

“New Sides to Every Story”

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurie K. Lindberg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, flowing 'L' and 'B'.

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Abstract

Throughout the years, fairy tales have undergone many changes, going from tales intended for adults, to tales thought to be only for children, to, in recent years, a revival of the adult aspects and versions of the tales. My project, specifically, consists of three tales of my own creation, two of which are based on tales from many years ago, but are prequels, of sorts, to the versions that are known so well, and I tell them from new perspectives. In the first story, "Cold as Ice," based on "The Twelve Dancing Princesses," I tell the story from the point of view of the old woman who advises and assists the soldier before he attempts to solve the riddle of the worn-out shoes. The second story "Seeing Red," based on "The Princess and the Pea" and "Sleeping Beauty," is told from the point of view of the queen who insists on finding a princess who is sensitive enough to feel the pea under the mattress. My third story, also based on an older, renowned fairy tale, is actually a sequel, because sometimes you just wonder what happens after the characters "live happily ever after." This story, "Curiosity," is based on "The Little Mermaid," takes place 250 years after the events of the original story and is told, mostly, from the former mermaid's point of view as a Daughter of the Air.

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Author's Statement

New Sides to Every Story

My project is about the evolution of the “fairy tale,” from the Brothers Grimm to Charles Perrault and Hans Christian Andersen. Throughout the years, fairy tales have undergone many changes, going from tales intended for adults, to tales thought to be only for children, to, in recent years, a revival of the adult aspects and versions of the tales. My project, specifically, consists of three tales of my own creation, two of which are based on tales from many years ago, but are prequels, of sorts, to the versions that are known so well. I tell them from new perspectives. My third story, also based on an older, renowned fairy tale, is actually a sequel, because sometimes you just wonder what happens after the characters “live happily ever after.”

But why does this project matter? The significance of this project can be found on two different levels: personal and public. On a personal level, this project matters to me because the process behind the creation of these three tales led me to multiple discoveries. On one hand, I discovered that writing does not always have to be work, which is something that I had started to think after writing one analytical paper after another for four and a half years. Writing can also be fun! It's not always about writing just because it's required of you in order to pass a class. I learned that it's possible to write and really open up the imagination, to let it run the show for a while. Which leads me to another one of the discoveries that I ran across while composing these three tales. Creativity leads to an incredible sense of inner freedom. It was a wonderful feeling to be able to sit down and craft stories to answer a few of the many questions that I have always had after reading fairy tales. After the monotony of writing papers about stories that comes with being an English Literature major, it was indescribably refreshing to come up with something new, something that could, in itself, be analyzed. On a public level, however, this project matters

because I am hoping that it will serve to do as the work of others who have reworked the classic fairy tales, such as Terry Windling and Ellen Datlow, has done for me: show that what we are given is not all that there can be. There is always more to a story that needs telling, whether it is a new perspective, a history behind the original events, or a telling of what happens after the characters ride off into the sunset.

Another question that needs to be answered is why did I choose fairy tales? Well, fairy tales have always been a great influence on my life. For as long as I can remember, there has been some fairy tale guiding me along, teaching me to look at the world in a new and exciting way. Though they are targets for a lot of criticism, the early, animated movies by Walt Disney are what first embedded the “fairy tale” in my mind, and I am indebted to him for that. Ever since I first watched his versions of the tales about the characters Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, and Cinderella, I have held onto a strong curiosity about how those stories happened, what other versions there are, and what happened next. I was persistently positive that there had to be more to those stories than what we were given, so that is what led me to read and fall in love with the stories by the Brothers Grimm, Charles Perrault, Hans Christian Andersen, and so many others. After having gone from the Disney tales to the originals, I felt the need to add a few stories of my own making to the world of fairy tales, to maybe give something back to the genre that has so influenced me throughout the years. So, in short, I chose to write fairy tales for my project because fairy tales helped to write me.

During the development of my project, there were a lot of decisions to be made. To be completely honest, the only thing I knew for sure that I wanted to do was write some kind of fairy tale of my own. I had no idea about what tales I wanted to base my stories on, no idea what kind of spin to put on them in order to make them unique, and no idea about what perspectives I

wanted to write them from. First things first, I decided to come up with a tentative list of tales to use as a jumping off point. Originally, the plan was to write only two of my own tales, so my first list consisted of four tales that I would research and narrow down to two. The list included “East of the Sun, West of the Moon,” “King Thrushbeard,” “Twelve Dancing Princesses,” and “The Fisherman and His Wife.” These tales were chosen because they had all been fairly new tales to me (tales that I was not as familiar with as, say, “Cinderella”), so I thought it would be nice to launch from them and possibly make a few more people aware of these tales.

Interestingly enough, after much research in the form of reading book after book of fairy tale retellings, “Twelve Dancing Princesses” was the only one of the original four tales that ended up making the cut. However, the point is that I had a lot of trouble deciding how, exactly, I wanted to transform and rework my tales.

At first, I was intrigued by the idea of writing each of my stories from the point of view of an “evil” character. Those had been the kinds of stories that I enjoyed the most during my research process, and I have always been interested in finding out why the villains and villainesses were “evil” in the first place. But, while I was in the process of choosing what tales to write about, I found that to be too limiting. It was as if, as soon as I would decide to write about the evil character, I would find myself more interested in a different, more neutral character. As a result, writing as an evil character was temporarily put on the backburner, and I decided that “Twelve Dancing Princesses” by the Brothers Grimm would be the inspiration for my first story, written from the point of view of the old woman who advises the soldier at the side of the road.

Admittedly, the old woman from “Twelve Dancing Princesses” is an obscure character. However, after reading through the tale a few times, I felt that her character needed to be more

involved in the story and that it was not just chance that brought her to the side of the road that day. She seemed to have a story to tell, and I thought that I might as well be the one to tell it. After I had made up my mind to write from her perspective, I faced my biggest challenge yet; I had to figure out how to write fiction. But, it turns out, that was exactly my problem. I couldn't think of my story as fiction; I had to believe that it was real, that it really happened. Once I came to that realization, it was merely a process of coming up with questions about "Twelve Dancing Princesses" that the old woman could answer for me. For example, my first question was: Why are the princes waiting, night after night, for the princesses in the underground kingdom? This led to the curse that the woman placed upon the family, which begged the question of why the family was cursed. As I set out to answer these questions, I made it a point to incorporate a few of the usual elements that are found in fairy tales, such as the number "3," curses, the "old crone" character, and the breaking of rules. More specifically, going along with the elements of the curse and the broken rules, I wanted to arrange it so that the princes' family had to be freed from the curse by a reversal, of sorts, of the situation that had placed them there in the first place, namely, the rules. I realize that this is not exactly an obvious point of the story, however, since the initial rules that were given to their father were to (1) not damage the shoes, (2) not take from the gold, silver, and diamond trees, and (3) not drink the wine. I felt that there needed to be a balance in order to erase the curse. This is why the soldier is the one who sets them free. He puts a stop to the princesses' nightly dancing, which damages the shoes, he DOES take from the trees, which was a rule that the initial perpetrator did not break, therefore balancing that situation, and, finally, he does NOT drink the wine, which was the rule that the underground king DID break. All in all, I found this tale, my first tale, to be the most difficult to write because it took some

time for belief in the story to kick in, but once I overcame that obstacle, the tale seemed to write itself.

After finishing my first tale, I went back to the list of tales that I had originally picked out to write about, looking for one to base my second tale on. Although I was still very fond of “East of the Sun, West of the Moon,” “King Thrushbeard,” and “The Fisherman and His Wife,” none of them seemed to inspire me the way “Twelve Dancing Princesses” had. This was also when Dr. Lindberg and I decided that it would probably be best, since I was planning on keeping my tales fairly short, if I wrote three tales instead of two. So, the search for “new” tales to base my stories on began, again. Luckily, it didn’t take long for me to run across Charles Perrault’s “The Princess and the Pea,” sparking the question I needed to get started on a new tale: Why was the queen so picky when she was looking for a wife for the prince? As I was brainstorming answers to this question, an interesting thought popped into my head. I thought that it might be fun to tie one of the better known, classic fairy tales in with this one, creating a kind of mash-up. That thought is what spurred me on towards the idea the queen’s own parents had been too preoccupied with her, now well known, sibling.

Following the decision to have my narrator feel neglected came the questioning process. Why are her parents preoccupied with her sister? What events reinforced these worries? How did all of this impact the queen, Octavia? At this point, I should mention that I decided to name my characters in this story, each of whom has a very different personality. These personalities are what made me resolve to name them after months of the year, with their personal nature reflected in either the month that they’re named for, or the season that the month falls into. Anyway, in answering the questions mentioned before my explanation of the names, my second story, as had the first, took on a life of its own, one that to me seemed quite realistic except for the occasional

bouts of magic by Octavia's younger sister, Julia. As each question seemed to answer itself, I still had a few decisions to make regarding what overt fairy tale elements I wanted to include in this story. Obviously, the fact that I brought in the evil fairy character from "Sleeping Beauty" as Julia was one of those elements. Another was the number "3," again. I chose to illustrate Julia's magical capabilities in three separate instances, keeping with my theme of threes. I also wanted to include the element of magic/curse reversal, similarly to how it is portrayed in the original tellings of "Sleeping Beauty," but with a small twist of my own, that Octavia was the one to reverse it, having acquired some magic of her own over the years. So, with my second tale I chose to alter my writing style only slightly, telling the story first from the point of view of an obscure character, who changed from being originally heroine-like to an antagonist, and then from the point of view of a character who was originally the antagonist, but then was revealed to be the heroine-like character of a different tale.

For my third and final tale, I wanted to do something a little bit different from my other two. Back when I decided to base my second tale on "The Princess and the Pea," I also decided that I would write my third one on Hans Christian Andersen's "Little Mermaid." At first I thought I would try writing from the perspective of the young prince, whom the titular mermaid falls in love with, because I thought it would be a challenge to write from a male's point of view. Yet, once I started trying to plan out my story and had re-read the original a few times, I just could not get drawn into the idea of explaining his side of things as I had with my previous narrators. The one question that did keep popping up in my head was what happened next? More specifically, I wanted to know who were the "Daughters of the Air" and how the little mermaid's existence changed after becoming one of them. It was this train of thought that I chose to pursue for the third story, making it slightly different, even though it was still going to be told from a

female's point of view, because instead of being a prequel to the originals, this would be a sequel.

During the early stages of the development of my third story, I found that there needed to be counterparts to the Daughters of the Air. This was the creation of the Sons of Fire, serving to warm those in cold climates, the exact opposite of what the Daughters do. After the invention of the Sons, I did have a bit of a challenge in front of me in the form of their dwelling. I was sure that they could not already reside in Heaven, for that was stipulated in Andersen's tale; Heaven is what they are meant to be working towards. However, I did not feel as if they could be with the humans either. Finally, I settled on the idea of their existing in a type of limbo, or, more specifically, an alternate version of the human world. That obstacle then having been dealt with, I was freed up to work on my favorite part: It was time to figure out what fairy tale elements I wanted to incorporate in this tale. In an effort also to remain consistent, I thought that three examples of misbehaving children would be a good way to give descriptions of situations that the Daughters and Sons might have to deal with. Then, a wonderful idea hit me: What if I made the misbehaving children characters from other fairy tales? Instantly, I knew that was exactly what I wanted to do; it was then just a matter of choosing which naughty children to include. Naturally, Jack from "Jack and the Beanstalk" had to make an appearance, because he is just so well known. Next I was drawn to "Goose Girl," because, even though I hadn't known it for very long, I was always intrigued by the fact that the waiting-maid was gutsy enough to make the princess switch places with her. For my third example, I felt as though I absolutely had to include Bluebeard, arguably one of the nastiest characters from fairy tales, but, of course, it would have to be a story from his younger years. I felt that these three characters were the perfect fairy tale children to incorporate into my sequel to Andersen's "Little Mermaid."

But how would I end it? Of course, I wanted everything to turn out happily ever after for the former mermaid, and I wanted to bring everything full-circle. That is why I chose to have the encounter between the young prince (descendent of the young prince from “Little Mermaid”) and the young mermaid (descendent of the little mermaid, herself) be the final visitation that would allow her to ascend into Heaven. I also thought it only right that the young prince be the one to fall in love this time. Knowing how I wanted to end the story, it seemed apparent to me that I couldn’t have the former mermaid narrating the entire time, because the result of her final encounter would leave her unable to tell the audience of it. Therefore, I had to end with a new, unidentified narrator, one who could tell of her ascension into Heaven and the preceding happenings. In order to then make the tale seem framed, I had to rework the beginning of my tale so that the unidentified narrator begins the story, as well. Although my third tale was not told from a male perspective, I still feel that it is different enough from my first two in that it is a sequel instead of a prequel, and it is told by two different narrators.

As a writer, I feel as though my thesis project completely represents both my areas of study and my development as an artist. As an English Literature major, I have had ample opportunities to explore different genres of literature, and after much reading and analysis, I am still drawn to works of fiction. More specifically, stories based in fantasy and fairy tales are what inspire me and make me want to continue to read, to discover new things about myself. I have taken a class on fairy tales, a class on fantasy, and even a class on gothic literature in which, for the final project, I chose to compare these three genres to discuss the ways in which they go hand in hand. Moreover, because I am a Classical Cultures minor, fairy tales and stories from ancient mythologies have striking similarities in terms of the types of characters that are presented and the lessons that are meant to be drawn from the overall tales. Therefore, I believe that this

project, the creation of three of my own tales, provided me with the opportunity to put what I've read about, studied, and analyzed to use. I was able to combine every aspect of my collegiate specialties to produce works that are wholly my own, and represent me as both a student and a writer.

Similarly, this particular project demonstrates my development as an artist in that the progression and the changes of my three stories signify my progression as a writer and the changes that I went through as I was becoming one. Before this project, all I knew was reading and analytical writing. Then, if reading a text sparked a question inside of me, I would have come up with a thesis regarding that question and tried to explain it away with technical examples from the text. Now I am able to answer my questions by creating stories of my own. I have grown from feeling restricted by the constant reading and analysis, to feeling freed because I now know that I have the option of, and ability to, come up with something new and fun. It is this freedom that allows me to feel that I have not only been successful at completing my final project, but that I have been successful at completing my degree as an English major, as well.

Cold as Ice

By Lauren Terrell

One thing is all I ask, that you do not steal from me. Personally, I don't think it's an exceedingly difficult request, but there's always going to be someone who needs food, needs livestock, needs clothing. In this case, it was a pair of shoes. Sure, they were just an ordinary pair of shoes, but they were *mine*.

All right, I suppose I should start from the beginning.

I live in the woods. I haven't always lived in the woods, but when, decade after decade, my possessions would mysteriously go missing, I got fed up with life in town. So I found myself a nice little cottage in the woods. A bit of a fixer-upper it was, but it was in a nice, dark part of the woods. The townspeople seemed to think it was "enchanted." Enchanted, my foot! People just can't hold their liquor these days, and they let their imaginations get the best of them.

Anywho, here I am in my little cottage one night, just minding my own business—heck, I might have been knitting or something—and I hear the unmistakable creak of footsteps on my front porch.

All right, I will admit that I was a bit startled. I mean, who in their right mind would be out in the "enchanted" forest after dark? And as if that wasn't enough, there was a bit of snow coming down!

So I take myself a little sip of my beverage, you know, to really get my blood a circulatin', and I figure I'll go out there and see who's interrupting my peace and quiet. If it wasn't the *most* pathetic young man I had ever seen! But what do you think he was doing? Stealing! Go figure. I don't care how sad, dirty, and cold you look; *you don't steal*. Honestly, is

it too much to ask for a little knock at the door and a “Hi, how are ya?” A woman’s got to draw the line somewhere.

Hold on a second. Don’t be giving me that look like, “Oh, but it was snowing. He must have really needed those shoes!” If you’re just going to take his side and judge me for the rest of the story, then I’ll just stop right here. What’s that? Oh, you weren’t judging? You just have a twitch, eh? Well, all right, but stop your twitchin’.

Now where was I? Oh yes, I remember, the little rat was taking my shoes. There’s that saying, “Keep your friends close, but don’t let the others out of your sight,” or something like that. Well, I thought that was pretty good advice, so I put on my harmless ol’ granny face and invited him inside.

“Come in, come in. Warm yourself by the fire,” I say. “No need to worry, I *completely* understand. You’re cold. It’s snowing. Just come on inside and all will be well.” Of course, he came right in. The lurking little lifter didn’t suspect a thing.

If I’m being completely honest, which I am, I think I was pretty nice to the filthy filcher. I mean, I fed him, I told him he could keep the shoes he had already pinched, and, as per my plan, I gave him a place to stay the night. Now, I want you to listen to this next part before you go writing me off as unfair. I told the kid he could stay on three conditions:

1. He was not to damage the stolen shoes while he stayed with me (I thought I’d give him an easy one).
2. He was not to steal from my trees.

They were dearer to me than a chest full of gold, silver, and even diamonds.

3. He was not to drink any of my special wine.

True, it was more sleeping draught than wine at that point, but it's hard to adjust to the quiet of the woods when you're used to sleeping amongst all sorts of city noises. Okay, okay, and I had begun to build up a tolerance. Long story short, I needed every drop and it would be easy to tell if he got a hankering for some vino in the middle of the night because he'd be asleep for days.

That was it. Three simple rules to follow whilst a guest in my humble abode. Had he followed each and every one, he'd have left a free man, to return to whatever crumble of a life he had going for him. It was too bad, really. I guess beverages are just too much of a temptation for young people these days.

When I woke up the next morning, he was out like a light. Dead to the world. Boy, was I relieved that he chose that rule to break. It gave me some time to come up with a way to teach him a lesson.

In the end, I went with the ol' standby. I cursed him and whatever sad excuses of family he had hanging around. I put quite a bit of effort into it, too, if I do say so myself. You have to, you know, if you want a solid curse that'll really stick to the culprits.

Personally, I like to make my curses subtle, at first anyway. Let them think they've been blessed, had their wishes granted, or won the lottery. Then, the pieces really fall into place. None of this, "You'll prick your finger," or, "You're rude, *BANG*, you're a beast," nonsense. No, no, no. I make their dreams come true so the reality hurts even more.

In this particular case, I made him a king, and all his little sons (can you believe he had *twelve* of them?!?) princes. I really gave them the royal treatment, too. When he woke up, he was in a four-poster, California King, canopy bed, with the lushest linens and most festive feasts money could buy.

But here comes the fun part.

Every evening, as the sun was setting, the pilferer's progeny were compelled (quite literally, I assure you) to cross a great lake I had given them. No, in the beginning, they did not have the twelve cute little boats. I give the rascals credit; it wasn't too long before they decided that building boats would be easier than swimming across that expanse each and every night. It did, however, take them a while to find the materials for those boats. Trees of gold, silver, and diamonds do not the most buoyant boats make.

This compulsion would last until daybreak, or until princesses were met at the other side, at which time, whether they liked them or not, the princes had to wine, dine, and dance their little girly shoes off.

I never actually met with the ruddy robber again, but I did take pity on him. Eventually. So, yes, I found a soldier who I thought could help them reverse the curse. After giving him a cloak to make him invisible, as well as a little hint about not drinking the wine, I sent him on to the castle. The rest is public knowledge.

In the end, it all comes back to rules. Guidelines. Boundaries. If they wanted freed from that underground kingdom, all they had to do was find someone who could show some self-control.

But, "Why didn't you curse the real thief, and only his sons," you ask? You don't think that living alone with twelve pubescent and pre-pubescent boys who are forced, night after night, to do something against their wishes is a curse?

Well then, let's just call yours a blessing.

THE END

Seeing Red

By Lauren Terrell

People always ask me why I was so picky when my son wanted to get married.

“Shouldn’t it be his choice?” “What were you looking for?” “What’s with the pea?” Well, excuse me for wanting to be thorough! It’s not like he was my only son or anything. Oh wait, he was.

Fine, I’ll admit that the pea might have been a little much. But honestly, wouldn’t you rather have parents who are a bit too choosy about your future partner in life rather than not choosy enough? I know I would have.

Maybe that’s my problem, though—I have some pent-up frustration. You would, too, if you were saddled with dear old Septimus for the rest of your life. He smacks when he eats. He snores when he sleeps. To top it all off, my chair probably has more going on upstairs than that old fart. It’s not his fault, though. The poor thing does anything he’s told, and King Dexter and Queen Jane, a.k.a. Mummy and Daddy, told him to marry me.

But this is *her* fault. She always had to have every ounce of their attention, and she was the baby, so she got it.

I mean, Julia was always a bit of a hothead. You’re nodding, but I don’t think you really understand how bad things could get with her. Especially with her “gift.” Gift, my tail! That girl was cursed. But she sure used it to her advantage. That’s why this is her fault! Do you think Mum and Dad would have shipped me, their sweet Octavia, off to be with this dullard if Julia hadn’t been so “special?!” No! They should have quit reproducing while they were ahead, in my opinion. But that’s how the whole mess started. I might have been slightly overzealous, that once, in the making of my princess requirements, but Julia *always* let her anger control her.

Enough about her, though. This, of all things, will not revolve around my hothead of a sister. This is *my* story.

Anyway, I deserved a better husband than Septimus, here. But after all of the “accidents” that sprang from Julia’s “gift,” well, let’s just say our parents had their hands full. Lucky for them, they weren’t around to see the biggest of them all.

“What accidents?” you ask. Well, I guess I can give you a few examples of what she was capable of.

The first one that I can remember happened when I was seven and Julia was four. Of course, it was my birthday and she had been whining all day long.

“Why does the cake look like Octavia?”

“Why are Octavia’s friends here?”

“Why does Octavia get to pick out dinner?”

I had never really had a birthday party with my friends over, you see, so it was a big deal. I was just getting around to opening my presents (I planned on giving the cheapest one to her, because I didn’t want her to be *completely* left out) when Julia just started screaming. Her eyes turned from their usual green to a fiery red, her black hair flew out in all directions, and the last thing I remember from that day was a slight shudder throughout the room. The next thing I knew, it was a day later, and I was waking up in my bed, completely dazed, curious as to how I got there.

And wouldn’t you know it, the little brat had made me sleep through my own birthday! Boy, oh boy, if I would’ve had that kind of magic when Mum told me what happened, Julia would have been sleeping with the fishes!

But compared to her other “accidents,” that one was nothing.

I remember when I was thirteen years old and it was the day of my first real school dance. I had been looking forward to that day for so long!

I was the typical teenage princess. I had a beautiful gown, a barely-pimpled prince to dance with, and permission to stay out until midnight. Then, Hurricane Julia entered the picture. She saw my gown and my date and knew that I was finally getting to go have some fun, and she was *jealous*! She begged Mummy and Daddy to let her go with us, but, since she was only ten at the time, there was no way she could have gone, even if they had said that she could.

To her, that was unacceptable.

How do you think she expressed her feelings this time? That's right. Cue the red eyes, the crazy hair, and the shuddering room. But this time was different. When she let loose her anger, I wasn't the only one put to sleep, and it wasn't for just a day, either. This time, Julia managed to put the entire school to sleep for a week! Needless to say, that did nothing for her popularity, which, in turn, did nothing for her temper. Of course, I was angry again, but after seeing the effect this incident had on her social life, I decided to forgive her.

Temporarily, that is.

It wasn't long before Julia's "gift" began to affect my social life, as well. Everyone was always afraid they'd be put to sleep if anything made Julia mad, and it was becoming obvious that her temper really flared when I could do something that she couldn't.

Invitations for parties stopped arriving.

My friends stopped coming over after school.

I was never allowed to have another party of my own.

I think my rapid decline in popularity is what really made our parents sympathetic.

When I was eighteen, their sympathy finally reached a breaking point. School had just ended, and one day some of my old friends approached me in the market and asked if I would like to go to an informal ball at a young prince's house that evening. I couldn't believe my ears, I had been invited somewhere again!

There was only one condition: Julia could not come with me.

This worried me, as did the question of whether or not our mother and father would assent to my attendance and risk upsetting Julia. Long story short, when I asked them, they said that I could go as long as I didn't mention it to my sister. Too bad for me, she had been eavesdropping at the door, like a true fifteen year old, and was enraged.

I don't know if it was the exclusion or the hormones that put her over the top, but this one could not be termed just an "incident." This was more of a catastrophe. Not only was our family put to sleep, but she also managed to ensnare the entire town in her drowsiness. And did I mention that it lasted a *month*?! You haven't seen a mess until you see a town that's housed a lone, incapable, teenaged girl for a month!

This event marked the end of my freedom, as I knew it. With this distinct escalation of my sister's magic each time, my parents could no longer risk having me around to spur Julia's jealousy. My being of age, they quickly found Septimus and pawned me off on him. Because of my many protests, Julia, for once, did not seem jealous of my life. Oh, but do not worry, this is not the end of my story.

As you should know by now, we had a son, Marcus. And, all right, my criteria for a match for him was a bit much, but, eventually, he did marry his pea-picky princess, April. What you might not be aware of is that they had a daughter. With this daughter, my granddaughter, Maya, came happiness to our family. This should be sending up a red flag if you've been paying

any kind of attention. There you go, “What happened to Julia,” you finally ask. Well, with this happiness to our little family unit, came jealousy to my lonely, angry sister. We had not heard from her in years, not since my marriage, in fact, and I presumed that she had finally managed to put herself to sleep.

Unfortunately, I was mistaken.

She showed up again at the dawn of Maya’s day of christening. All were already gathered, full of excitement, to bestow gifts on my new granddaughter, when in stomps Julia, demanding to know why she hadn’t been invited. I knew that something was about to happen and it wasn’t going to be good, so into the shadows I stepped, to watch things unfold.

It seems that Julia’s many years of loneliness had provided time enough for her to hone her “gift” to make it deadly, and at a time of her choosing. While I had previously been at the mercy of Julia and her “gift,” my years of faultfinding led to the development of a “gift” of my own.

The search for the perfect daughter-in-law had taught me an invaluable lesson: there’s always a loophole.

THE END

Curiosity

By Lauren Terrell

Once upon a time, there was a little mermaid. But you all know that story.

Or do you?

It's common knowledge that she died that day and joined the Daughters of the Air, but do you ever wonder what happened after that? Well, let me tell you. Actually, I'll let her tell you, because it just so happens that she kept a diary. Conveniently, I have it right here....

“Two hundred and fifty years ago, I died. And if I had the same choice to make again, well, I assume I would be doubly dead. I do not think that my sisters ever really understood why I could not do it, why I could not trade his life for mine, but I loved him, and I knew all along that it could cost me the rest of my life.

Since then, I have been happy. Well, as happy as an air spirit can be. Yes, it has been hard at times, especially in the beginning. It was a whole new world to get used to, after all.

“What’s different about life as a Daughter of the Air,” you ask? Only our entire existence! I guess I should start with the basics. First of all, the Daughters of the Air are not the only ones up here; there are boys, too. As we are Daughters of the Air and are sent to cool those in hot, oppressing climates, they are Sons of Fire, sent to warm those with no refuge from the bitterly cold climates. As for where we reside, this plane suits our needs, which are few. I understand that you may be slightly confused about what this “plane” is, but think of it as a type of alternate version of the world that you live in. It allows for some separation from those still living and provides all of us with a common gathering place. When we are on our plane, the most

common conversation, for both the Sons and Daughters, is how much time we estimate that we have left as a spirit. You see, we are each given three hundred years during which we are meant to cool or warm those in need of it. However, each of us also has the chance to shorten our time by finding well-behaved children during our travels.

Unfortunately, there is also the chance of lengthening our term if we find children that are behaving badly. Perhaps “unfortunately” is the wrong word to use, because it may give you the wrong idea. I do enjoy being a Daughter of the Air very much, but at the end of our time as a spirit we are promised an immortal soul, as well as entrance into Heaven. Let’s just say that curiosity is one of my traits that carried over from my life as a mermaid. I wish to know what Heaven is like! I imagine that it is beautiful, and that I may get the chance to, once again, see my dear prince—maybe to explain to him what happened and let him know that I have been vigilantly watching over his family.

By my calculations, I should be getting fairly close to earning my soul. Yes, I’ve only been a spirit for two hundred and fifty years, but I have witnessed so many good children! The good have far outnumbered the bad.

There were a few rough ones, however. The first of the exceptionally naughty children I encountered approximately two hundred years ago. There were a few others before him, but none so memorable as Jack. I found the boy in a fairly warm place, filled with many black and white spotted land manatees. His name was John, but all who knew him called him Jack. Anyway, that boy had a penchant for thievery and fortune shone upon him. From what I gathered about the situation at my arrival, he had been stealing from a giant couple. I was hoping that he would turn it all around and prove to be a good boy, but he continued to steal, which led to the death of the

giant husband. I felt as though my heart was breaking, I cried so much. And of course, those sorrowful tears of mine were added on as another year to my time as a Daughter of the Air.

Jack was nowhere near the worst child that I came across, however much I might have wished that he was. About seventy-five years later, I floated by a couple of young girls who looked to be traveling. It was a very warm summer in a land with many winged fish that had large, colorful beaks and the two girls were riding their horses over to the river for a drink. I thought I would pick up my floating pace and cool them off with a nice breeze. They both looked kind enough. But, sadly, looks can be deceiving. I suppose I should mention that one of these girls was princess, and the other, her waiting-maid. Well, I was just starting to blow by when the waiting-maid had the audacity to force the princess to switch clothes with her, and she assumed the role of the princess! After watching what that wicked girl did, I thought my sorrowful tears were going to be enough to flood the river, but they were only enough to add another year onto my life as a spirit.

The girl is still not the worst of the children that I have seen. I would have to say that the worst, by far, I found in a land covered in sand but with very little water. It was an incredibly curious place to behold! Anyway, I was breezing through this place nearly fifty years ago when I found a young boy with blue hair. I must admit, I was taken aback by the blue hair, but he seemed to be very charming with a kind face—besides, his cat seemed to like him well enough. So I was just on my way to cool him off, when I noticed him pull out a key and open a door. Of course, being a curious spirit, I decided to have a closer look, when, all of a sudden, I heard a sickening *CRACK!* That fiendish, blue-haired little boy had snapped the cat's neck in two! As if that was not bad enough, the door that he had opened hid an area full of dead, decomposing, cat

corpses—all of which were the possessors of snapped necks! Since that day, I have never been so full of sorrow as I was that-----

I'm sorry, but it doesn't look as though I am going to be able to finish that part of my story. I suddenly feel like I need to return to my dear prince's former kingdom....”

The Daughter of the Air then flew to the kingdom that had once belonged to her young prince, only to find a young mermaid, very much like herself before her death, swimming near the shoreline of the kingdom. You see, this young mermaid also had a healthy amount of curiosity in her, a curiosity that had only been intensified by a story that had been told to her for many years by her grandmothers, a story of a young mermaid who once gave up her voice to join the world of the prince whom she loved, on a quest for an immortal soul. As the beautiful spirit watched the young mermaid, wondering why she had been compelled to this place, at this time, she noticed a young boy walking along the beach toward the mermaid. Then, *SPLASH!* A large rock fell from a cliff, leaving the young mermaid trapped in the shallows as the young boy, who looked curiously like the Daughter's former prince, continued to draw closer.

Luck seemed to be on the mermaid's side, for the moment, because the rock seemed not only to be holding her down, but also hiding her tail from sight. The spirit could only hope, for the young mermaid, that the boy would not try to save her and, in the process, discover her true nature; terrible things could happen. But the young prince, for that was what he was, immediately ran to save the young maiden when he noticed her distress, and it was not long before, with a shifting of the rock, he saw her tail. Having drawn back, filled with shock, he was unsure of what to do. Then, with a shake of his head (almost as if he was shaking out the bad

thoughts) the boy resumed his rescue. As the mermaid was freed she gave the boy a single kiss and then swam away, leaving the boy in the shallows, gazing after her.

It was at that moment that the boy fell in love, wholly and completely, with the little mermaid, and as his heart filled with love and awe, our very own Daughter of the Air found herself feeling a love that she had never before experienced. As her heart was lifted with love, so was her spirit, up, past the clouds, through the spirit realm, and into Heaven, where her curiosity, at last, was satisfied.

THE END