer said: "Now you've done enough. Here is the golden wand and as many jewels as you desire." But Thistle only wanted the wand, and he hurried back up into the sunshine, as fast as he could climb, eager to show the Forest Spirits how well he had kept his word. They were glad to see him again and told him to rest. But he had no patience to wait, and after a look at Lily-Bell, who was still sound asleep, he flew off to find the Air Nymphs.

No one seemed to know where they lived, and Thistle became desperate. But then he suddenly remembered that he had heard Gonzer the bee talking about these nymphs at their first meeting.

"I dare not go to the beehive," he said, "because the bees would kill me, as I have done them so much harm. Perhaps they will forgive me, like the flowers, if I first show them that I am sorry."

So he went to a clover field and worked hard until he had gathered two jars of sweet honey. He left them by the door of the hive when no one was looking and then hid in an apple tree. The bees were very pleased and surprised, because every day two jars stood by the door, filled with such delicious honey that they only used it for the Queen and her royal children.

"It must be from a good nymph who knows how hard we've had it this summer and who wants to help us fill our cells before the frost comes. If we find out who it is, we will thank the kind giver warmly," said the grateful bees.

"Ha, ha! I think we'll become friends if I keep this up," laughed Thistle, and had a lot of fun in his hiding place among the leaves.

After that, he not only left honey, but also flowering herbs, berries, and bags full of flower pollen for their bread.

He helped the ants carry their heavy loads, helped the field mice with their harvest, and chased the flies away from the peacefully grazing cows in the meadows. No one saw him, but everyone loved the invisible benefactor who did so much good. But eventually he was caught, just as he was covering a sickly little lizard with a thick leaf, like a woolen blanket.

"Look! There's that naughty Thistle!" the bees cried, and they were about to sting him to death.

"No!" cried an old cricket, who had kept the secret until now. "He is a good boy now and helps us all. Put away your stingers, and shake his hand before he flies away and hides again."

The bees could hardly believe it at first, but they were willing to make friends. When they heard what Thistle was looking for, they sent Gonzer to show him the way to the Cloud Land, where the Air Spirits lived.

They were busy flying back and forth like specks of dust in a sunbeam. Some polished the stars so they would shine brightly in the evening, some drew up water from rivers and lakes to later pour it down as rain or dew on the earth. Others wove brightly shining fabrics to decorate dark walls, illuminate budding plants, and clothe all the inhabitants of the sky.

Thistle asked for the mantle of sunshine.

"First, you must help us," the weavers replied.

Thistle worked hard. His favorite job was shaking sweet dreams from the dream tree onto little children in their beds, and suddenly shooting bright strong rays of light into dark rooms to cheer up the sad or sick. Sometimes he rode on a raindrop to the earth, like a little waterman, sprinkling the dusty road, or watering a thirsty plant. He helped the winds deliver messages and carry flower seeds to lonely places, to grow and bloom there as a nice surprise for whoever might find them. It was a busy and happy life, and he enjoyed it. And soon he had earned the mantle.

"Now one more test, then she will awaken," said the Forest Spirits, very pleased.

"I'm sure I'll find this one very unpleasant, because I'm not a friend of water, but I'll do my best," Thistle replied, and floated away to the forest, where he followed a stream until he came to the little lake where he used to play with the fly. As he was thinking about how he could find the Water Nymphs, he heard weak cries for help, and soon found a small frog lying on the moss with a broken leg.

"I wanted to jump, but a mean child stepped on me and now I'm here, between the stones. I'm thirsty for water, but I can't get there myself," sighed the frog.

Thistle didn't really want to pick up the clammy creature, but when he remembered how unkind he had been to the fly before, he put the poor little frog on a bed of oak leaves and tended to its injured leg. The frog grew bored and Thistle made a boat.

Then they floated around all day and Hop, the frog, got better so quickly that he could dive off and row a bit with his forepaws, or float and use his healthy leg as a rudder. Thistle had told him about the Water Spirits, but Hop didn't know where they were.

But then a fish popped its head up and said, "I know where the Water Spirits live, and to help our dear Lily-Bell, I will show you where that is."

Thistle followed the little fish deeper into the lake, until they reached a strange palace of red coral on the sea floor. Colorful shells decorated the walls and covered the floors, while graceful seaweed grew in the white sand and piles of pearls were scattered about. The Water Nymphs, dressed in blue, drifted here and there, or lay sleeping on beds of foam, swayed by the motion of the waves. They gathered around the stranger and offered him all kinds of treasures, but he did not accept them and instead told them what he needed.

Then little Pearl, the sweetest of the nymphs, said: "You must help the coral workers until the branches of their tree reach the air, for we need a new island. It is tedious work, but until it is done, we cannot give you the crown." Thistle hurried to the coral tree, where hundreds of little creatures built one cell upon another until the white tree spread wide and high in the blue water. It was indeed tedious work, and the poor gnome was afraid of the strange monsters that swam around him, staring at him with their big eyes or gaping at him with their big mouths, as if they wanted to devour him. The sun did not shine there in the depths, only a faint twilight, and the air seemed full of storms as the

waves rolled above them and sometimes brought driftwood. Sea flowers did not smell, there were no other birds except flying fish, and in the distance were seagulls. Thistle longed for light and air, but he remained patient and worked diligently. Finally, the tree protruded above the water, and the task was completed. "You may leave. Here is the crown. Farewell, farewell," said Pearl. When he arrived in the forest, he saw the Forest Spirits hurrying to meet him.

Lily-Bell lay with the mantle of sunshine around her and the golden wand in her hand, waiting for the crown and the kiss that would awaken her from her deep sleep. Thistle gave her both, and when she opened her eyes and stretched her arms toward him, he was the happiest being in the world. The Forest Nymphs told her what he had done and how he had learned to be gentle, faithful, and good. "You may have the crown, for you have worked so hard to get it, and I will wear a flower wreath," said Lily-Bell, so happy and proud that she wanted nothing else. "Keep your crown, dear Lily-Bell, for here are friends who have come to bring Thistle his reward," said the Forest Nymphs, pointing to a group of Earth Spirits who were crawling between the mossy roots of an old tree with a crown. Shimmer brought a golden wand, and the Air Spirits floated in with a mantle of sunshine as their gift. And the Water Nymphs brought a crown. As they placed it on his head, they all joined hands and danced around the couple, calling out in their sweet voices: "Thistle and Lily-Bell! Long live our King and Queen!"