



# The Sleeper and the Spindle

*Neil Gaiman , Chris Riddell (Illustrator)*

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A thrillingly reimagined fairy tale from the truly magical combination of author Neil Gaiman and illustrator Chris Riddell – weaving together a sort-of Snow White and an almost Sleeping Beauty with a thread of dark magic, which will hold readers spellbound from start to finish.

On the eve of her wedding, a young queen sets out to rescue a princess from an enchantment. She casts aside her fine wedding clothes, takes her chain mail and her sword and follows her brave dwarf retainers into the tunnels under the mountain towards the sleeping kingdom. This queen will decide her own future – and the princess who needs rescuing is not quite what she seems. Twisting together the familiar and the new, this perfectly delicious, captivating and darkly funny tale shows its creators at the peak of their talents.

Lavishly produced, packed with glorious Chris Riddell illustrations enhanced with metallic ink, this is a spectacular and magical gift.

## The Sleeper and the Spindle Details

Date : Published October 23rd 2014 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc (first published May 3rd 2014)

ISBN : 9781408859643

Author : Neil Gaiman , Chris Riddell (Illustrator)

Format : Hardcover 72 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Fairy Tales, Young Adult, Fiction, Short Stories

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# From Reader Review The Sleeper and the Spindle for online ebook

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

Final review, posted at [www.FantasyLiterature.com](http://www.FantasyLiterature.com):

Neil Gaiman took one of his twisted, rather creepy fairy tale stories and turned it into a 66 page picture book with wonderfully whimsical and detailed illustrations by Chris Riddell.

I went out on a limb recommending this to Kelly (and the Book Boar) for her fairy tale retellings project when I was only halfway done with this, but I'm relieved to say I still liked it when I finally finished it last night.

A queen is (reluctantly) about to get married, but when a sleeping sickness spreads through a neighboring kingdom and threatens hers, she sets aside her plans, puts on her mail shirt and sword, and heads off with her dwarf friends to take care of the problem herself. There's a fascinating, gradual reveal of who the queen actually is, and Gaiman deftly interweaves details about how her past experiences inform her present decisions.

Occasionally it seems like Gaiman is pandering just a bit to readers:

She called for her fiancé and told him not to take on so, and that they would still be married, even if he was but a prince and she a queen, and she chucked him beneath his pretty chin and kissed him until he smiled.

It feels as if he's trying to display how much he supports female empowerment, which is a great thing except when it gets in the way of the actual story. And I can't say I'm all that sympathetic to the queen's feeling that, because she's getting married and **ruling a kingdom for the rest of her life**, she has "no choices" and "the path to her death, heartbeat by heartbeat, would be inevitable." Seriously?

But there are some really nice touches to the story--the queen's decisive action when she comes up to the Sleeping Beauty castle, surrounded by deadly thorns that have killed many adventurous men, had me thinking, why didn't any of the guys ever think of doing *that*? A suitably creepy note is added when it develops that the people struck by the sleeping sickness do more than just sleep. And the detailed pen-and-ink illustrations with touches of gold really made the story. I loved the skull motif, which subtly changes at the end.

This story may not be amazingly unique--there are a lot of dark fairy tale retellings out there--but between Gaiman's fantastic use of words and imagery, and Riddell's gorgeous illustrations, this is a pretty easy 4 star book for me.

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## Lola says

The Sleeper and the Spindle could have been such an enchanting, lovely lesbian fairytale retelling. But no. Instead, it's romance-free and pretty deceiving. The illustrations are rather ubiquitous and of good quality... but not that necessary. At least, it isn't necessary to have that many of them. I just want to clarify something: **this is not a graphic novel.**

This being a short story, and the author not having depicted everything or everyone in extreme detail, we never get to know the characters all that well. Actually, they all feel insubstantial. The story is original, that's for sure, and I liked the unpredictable twist, even though I was expecting something else to come out of it.

For fans of Neil Gaiman's writing style and his Snow, Glass, Apples short story.

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## Evelyn (devours and digests words) says

Whimsical and deliciously *dark* at times, The Sleeper and The Spindle is a retold fairytale featuring a not-quite Sleeping Beauty and a sword-weilding Snow White.

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The moment I set my eyes on the book cover, I knew I need to have this beauty in my possession. I was beyond delighted when I found out that **this tale is accompanied with gorgeous illustrations** by Chris Riddell (who also drew for the macabre children's story, The Graveyard Book. Another favourite!). **Coupled with Neil Gaiman's excellent, lyrical prose The Sleeper and The Spindle has successfully met my idea of a true whimsy fairytale.**

After waking from a year long magical sleep, Her Majesty the Queen is set to marry a young prince soon. Meanwhile, a sleeping sickness is spreading far and wide in other parts of her Kingdom. When news and tales of old reached Her Majesty, she called for the servants to bring forth her chainmail and sword then finally, mounting on a horse she takes off with her brave Dwarves with a rescue mission in mind.

Are you dead tired of Princes coming to the damsel's rescue? Do you roll your eyes at the idea of Happily Ever Afters that always seems so *final* and *resolute*? Have you ever question what other alternate endings to a fairytale could be?

If your answers to all the above is a yes. I highly recommend picking this up. However, cast aside your expectations for solid characterizations because there will be next to none. This is one of those books with no room for that.

**Despite the lack of depths, Gaiman has still managed to eliminate most classics fairytale tropes in 70 pages or less.** I find the twists to be cleverly done and **the final reveal certainly has that satisfying smackdown effect for me** and best of all, Gaiman offered *choices*. Such as the choice for Her Majesty to pick her own Happily Ever After, and what a change that is.

**Actual rating: 3.5 stars**

*\*\*Disclaimer: The illustration above originally came in black&white with no typography added. I simply paint the colour in for fun. Otherwise, it is entirely drawn by the talented Chris Riddell.\*\**

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## **Jadranka says**

Poznati motivi iz bajki isprižani na malkice drugačiji na?in...neki bi rekli "Svetogr?e!", "Kako se samo usudio?!", a ja kažem, ako je neko mogao to da uradi na pravi na?in, onda je to Neil Gaiman.

A koliki je Gaiman mag za re?i, toliki je Chris Riddell majstor za crtež.

Vidim da su mišljenja podeljena kada je re? o ovoj pri?ici, ali meni je posle napornih mesec dana na poslu došla kao melem na ranu.

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## **Kelly (and the Book Boar) says**

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

*“There are always choices.”*

It seems every time I delve into the world of a retelling I begin by pointing out how much I didn't care for the original. I guess it should come as no surprise that Snow White and Sleeping Beauty weren't my idea of a great time when I was a kid either. In fact, the entire world of Disney princesses kinda creeps me out – unless it's these kind of princesses . . . .

But I digress.

Due to the above I didn't have high expectations upon starting *The Sleeper and the Spindle* and was pleasantly surprised with the end result of this mashup. The story is about a young queen (Snow White) who is given word by three of her loyal followers (dwarfs) about a sleeping sickness that fell over a neighboring kingdom decades before, but has begun to spread. Unlike all the pansy-ass Disney broads, **this** queen decides to take care of the problem herself. You know why????? Because . . . .

While I generally fall into the “idiot overzealous fangirl” side of the spectrum when it comes to Gaiman, this one wasn't quite as good as Snow, Glass, Apples so it hovered around the 3.5 mark. I'm rounding up, however, because there was a little more to the story than met the eye that left Mitchell and I looking something like this . . . .

And also because it was oh so very pretty to look at . . .

I mean **REALLY** pretty . . . .

My friend Sam disagrees with me about per near errrrrything, but somehow I still like him anyway. (In this case it's probably because he's so much smarter than I am and I have to acknowledge he probably read this correctly and I just got mesmerized with the pretty pictures and the fact that the female lead wasn't some douchey damsel in distress). If you want to see what the "meh" crowd thought about *The Sleeper and the Spindle*, go check out his review.

*This selection was chosen for my library's Winter Reading Challenge. Many thanks to Tadiana for the recommendation. Three more books and the limited edition coffee mug will be MIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIINE!*

### Kai says

*“The path to her death, heartbeat by heartbeat, would be inevitable.”*

A wonderful book with beautiful illustrations and a new perspective on our most beloved fairytales. I'm not a big fan of Gaiman's writing, I guess. Would this be the same artist but a different author, say Laini Taylor or Catherynne M. Valente, this could have been as magical and wondrous as I had wished it.

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### Masooma says

### 3.5 magical stars

Enormous peaks of mountains separate the kingdoms of Dorimar and Kanelaire. Kanelaire is rowdy as the wedding of their queen approaches. But Dormiar is silent as it mourns the spell that has put its princess to sleep.

*“Up the blooming stairs and past the blooming cook and what are you cooking now, eh, great land-ar-se, nothing in your pots and pans but dust and more dust, and all you ever do is snore.”*

There is one oncoming calamity, though, poking its head out its burrow, viz;

*“It is expanding, the zone of the spell, a few miles every day”*

It is now up to one kingdom to save another one and in doing so, save itself.

The lust for beauty, power and youth underlies this story and the concept of life threaded into a roll of yarn is unique. Comprehensively written with lucid descriptions, **The Sleeper and the Spindle is a blend of Snow white and Sleeping Beauty with a few touches from Maleficent.** It is a quick, beautiful read with an unpredictable villain.

*“She’s still there. That’s what they say. If you get that close. If you make it through the roses, she’ll be waiting for you. She’s old as the hills, evil as a snake, all malevolence and magic and death.”*

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### **Catriona (LittleBookOwl) says**

4.5 stars!

Absolutely loved this story and the illustrations. I wasn't sure what to expect going in to this and I was pleasantly surprised with it.

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### **Mario says**

*There are choices, she thought, when she had sat long enough. There are always choices.*

Since I've read *The Graveyard Book* I wanted to read more books by both Neil Gaiman and Chris Riddell. So when I found out that they were translating this book in my country, I was beyond excited and my expectations for this book were pretty high. And now, that I've read it, I can safely say that this book was just as good as I expected it to be.

This was a retelling of Sleeping beauty and Snow White mixed together. I loved Gaiman's dark twist to the story but I've got to say that my favorite thing about this book were Riddell's illustrations. I think that I stared at every illustration for at least a minute. And as soon as I've finished the book, I wanted to read it again. I just really hope that these two will collaborate in the future many, *many* times.

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### **Lucy says**

The first thing you should know: this is NOT a lesbian retelling of Sleeping Beauty. I'm sure you've all seen the Chris Riddell illustration of Snow White kissing Sleeping Beauty awake by now, and will have seen this book lauded as LGBT representation. It is not.

Suffice to say, I was let down. I was expecting a properly queer retelling and that's not what I got. What I got was one sweet lady smooch and one (admittedly beautiful) illustration to accompany it...and that was all. Literally. Not true love's kiss. Not anything's kiss. The kiss was as impersonal as bringing a clockwork automaton back to life by winding its mechanism.

I waited to give this book a rating because if I'd rated it as soon as I finished it would have only got two or three stars - that's how annoyed I was with it. However, I am bumping it up to four because for starters, nothing Neil Gaiman writes is ever BAD, Chris Riddell's illustrations are beautiful as usual and the production quality of the book is flawless. It is a VERY attractive book and the story itself is whimsical and lovely and filled with lots of amusing side characters, like all good fairy tales. Finally, I'm giving it four stars because there is a truly EPIC twist that I would have absolutely loved if I hadn't been so thirsty for proper lesbian representation.

If the lack of proper queerness will not bother you, you will probably love this book. If you're looking for a book to be the answer to your lady-loving fairytale prayers, then this is not the book you're looking for. (And in that case, I recommend *Ash* by Malinda Lo, which is still not perfect but it's a damn sight better than this.)

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## &#x1f98a; Jessi ♥? H. Vojsk says

*"Names. Names.*

*The old woman squinted, then she shook her head. She was herself, and the name she had been born with had been eaten by time and lack of use."*

Story ??????????

In this story a strong queen goes on an adventure to save a kingdom and her sleeping princess.

It's a combination of the Snow White and the sleeping beauty fairy tale in a beautiful new way.

It's one of the most perfect children fairytales I have ever read ??????

Characters ??????????

The strong female main character, the queen, was brave and a perfect role model for young children.

This story didn't need a hero, that was perfect on his white horse.

It only needed a good heart and bravery. ♥?

World ??????????

Two separated kingdoms that are next to each other.

One with a queen nearly to be wed.

One with a sleeping princess and a curse that makes everyone fall into a deep sleep.

Writing style ??????????

Neil Gaiman's writing was, as always, absolutely brilliant.

Drawings ??????????

The drawings were black and white, but had some details in a wonderful gold.

The pictures were really dark and had their own special touch.

It felt really magical itself and fitted the story perfectly.

P.S. I got this book from the library, but will buy it for myself (and for my future children) in German and English ?♥?

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## Kristijan says

Pre svega moram da kažem da sam se oduševio što je Laguna odlučila da objavi ovo u Srbiji. Nekako mi je delovalo kao previše rizičan korak i čak sam se plašio da će (da prostite na izrazu) zgovnati knjigu i da će ona izgubiti svoju draž. Na svu sreću, ono što imam u rukama je apsolutno WOW! Tehnički i grafički knjižica je odrađena fenomenalno.

Priča sama po sebi jeste poprilično dobra. Postoji onaj Gaimanovski "twist" koji mi svi jako volimo i odličan je crossover Uspavane lepotice i Snežane. Međutim, glavni i jedini problem ove knjižice je u tome što se Gaimanov tekst jednostavno gubi i postaje minoran u odnosu na Riddellove grafike (a malo je reći da su grafike fenomenalne).

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## Bookdragon Sean says

Wow! This was so absolutely terrible! Why do you always polarise me Gaiman? Sometimes I love what you do and at other times I absolutely hate it. I just have no middle ground with you.

Gaiman subverted the standard fairy-tale so much that his ending, one that was clearly meant to be surprising, was so blatantly obvious to the point of actually being mundane. I called this one from the get go. Certainly, some of the changes he makes are, indeed, praiseworthy. We have a gallant hero, one ready to wake the sleeping beauty. So to spice things up a bit Gaiman makes the hero a woman. This was a good move, but nothing overly remarkable. It's been done before, and will be done again. By reversing such things, the story that followed was easy to predict; it was just the opposite of what you'd normally expect to see. I yawned through the entire thing.

Now the artwork was undeniably wonderful, but this story doesn't deserve it. . The plot is simple at best, and the final ending just doesn't deliver what it needed to. It relies on its reversal so much. It was disappointing as a story, and not worthy of being in an edition like this by itself. It was weak, so weak. There's no time for anything to develop, and the eventual villain that revealed itself was practically an overdone caricature. There's so little to this. I actually have nothing else to say because there is not much else here to criticise. It's like the bear bones of a story. Gaiman can do so much better than this.

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## Dan Schwent says

As a sleeping curse hits the kingdom, the queen postpones her wedding and sets off with three dwarves to free the sleeping princess and end the curse...

Neil Gaiman and Chris Riddell team up yet again to present this short fairy tale, a dark combination of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty.

As dark fairy tales go, it had its moments. I loved the sleepers talking and eventually sleepwalking after the heroes. I've said it many times before but Gaiman's tales for kids are way creepier than the ones for adults. The art by Chris Riddell added to the tale and reminded me of old woodcuts at times.

I liked the ending quite a bit, not nearly as pat as I was expecting. However, at the end of the day, this was

pretty average. It was a little too short and not as fleshed out as I would have liked. I guess I expected more from Neil Gaiman this time out. Three out of five stars.

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### **emma says**

this book has the most beautiful cover i have ever seen in my LIFE. and beautiful black-and-white illustrations. and it's a fairytale retelling. and it's by neil gaiman. and it's short.

i have loved books for all of those reasons alone. like, by neil gaiman? done. pretty? done. illustrated? done. short? done. fairytale-y? dooooooone.

SO WHY DIDN'T I LOVE THIS ONE, WHICH HAD ALL OF THOSE THINGS.

it just didn't feel particularly any of those things, i guess. the writing was meh for neil gaiman. everything was confusing because it was so short. there were some moments of tension that were gone within a paragraph. not enough worldbuilding, or character-building, or anything -building. NOT ENOUGH ANYTHING, REALLY.

i guess that's what you get when a book is under 70 pages and, like, half illustrations?

still. seanan mcguire would never.

bottom line: this was a massive disappointment but i'm still going to gaze lovingly at the cover for the next 3-5 business days because *ohmygodlookatit*.

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### **Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says**

MY BLOG: [Melissa Martin's Reading List](#)

I got this book from the library but I can tell you it is going to be added to my bookshelves as I must have it. The story is so different and dark and good. The graphics are **AMAZING!**

Queen Snow White doesn't seem too happy in her current situation, she is to be wed and have babies and do this and do that....

.....until one day, three of her dwarfs tell her about a land where everyone is asleep...

and the queen who is ready for some adventure, or so it seems, heads out to see what this nonsense is all about!

Queen Snow and the dwarfs arrive at the castle and find (just like they said) everyone asleep. There seems to be one old lady there that is watching over the Sleeping Beauty. She has been there for many years while the beauty slept. Until along came Snow, who isn't a prince but a Queen, and wakes her up.

We find out all is not as it seems as the Beauty wakes up. There is evilness afoot!! But alas, things are set to rights and the Queen and her dwarfs set out on their way... but the Queen is unsure of what she wants...

and then the decision is made...

I must say once again that I LOVE THIS BOOK! And I am sooooo glad I got it from the library... to think I wasn't even going to bother.. OH when you think your not going to bother with something, that you might not like it or have the time...BOTHER WITH IT, trust me, you might find a little gem or a big gem depending on how you look at it. :-)

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**Jessica ❀ ➡ Silverbow ➡ ❀ Rabid Reads-no-more says**

I liked this very much. I think I liked this very much. I'm *almost positive* I liked this very much . . . o.O

Full RTC.

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**PorshaJo says**

A wonderful Neil Gaiman retelling....remashing....reimagining of a fairy tale. A gothic, creepy tale for sure. I listened to the audio and it was wonderful. A full cast of characters with music and various sounds. Fantastic. Though I must get the print to see the drawings that are part of the book.

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**Miranda Reads says**

I've read so many versions of fairy tales that it takes a really interesting spin(dle) (ha) for me to enjoy.

**Unfortunately, this was not the case**

**The best part** - how Gaiman takes the fairy tale characters and weaves them into a new-old story.

*"You don't need princes to save you. I don't have a lot of patience for stories in which women are rescued by men."*

Yes, there's a **sleeping beauty** but she's nothing is like the original story. Yes, there's a **Snow White**, but gone is the calm Disney gal.

*Learning how to be strong, to feel her own emotions and not another's, had been hard; but once you learned the trick of it, you did not forget.*

**However.... the whole story had a very lackluster feel to it.**

Maybe it's because I've read too many versions of fairytales but **I just wasn't wowed.**

It has too many lines like this:

*But the path to her death, heartbeat by heartbeat, would be inevitable.*

or this:

*It would be the end of her life, she decided, if life was a time of choices.*

which (of course) made everything **ridiculously and overwhelmingly dramatic**... which is one sure way to take me out of the story.

And I **didn't feel the romance** - for some reason,  
I went on thinking that this would be a lesbian retelling of sleeping beauty. Boy was I wrong.

I really wanted to see that build/emotional development and there was absolutely nothing. Hugely disappointed.

Overall, this one was alright. Annnnd that's about as positive as I can get.

### **Audiobook Comments**

Read by Neil Gaiman and (as always) he provides an excellent audio rendition

[Blog](#) | [Instagram](#)

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### **Emily May says**

2 1/2 stars. I almost always love Gaiman's work, but this one was mediocre for me.

Riddell's artwork is - not surprisingly - **absolutely stunning**. The illustrations are black and white gorgeousness, decorated with gold leaf here and there. It's definitely a visually impressive book.

And yes - there's a cool twist to the traditional Sleeping Beauty tale, as well as a new spin on the Snow White story. But the book is so short that there are no really interesting or developed characters. The villain is the traditional, one-dimensional kind that longs for youth and power, and the story just felt like it needed something else in order to be memorable.

Pretty much any story that relies on its big twist kind of falls flat, in my opinion.

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