

Aurelia and the Witch of the Sleeping Tower

A Bedtime Adventure in the Grand Castle

Made especially for Aurelia, our brave and wonderful
girl.

This book belongs to Aurelia.

Light the lantern, climb the winding stairs, and listen. Something magical is waiting at the top.

The Castle Wakes Up Warm

Golden morning light poured through the tall castle windows and pooled across the stone floor like warm honey. Aurelia ran straight through it, arms wide, watching the dust motes spin and scatter all around her. The great hall smelled of woodsmoke and something sweet, and every tapestry on the wall glowed as if it had swallowed the sun.

She skidded to a stop in front of her favorite one. A magnificent green dragon breathed a curl of orange flame, and right beside it stood a good witch in a shimmering cloak. Aurelia pressed one small hand flat against the woven threads and whispered, "Hello, dragon. Hello, witch."



Papa crouched low behind a stone pillar and let out his very best dragon roar. Aurelia shrieked with delight and charged straight at him, arms out, absolutely fearless. Mama laughed from across the hall, swaying gently with baby Cyrus on her hip. Cyrus stared at Papa with enormous grey-green eyes and then broke into a sudden wide grin.

Aurelia grabbed Papa's sleeve and pulled him toward the tapestry. "Papa," she said, her voice full of certainty, "there is a good witch in there. I want to find a real one." Papa raised his eyebrows and looked at Mama, and Mama smiled like she already knew something wonderful.



Too Many Wants at Once

The afternoon was long and golden, and Aurelia wanted everything at once. She wanted a snack. She wanted the dragon story with the loud part. She wanted to hold Cyrus, and she wanted to run outside where the light was still warm on the stones. She spun in a circle in the corridor and announced all of it in one great breath, her cheeks flushed and her eyes bright with wanting.



Mama knelt down so their faces were close. "Sweet one," she said softly, "good things like to be waited for, just a little." Aurelia did not like that answer one bit. She crossed her arms, pressed her lips together, and stomped one foot on the cool stone floor. Cyrus, bundled against Mama's shoulder, stared at her with wide grey-green eyes, perfectly calm, as if he already knew something she did not.



The Sun Starts to Slide

The light through the tall castle windows turned long and golden, stretching warm stripes across the stone floor. Mama began tidying the toys, humming softly, and one by one the lanterns in the corridor dimmed to a gentle glow. Aurelia felt something tighten in her tummy. She did not want the bright day to fold itself away.

She pressed her back against the doorway of her bedchamber and crossed her arms tight. "I am not even a little bit tired," she announced, her voice firm and her cheeks going pink.



Mama set a sleepy Cyrus against her shoulder and turned toward Aurelia with calm, kind eyes. "Time to rest, little love," she said gently. Aurelia shook her head so fast her light brown hair swung across her face.

"Bedtime," Aurelia declared, "is only for bad witches." She stomped one foot on the cool stone floor, and the sound echoed all the way down the corridor. The castle went quiet around her big feeling, and somewhere far above, the night was just beginning.



Mama Tells of the Sleeping Tower

Mama settled onto the hearthside bench and patted the warm stone beside her. Aurelia crossed her arms, but her feet shuffled over anyway. Cyrus was already dozing in Mama's lap, his small fist curled near his chin. The fire crackled softly, painting everything amber and gold.

"Did you know," Mama said, her voice low and round like a secret, "that there is a good witch living right here in this very castle?" Aurelia's arms slowly uncrossed. Her eyes went wide.



"Her name is Willa," Mama said, "and she lives in the Sleeping Tower, the tall stone one at the heart of the castle. Every single night, she rests so her magic can grow big and bright again." Aurelia leaned in so close her nose nearly touched Mama's cheek. "A good witch?" she whispered. "A really real one?"

Mama smiled and nodded. The fire popped once. Aurelia sat very still, her big feelings suddenly quiet, filled up instead with something new and sparkling.



The Hum on the Night Breeze

Aurelia was just drawing a big breath to argue again when something stopped her.

A sound came floating through the tall window, low and warm and sweet, like a lullaby the stars might sing to each other. It curled through the cool night air and wrapped around the room. Aurelia's mouth closed. Her shoulders dropped. She stood very still, her eyes growing wide and round as two full moons.



Papa lifted the lantern and tilted his head. Mama glanced toward the window, Cyrus blinking quietly in her arms.

"It is coming from the tower," Papa said softly, his dark eyes warm with the glow.

Aurelia pressed her small hand to the stone sill and listened. The humming was gentle and golden, and it seemed to be calling her name without using any words at all. She turned to Papa and gave one small, brave nod.



Up the Winding Stairs

Aurelia took one look at the dark winding stairs and reached up for Papa's hand. His lantern swung gently, and warm amber light bloomed against the curved stone walls. The shimmer was already there, soft and golden, like the tower itself was breathing.

"I am going first," Aurelia announced. She set her small foot on the very first step and began to climb.



The humming grew sweeter the higher they went. Aurelia could hear Cyrus making his little gurgly sounds behind her, and Mama's steady footsteps just below. The stairs curved into shadow, but the lantern light followed her like a warm hand at her back.

She kept climbing, eyes lifted, heart thumping, almost there.



Willa at the Top

At the very top of the stairs, the door stood open, and soft golden light spilled out like honey. Aurelia stepped through first, her heart thumping small and fast.

There sat Willa. Her silver hair glowed in the light of floating orbs, and her deep blue cloak pooled around her like a quiet sea. She looked up at Aurelia and smiled, warm and unhurried, as if she had been expecting her all along.



"You came," Willa said softly. "Brave girl."

Aurelia stood very still, drinking it all in. Bundles of dried herbs hung from the curved stone ceiling, and the air smelled sweet and old and good. Behind her, Cyrus let out a happy gurgle, reaching his small hands toward Willa's gentle light. Aurelia felt something loosen in her chest, soft as a breath, and she took one small step closer.



Why Willa Waits

Willa reached into the folds of her blue cloak and opened her palm. There, in the center of her wrinkled hand, sat a seed no bigger than a raindrop. It was dark and still at first. Then, as Willa breathed slowly and held it quiet, the seed began to glow, warm and golden, like a small sun resting in her hand. Aurelia leaned in so close her nose nearly touched it.



"It only shines when I stop rushing," Willa said softly, "when I wait and trust." She tilted her palm toward Aurelia. The golden light swelled between them, painting both their faces warm. Something settled low and quiet inside Aurelia's chest, like a held breath finally let go. She understood, not in words, but in the glow. Tomorrow and its magic were already growing, patient and sure, just beneath the dark.



Aurelia Tries the Quiet

Willa placed something small and warm into Aurelia's cupped hands. It was the seed, glowing soft as a candle through Aurelia's fingers. "Carry it gently," Willa said, "and listen to your breath." Aurelia held it close and started down the winding stairs, Papa's lantern bobbing ahead. Each careful step felt different from stomping. Slower. Steadier. The little seed pulsed with a quiet golden light that made the stone walls look like honey.



Back in her bedchamber, Aurelia sat on the edge of her bed and breathed in slowly, then out. The seed brightened. She breathed again, and it glowed even warmer in her palms. Mama tucked a soft blanket around her, and Cyrus let out one small sleepy grunt from her arms. Aurelia smiled her dimpled smile and slipped the seed under her pillow. The room felt full and still and safe, and morning, she decided, was going to be wonderful.



Morning Magic

Aurelia opened her eyes to golden light. It poured through the arched stone window and lay in warm stripes across her blanket. She remembered. Her hand slipped under the pillow, fingers searching, and there it was, something small and soft and glowing.

She lifted it slowly into the morning air. The seed had opened in the night. A tiny flower sat in her palm, its petals shining with a gentle golden-white light, warm as a lantern, bright as a wish come true.



She ran down the corridor in her bare feet, the flower cupped carefully in both hands. "Mama! Papa! It bloomed!" she called, and her voice rang off the old stone walls like a little bell.

Mama laughed and pulled her close. Papa's eyes went wide and crinkly. Even Cyrus let out a happy grunt, reaching one chubby hand toward the glow. Aurelia looked at the flower and understood. She had waited, and the magic had come. Tomorrow would always be worth the wait.



What Our Hero Learned

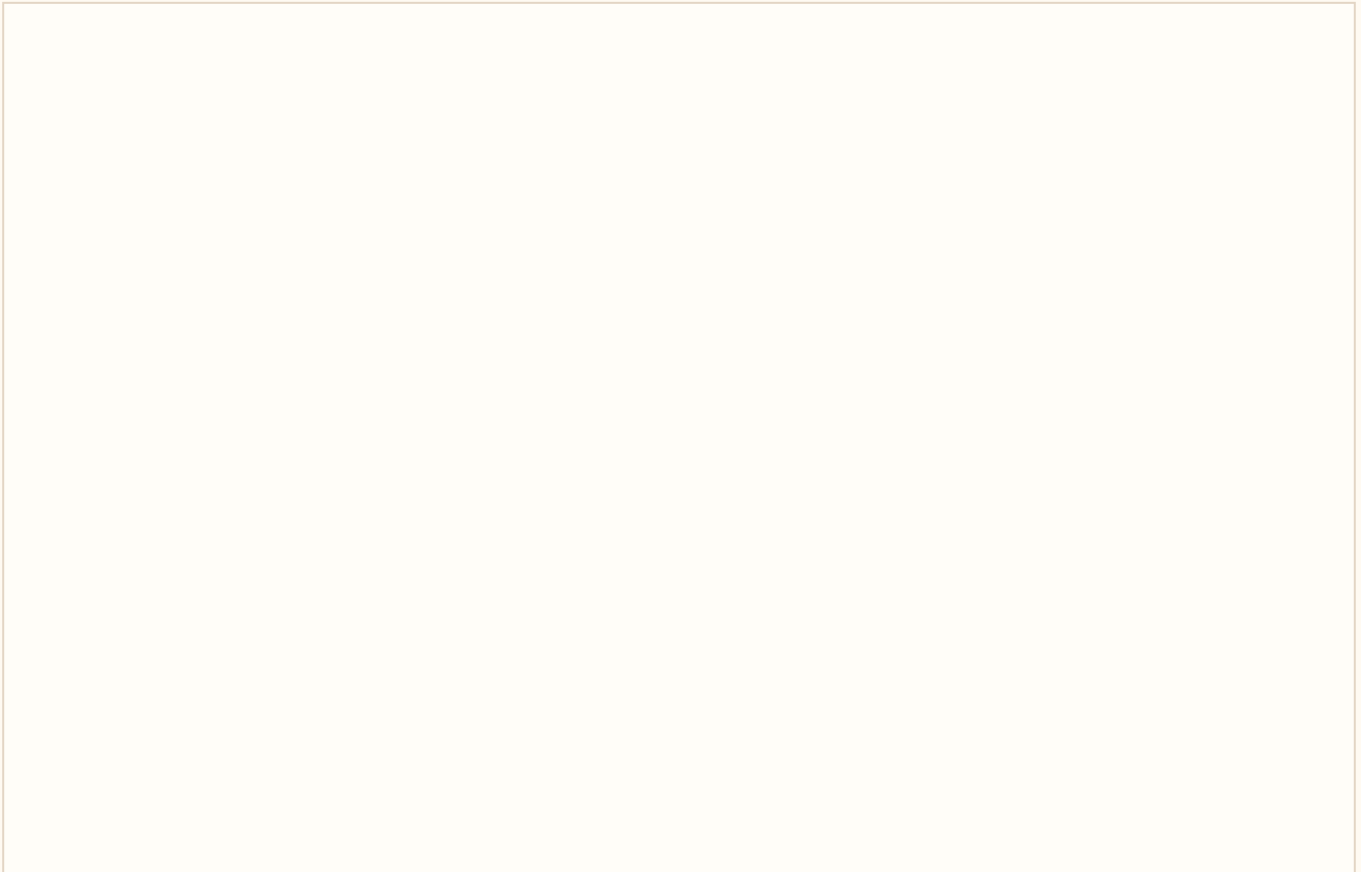
Aurelia had big feelings, and those feelings were real. Wanting things right now is something every brave heart knows. But on the night she followed the humming lullaby up to the Sleeping Tower, she learned something new. Witch Willa's magic only worked because she waited for it. And when Aurelia let the night come in without a fight, she found that morning brought something wonderful. Patience is its own kind of magic, and it was inside her all along.

Things to Talk About

- What sound did Aurelia follow up the winding stairs?
- Why does Witch Willa need to rest so her magic stays strong?
- What is something you like to look forward to in the morning?
- How did Aurelia feel at the top of the tower when she met Willa?

Draw Your Next Adventure

Draw Witch Willa's Sleeping Tower at night, with one glowing window and as many stars as you like around it.



About This Story

This story was made especially for Aurelia, with her name, her castle, and her very own adventure woven into every page.

A private personalized keepsake, made for family reading and quiet nights together.

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