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Parents Behavior in Fairytales

The fairytale protagonist's parents are rarely shown acting out their role efficiently in the duration of the story. The audience never sees Cinderella's father, Briar Rose's parents are hardly involved, and Little Red Cap is sent into the woods alone. In this particular genre, the parents are portrayed as people who do not care about their child's well-being. The behavior of the parents in fairytales causes the children to become insecure and uncomfortable, forever affecting their daily lives.

In "Briar Rose" by the Grimm Brothers, the neglectfulness of her parents makes Briar Rose isolated from them and others. It is known that Briar Rose would be cursed on her 15th birthday, at least her parents knew that; yet they still left her alone on that day. "On the day she turned fifteen, the king and queen had gone out, and she was left completely alone in the palace. So she wandered all over the place just as she pleased" (Grimm 183). Briar Rose's parents don't prioritize her to the point where they left her alone on the day she is meant to be cursed to attend some other business. If she is this irrelevant to her parents how can she expect others to care for her. In an article called "The joint impact of parental psychological neglect and peer isolation on adolescents' depression" the authors display the idea that, "The effect of caregiver neglect remains prominent even when controlling for peer isolation"(Christ, et al.) Neglect from parents can make children feel as if no one will care about them like their parents.

In Briar Rose's situation she has no companions other than her parents so when she is neglected by them she is completely alone. Some may say that Briar Rose's parents did care for her since her father tried to prevent the curse by banning all the spindles in the kingdom. However, protecting their child is the bare minimum for a parent and actually being there for them is just as important.

Another impact that the neglect has on Briar Rose is that it makes her uneasy around her parents. She seems eager to leave her parents and get married when she wakes from the curse. Briar Rose is awakened with a kiss from a prince she never met, after she wakes the rest of the kingdom is also awakened and she and the prince are married and "live happily to the end of their days" (Grimm 164). Even though she just met this prince she seems to approve of spending the rest of her life with him. According to "Child Maltreatment and Insecure Attachment: a Meta-Analysis", "Anxious-avoidant children ignore or avoid their parents after separation and show little preference to parent over a stranger" (Baer and Colleen). Briar Rose was separated from her parents by the hundred year sleep curse and got married immediately after. We can assume that she is an anxious-avoidant child due to the separation from her parents due to the curse and their lack of attention to her before that. She never really had a connection with her parents and the separation from them during the curse only makes it worse.

Cinderella's stepmother treats her with unfairness, making her unfamiliar with goodwill and a loving family. As a result, Cinderella becomes very passive and has low self esteem. She is consistently degraded by her stepmother, who scorns her, "'What's this terrible and useless thing doing in our rooms?' the stepmother said. 'Off with you into the kitchen. Whoever wants to eat bread must first earn it. She can be our maid.'" (Grimm 69) Cinderella's stepmother regards her as a maid rather than a daughter, treating her with distaste. Cinderella grows accustomed to ill

treatment and accepts it due to her lack of knowledge. This is an example of a parent's harmful behavior impacting a child's way of thinking. As recorded by the article "Cinderella': Family Pathology, Identity-Sculpting and Mate-Selection." by Stanley Rosenman, "Her old signposts as to what is reliable and stable go crashing. She is dispossessed, abandoned, forgotten by those who cared for her (Rosenman)." Cinderella is treated as if she isn't even part of the family the moment her step-mother entered the story. The step mother's hatred and neglect to Cinderella as a parent is the reason why she suffers during her life. Cinderella becomes ignorant and fully dependent on her family's orders. One can say that without them, she is completely lost.

Cinderella's father was also largely absent after he married her step mother, abandoning Cinderella to suffer alone, and damaging her idea of love. By the time the story begins, we are only familiar with the protagonist and her tormentors, with no protective figure to shield her. "However, the stepmother already had two daughters from her first husband. They had beautiful features but proud, nasty, and wicked hearts. After the wedding had now been celebrated, and all three entered the house, a difficult time began for the poor child." (Grimm 69) With new additions to the family, he does not interact with Cinderella. He isn't even referred to as her father, instead he is called "the man". Cinderella is given a difficult time because of the step-family and yet he does nothing. Stanley Rosenman claims in his article, "Cinderella': Family Pathology, Identity-Sculpting and Mate-Selection" that, "The father, the key breadwinner, is spared from being the victim of mutilation only by setting up his daughter as prey for these group cravings" (Rosenman). Cinderella's father ignores the situation his daughter is in to avoid being targeted as well and basically sacrifices her for his benefit. Cinderella's own father refused to protect her, negating her reasons for why she would expect anyone else to. In her perspective, this may as well be the most loving a family may be towards her. Cinderella's

only means of support was to abide by the rules set for her by her step mother, since her own father decided to ignore her needs.

A parent is a child's the only reliable and trustworthy person in their life, so when they are left to be independent like Little Red Cap, they cannot be expected to make good judgements. Especially in the early stages of life, children are at an experimental stage and bubbling with curiosity. They become more prone to make mistakes because they do not know better. In some situations, it can become dangerous to leave a child unattended. "Little Red Cap promised to obey her mother. Well, the grandmother lived out in the forest, half an hour from the village, and as soon as Little Red Cap entered the forest, she encountered the wolf. However, Little Red Cap didn't know what a wicked sort of an animal he was and was not afraid of him." (Grimm 85) Little Red Cap is so reliant on her mother that she is unable to tell who or what is dangerous on her own. Her mother should not have let the small child deliver the basket to her grandma alone, leading to her demise. This can be further elaborated from the article "Mind You Stay on the Path!' The Representation of the Parent-Child Relationship in Stories for Children" in which Gabrina Pounds states that "the parent retains full power and authority within a hierarchical relationship in which the child is fully dependent on the parent, and has no agency, understanding or self-reliance." (Pounds) A child who has no understanding of the world will be left in a horrible situation when their parents aren't looking after them. Little Red Cap's mother had failed to fulfill her basic duties, unable to protect her daughter from harm. It should be basic knowledge not to send out a child into the woods on their own.

There is also no mention of Red Cap's father indicating that he is not involved in her life at all, leaving her all alone to do these difficult tasks. Red Cap's father is almost seen as a missing piece in her life. In the Grimm's brothers' version of the story, A huntsman comes to

save the day fulfilling the role of a father (Grimm 87). In “Little Red Riding Hood” Then and Now, Fay e R. Johnson and Carole M. Carrol states, “Neither Big Red Riding Hood nor her grandmother are rescued by a woodcutter nor anyone else in these 1990’s versions of the tale. They often get killed”(Johnson and Carrol 76). When there is no father figure including a woodcutter or huntsman, Red Cap is always destined to a horrible fate. The father neglects his daughter in Little Red Cap and causes her to suffer in unfortunate circumstances.

Cinderella, Briar Rose, and Little Red Cap all have neglectful parents who don't take proper care of them. It impacts their views on life and their future decisions. Cinderella and Briar Rose both marry the first man they met, they were never given time from their parents so they most likely aren't aware what a proper relationship looks like. It is possible that the princes they married do not treat them right but they wouldn't even know that. Having no information on relationships and roles can lead to children picking toxic partners in relationships. Cinderella and Little Red Cap become dependent on their mother figures. Their fathers aren't mentioned at all as if they are not a part of the girls' life. Cinderella is forced to deal with her stepmother's torture and Little Red Cap is left alone in difficult situations and is taught that if she does not do what her mother says she will suffer. This much dependence makes it hard for children to make decisions on their own.

In Sleeping Beauty the parents neglect Briar Rose which causes her to isolate from others and feel unusual with her parents and other people in general. She also rushes into getting married as she hasn't experienced proper care and thinks the first man she meets will provide her the love she had been yearning for the past several years. Cinderella also rushes into marriage because of a similar situation at home. In her case she is not only neglected by her father but is also hated by her Step-mother giving her very low expectations of a loving family. Little Red

Cap is sent away without her mothers guidance and doesn't know what to do. She ends up trusting an evil wolf and being tricked and almost eaten.

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