

Princess Sophia

Once upon a time there was a king and queen who had been married for many years. At long last a child was born to them and they named her Aurora Sophia, or Princess Sophie for short. To celebrate their very good fortune they decided to host an elaborate banquet after her naming ceremony. Among the many guests to be invited were the wise women of the realm who had the power to bestow upon the baby princess special gifts. There were, in fact, thirteen wise women but the king and queen had only twelve gold plates with which to serve and honour them, so they decided not to ask the thirteenth – but, she came anyway, uninvited.

At the feast each of the wise women conferred on the princess their gifts; intelligence, compassion, grace and so on. Then, the thirteenth wise woman came out of the shadows, causing a ripple to pass through the assembled guests. ‘My gift is the greatest of them all’, she said, her clear strong voice reverberating around the room. ‘On her thirteenth birthday the child will prick herself with a spindle and die.’ Led by the king, a great gasp passed through the banquet hall.

The very next day the king and queen decreed that every spindle in the realm and every object that could draw blood be destroyed. Great fires burned for weeks and in them all possibility that the thirteenth wise woman’s curse could come true, or so they thought.

In the years that followed Princess Sophie enjoyed a happy childhood roaming the palace with her friends, studying languages, philosophy, astronomy, foreign affairs, painting and singing, and she was loved by all who knew her. On the day of her thirteenth birthday she was feeling strangely restless and decided to explore a part of the castle that she had never explored before. She climbed the steps of a tower up and up as far as they would go until she came to an old wooden door. She reached out to push it but before her hand touched the door it opened by itself. 'Come in', said an old, but strangely familiar woman, who was sitting spinning. The curious girl entered and as soon as she stepped over the threshold she discovered that she was bleeding. She thought it very odd because she hadn't touched anything and the blood wasn't coming from her hand. She entered the room and the door closed forever behind her.

Then the thirteenth wise woman, for it was she who was spinning the fabric of life, explained to the young woman newly emerged from the girl, the mysteries of the body that bleeds but is not wounded. And she lived happily ever after. Well, to be completely honest, not always happily, but certainly meaningfully.

Adapted by Jane Bennett from *The Lambs of God* by Marielle Day, with permission

