

AWAKE, SLEEPING BEAUTY!

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I've been thinking this morning about the Sleeping Beauty, with a spiritual twist.

We were told not to touch the spinning wheel or we'd die, stay AWAY from the spinning wheel! But even knowing that our curiosity caused us to touch it and prick our finger. So the King said, "Okay, at great price to the Prince and me, while I can't remove the death spell I can change it so that instead of dying you'll fall asleep until the Prince awakens you."

So one day our Prince comes and wakes us. He stands by us, declaring his love and promising to forever take care of us. "Please love me," he begs passionately, "return my kiss and I'll marry you and we'll live happily ever after." He aches for us to see his love and trust him, *choose* him and break the spell.

And we look at him, at his good and loving and generous face, and remember how the legends tell us he's not good, but grouchy and fussy and will punish us if we do something wrong. We remember what the servants said, that we'll live a life of service, because while the Prince SAYS he loves us what he REALLY wants are servants. Sure, after we serve him a hundred years we're rewarded, but only if we do a good job. We've heard how he's strict and if we do anything wrong he's angry. The others have chosen not to kiss the Prince but to just live in his castle, because they fear him. But by living in the castle they feel safe, they can live and participate in castle life, escaping the hardships that come outside the castle. Will the Prince ever find one who will choose to marry him?

Why can't the servants see how loving and brave and kind the Prince is? After all, they live in his castle! But, while the Prince has an open-door policy where they can come to him anytime, they prefer the servant's quarters, they're busy you know, doing castle stuff, and if they don't do a good job the Prince will be angry. And the Prince is VERY important, they're quite in awe of him, and why would he care about spending time with them (in spite of what he says)? And, because they rarely are with the Prince they continue believing the stories of his anger and desire for collecting more servants. And because the stories have been around so long they must be true. So the strong, brave-hearted, kind Prince continues looking for the

one who wants to be his wife, his princess. By now he has acquired a whole castle-full of servants, will anyone ever choose Him?

Of course my little fairy tale is just an overall picture, but it's made me think. I, too, fell for the rumors, at first believing that all the Prince wanted was servants. Sure he cares and provides for his servants, but it's servants that he's really looking for. It may be disguised as love but the word "love" is just a different word for "servant." But one day as I worked in the castle I glanced up and saw the Prince looking at me. And instead of bustling off in my busyness I caught his eye, and what I saw changed everything. Looking deep into his heart I saw love, not servanthood. I saw his deep desire to have me love him back. I saw that what the castle servants were chattering about wasn't the truth, that he wasn't waiting to punish me, scold me, or have me serve, but that all he wanted was for me to choose him as my Prince and love him back. And I wasn't scared or doubtful anymore about choosing him, because I had seen, and seeing was knowing.

I'll never go back to being a servant, scurrying around the castle looking for things to do, avoiding the Prince unless it's at the weekly meeting when the servants all gather to parcel out the list of the next week's duties. I'm no longer interested in trying to earn the Prince's favor by being the hardest-working servant in the castle. I can no longer believe that all the Prince wants is a castle full of servants, because I've seen his heart, and it's for me, and it's for all of his kingdom. His anger, when it appears, is beautiful in its purity, because it's an anger towards actions that destroy. This Prince's heart is made of gold, there is no place in it that isn't love. Because of that his frustrations are born out of his love, towards the actions of those who would hurt others and not just because he's in a bad mood or tired or mad at people or can't wait to point out what you've done wrong.

This last month, as I'm living in the castle with the Prince and working alongside him, I got distracted. There have been times he has wanted to relax with me and stroll in the gardens, or when he's wanted to sit by the roaring fire with me, putting our feet up and hearing each other's heart. And without realizing it I've reverted back to my servant mentality, thinking about all that needs to be done in the kingdom. Then, instead of enjoying my Prince I'm too tired, or too busy planning out my latest kingdom project. I forget that my first love is my Prince, and that if I keep HIM my focus then everything else will fall easily into place.

Lately he has begun to woo me back into that place of love. He's never harsh or critical or lecturing, but he just tenderly and laughingly reminds me that we're a team, a partnership, so remember to walk WITH him instead of running off on my own with my good ideas I label as his. For example, one night he spoke to me as I slept, saying "Books are Martha." I woke, knowing instantly it was my Prince whispering to me, and after writing it down I lay and thought about what he was saying. It didn't take long, and it wasn't that he doesn't like books.

As I've mentioned many times in the past, I eat breakfast each morning with my Prince, and it's a time where we just share our hearts. Sometimes it's in the castle garden (my front porch), or on our loveseat in our private sitting room (my futon in my office), or it may be in the castle dining room (my office at the small table by the window). BUT, a while back I got a women's book of daily readings, and I'm totally enjoying it. It's encouraging, great food for thought, and pure pleasure. A while back I realized that it's much easier to read while I eat than write in my notebook, so I started reading while I ate, then having my Prince time after that while I finished my tea. Over time my reading has encroached on my Prince-time so much that by the time I'm finished eating I'm ready to jump and run. And my Prince was feeling left out.

When he said to me "Books are Martha" he was referring to the Biblical story of Mary and Martha, where Martha fussed to Jesus that she was doing all the work while Mary was sitting and listening to him. His response was that, while Martha wasn't wrong, Mary had chosen the better part. When my Prince spoke to me in the night he WASN'T saying that reading is wrong, he was just reminding me that I was letting my reading distract me from spending time with him. He didn't say it in a condemning way (the Prince is never condemning and harsh, in spite of what the servants think) but he was gently reminding me that while my book was *good* it wasn't the same as being with him. I didn't have to give up my book of daily pleasure, but now I don't read it at breakfast anymore. And I've realized that ANYTHING that takes us away from spending direct time with him is a "Martha." Other things are good but they shouldn't take the place of our time with our Prince.

A few weeks later I had an interesting dream, where, while in the woods talking to a young boy I pulled out my chapstick and put some on. The boy noticed that under the cap of my chapstick was a digital clock, built into the top of the tube, and he was fascinated by it, saying "If I had one like that I would always know what time

it was!" The next morning I thought about that dream, as in, if my Prince was speaking to me what might he be saying? I thought about what chapstick represents, and when I think of lips I think of kissing, which to me is a representation of intimacy, and I equate that with my relationship with my Prince. I followed that thought like this: "So chapstick represents intimacy and it has a clock attached. YIKES! My time with my Prince comes with a clock attached!"

I thought how I always come to spend time with the Prince in an allotted time frame (because afterwards I'm going to bed/going to write/going to do chores/starting my day). The point isn't to have unlimited time, that's unrealistic, but to come to my time (however short it is) ready to relax and enjoy time together instead of my head buzzing with busy stuff.

And then I thought of something else, something that caused me to burst out laughing with an "Oh no!" About a week before that I had discovered a wonderful app for my phone that was a timer, with lovely chiming bells announcing the beginning and end. So I'd set up "preset" timers for both my breakfast and one I designated "God" for my time alone with him. My intimacy DEFINITELY came with a clock attached!

Again, the Prince didn't lecture or fuss, he just laughingly reminded me that he loves me and wants time with me, time to relax and not have my mind on the clock.

Last Thursday I ate the last of my breakfast cookies. That is tragic for me. I usually alternate between chocolate-chip croissants and fancy cookies, like Pepperidge Farm Milanos (raspberry or double dark chocolate). Currently, with our business, there isn't money for fancy cookies. I thought, as I enjoyed the last of my cookies, how I'd have to resort to (ouch) unappealing breakfasts like oatmeal or grits. I like both of those, but not for breakfast. That afternoon my mother found an unopened pack of cookies that she gives as gifts at Christmas, and knowing how I love them she immediately insisted that I take them home.

So Friday I sat at my table in my office enjoying my cookies and thinking about all the cookie miracles I've had. So many times when I run out God quickly provides more. There was the time I got two boxes of cookies in the mail from my niece and the Christmas my sister-in-law arrived for the holiday bringing me cookies. As I sat during breakfast thanking the Prince for his thoughtfulness, he made the point that since he enjoys having breakfast with me OF COURSE he wants to keep me in

cookies! That had never entered my mind, I just thought how sweet he was providing my cookies because he knows how special they are too me, I had never thought about him wanting them so I would have breakfast with HIM! I was overwhelmed again by his love.

Servant? No. I'll take bride any day. I dare you, if you haven't lately, to stop what you're doing, look into his eyes and see his love. And when you do, you'll put the dishrag down, the list of phone calls to make away, and arm in arm with him you'll walk off into the garden. He has plenty of servants, that's the relationship they choose, but you make the better choice, and choose Him!

So kiss the Prince and wake up to the real life He has for you!