

Kissing is Yucky

by

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In the Great Castle, Sleeping Beauty snored in a most unladylike fashion. Everyone else was asleep too. They were good at it. They had been practising for 81 years.

In the small castle, Gloria, the Good Fairy, stood on tiptoe to see over the people in front of her and wished she was one of those dainty fairies that only exist in stories. Then she'd have gossamer wings to carry her high enough to get a better look. But Gloria was a real, human-size fairy so her wings were even less useful than those of a penguin.

At that moment, the baby prince woke up and screamed with rage. His mid-morning nap had been rudely interrupted by someone pouring water on his head.

"It's supposed to be lucky to cry at your christening," said Doris, the Fairly Incompetent Fairy.

"It didn't do Princess Beauty much good," declared Muriel, the Miserable Fairy. "She screamed and screamed, but just look at her now."

Gloria blushed with embarrassment and shuffled awkwardly from foot to foot. "That's not my fault," she muttered, "I did the best I could. Anyway this young man will solve that little difficulty as soon as he's grown up."

The vicar finished the ceremony, muttered "Amen" and passed the prince back to his nurse with a sigh of relief. The damp patch on his robe showed it wasn't just the baby's head that was wet.

"I'm glad that's over," said the Good Fairy, as she fanned herself with her hymn book. "I love a good christening, but it's too hot in here."

"That's because there are so many people," replied Doris. "The king and queen invited everyone they knew as well as all of us fairies. They didn't want to take any chances after the last..."

"That's enough, Doris," snapped Gloria. "There's no need to go on about it."

The guests filed out of the Royal Chapel to the accompaniment of a wheezy organ. As soon as they were in the open air, the crowd rushed across the courtyard into the Great Hall where the feast was waiting for them.

The fairies were in the lead as was only to be expected when there was food about. Real fairies prefer chips and chocolate and cream buns to nectar and start their day by drinking strong coffee instead of morning dew.

"47, 48, 49," muttered the Good Fairy anxiously as she balanced a plate of food in one hand and a drink in the other. "I knew it! She's not here. It's all gone wrong again."

"You could well be right," said the Miserable Fairy. "But Beatrix the Bad was definitely invited. She was just too busy to come."

"Too busy!" said Gloria. "She can't be too busy for a christening. She's a fairy."

"But you know how she's been since she started writing. The success has gone straight to her head. This afternoon she's signing copies of her latest book, *How to Solve Your Sleep Problems*."

Their conversation was interrupted by a fanfare of trumpets announcing the return of the prince. He was now dry at both ends and ready to meet his visitors.

The Good Fairy took him in her arms and sat down in an armchair to perform her godmotherly duty. "Who's a lovely little diddy widdums babykins den?" she cooed.

The prince stared at her in wide-eyed astonishment.

The Good Fairy bounced him up and down a little.

The prince smiled.

She bounced him up and down even harder.

The prince was sick.

She mopped up the mess with her hankie. Then, to prove she didn't mind at all, Gloria gave the baby a big, slobbery kiss.

The prince wrinkled his face in disgust, opened his mouth wide and screamed.

The Queen rushed up with the King following close behind. "I'm dreadfully sorry," she said. "He doesn't like kissing."

"It's most unfortunate," said the King. "Most unfortunate. Especially under the circumstances."

"Now, now. Don't upset yourselves," said the Good Fairy. "I'm sure he'll grow out of it." But her smile was full of a confidence she didn't feel.

This was more than just unfortunate. It was a potential disaster and Beatrix the Bad was behind it. Gloria was sure of that.

Ten years passed.

In the great castle, dust lay everywhere but there were no cobwebs. Even the spiders were asleep.

At Number 32, Buttercup Avenue, three fairies were enjoying a mid-morning snack. Or to be more truthful, two fairies were enjoying themselves. The third was living up to her name.

"You shouldn't eat those," moaned the Miserable Fairy, as she looked at the cream buns. "The sugar rots your teeth, you know. The chocolate brings you out in spots and, as for the cream, well, you should see what it does to your heart."

"Have you been reading those health magazines again, Muriel," asked the Good Fairy.

"Only one or two, Gloria. Surely one or two can't do any harm."

"They are written for humans, you daft fairy. We're immortal, remember. We can eat cream until it comes out of our ears if we like. It won't do us any harm."

"It would trickle down our necks and make our dresses mucky," said Doris the Fairly Incompetent.

The Good Fairy groaned. There were times when Doris and Muriel together could drive her to distraction, and this was one of them.

Doris looked embarrassed and tried to change the subject. "Any news of the young prince," she asked.

"Not recently. It's time we checked on him," said Gloria, and she reached for her magic mirror.

"Are you sure we should?" asked Muriel in her best voice of doom. "There's been reports of them causing serious twinkles in the eye. I was only reading the other day -"

"That's enough, Muriel," said the Good Fairy. "Have a bun and keep quiet." She help the mirror up to the light and muttered some words under her breath.

"The picture's a bit fuzzy," said Doris.

Gloria thumped the mirror's frame with her fist, and the image of the young prince sprang into focus. He was running very fast down a corridor.

As they watched, he dived into his bedroom, slammed the door and turned the key in the lock.

Footsteps sounded in the corridor, and someone banged on the door until it shook. "Come out of there at once, young man," shouted the King. "Come and kiss your Aunt goodnight."

"Shan't!" said the prince.

"Who's Mummy's favourite little boy then?" the Queen cooed through the door. "Who's going to please his Mumsy Wumsy by giving Auntie a lovely big kissy wissy?"

The prince looked as if he might be sick. "Leave me alone!" he yelled. "I won't kiss anyone. Kissing is yucky."

"Oh dear," said Doris the Fairly Incompetent.

"No good will come of this," said Muriel the Miserable.

"I'm sure he'll grow out of it," said Gloria cheerfully, but she didn't feel as happy as she looked. Deep down inside, she was angry. Why did Beatrix the Bad have to spoil everything?

More years went by.

In the great castle, everyone slept. The dogs dreamed of chasing cats, the cats dreamed of chasing mice, and the mice dreamed of eating cheese. The cheese, which had a very poor imagination, dreamed of nothing at all.

In Number 32 Buttercup Avenue, the three fairies were discussing the prince's progress while they munched their way through a large box of chocolates.

"Let's have another look," said Doris. "He might like kissing now he's grown up."

It took a few minutes to tune into the castle. After the usual thump, the picture was excellent but there was no sign of the prince. All they could see was a fat fairy dressed as a furry banana who was singing about the delights of Fairyfluff Milkshakes.

"I hate adverts," grumbled Muriel.

"I'm sure that's Edith," said Gloria. "I'd recognise those feet anywhere."

Doris beamed. "She will be pleased. She's always wanted to break into show business."

The song came to a shrieking end, and the giant banana was instantly replaced by an image of the prince. He was tall and handsome now - everything a fairytale prince should be. There was just one problem.

"Oh, go on," said the girl sitting beside him on the garden bench.

"No, Petunia," said the prince. "Your mother wouldn't like it."

"She won't know," said Petunia with a mischievous smile. "She's busy eating bread and honey in the parlour with the Queen." As she spoke, she slid along the bench towards him.

He slid away.

She slid towards him.

He slid away.

She slid towards him.

He slid off the end of the bench and landed with a thump in a patch of mud. "No! No! No!" he shouted, as he leaped to his feet. "Kissing is yucky." Then he ran off across the palace garden with Petunia chasing him.

The Good Fairy tried to look confident but failed. Her smile drooped at the corners as she muttered, "I still think he'll grow out of it."

"But he's only got twenty four hours to do it in," said Muriel in her best gloomy voice.

"It's not too late yet," said Gloria. "He just needs a little help, that's all." She picked up her wand and started to polish it carefully.

Doris's eyes opened wide in panic. "You can't interfere."

"Why ever not?" asked Gloria. "Isn't that what fairies do all the time?"

"Beatrix will never let you get away with it," said Doris.

"And you know what she's like if you try to cross her," warned Muriel.

The Good Fairy squinted down the handle of her wand and made a slight adjustment to the star at the top. "But suppose she was busy elsewhere," she suggested. "Pass me the phone. My fairy godmothering got Peregrine his job in TV. It's time he did me a favour in return.

In the great castle, a new day dawned. The cock snored as usual. But this wasn't any old day. It was exactly one hundred years since the princess pricked her finger on the spinning wheel and fell asleep.

In the black castle, Beatrix the Bad was wide awake and so was everyone else. A television crew had moved in and were in the process of rearranging the whole place. People were moving furniture, putting up huge lights and laying electrical cables. A sound engineer wandered between them, muttering "Testing. Testing," into a microphone that looked like a shaggy rat on a stick.

Beatrix quivered with excitement as she searched through her wardrobe for the right dress. "Should I wear the plain black?" she wondered out loud. "Or maybe the black one with the black stripes or perhaps the black one with the black spots would be better."

"They are all divine," said the make-up lady as she patted powder onto the fairy's nose.

"Absolutely divine, darling," added Peregrine Prout, the producer. "I do hope your sudden arrival hasn't disrupted any other plans."

"No, not at all," Beatrix lied, with only a brief glance at the calendar. After all, this was the big chance she had always dreamed about. A hundred years of planning were of no importance in comparison with being this week's celebrity on *The North Bank Show*.

In the small castle, the prince was awake. His three visitors had made sure of that.

He sat up in bed, folded his hands and stuck his chin in the air in a very determined way. "I won't go," he declared.

"But you must, my dear," said the Queen. "Princess Beauty needs you to kiss her so she can wake up."

"No!" said the prince. "I am not kissing anyone. Kissing is yucky."

"Come on, lad," said the King. "Just one kiss. We all have to do things we don't like sometimes."

"No!"

"But you can't refuse," said Gloria. "Your destiny awaits you."

And it can go on waiting as far as I'm concerned," said the prince. "I won't do it."

The King scowled at the Good Fairy. "I thought you promised he'd grow out of it."

This was exactly the situation Gloria had feared. But she was ready for it. She had a plan. In a very firm voice, she said, "Don't worry. He's going to grow out of it right now. I'll see to that."

She sent the King and Queen to arrange for two horses for the journey. As soon as they were safely out of earshot, she turned her attention to the prince. "Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be a frog?"

"No," said the prince in as slightly puzzled voice.

Gloria smiled the menacing smile she had been practising all night and asked "Would you like to find out?" in as equally menacing voice.

The prince looked worried. "You wouldn't. Would you?"

"What do *you* think?" said Gloria without actually answering his question. This had to work. If it didn't, he'd discover she was only bluffing.

"But you're a GOOD fairy. GOOD fairies don't do that sort of thing." The prince looked at that smile again and bit his lip nervously. "Or do they?"

Gloria stared at him hard for a moment before she answered. "Do you really want to find out?" she asked. "Or would you rather play safe and come with me to kiss the princess?"

The prince gave the situation careful thought. Then he sighed and climbed reluctantly out of bed.

In the great castle, Gloria and the prince were the only people awake. The princess lay on the bed in front of them, snoring in a most unladylike fashion.

"Are you sure I have to?" asked the prince.

"Yes," said Gloria firmly and pushed him towards the bed.

He knelt down beside the princess's head and looked back at the Good Fairy again. "Now?" he asked.

"Yes. Now or else..." Gloria stepped forward slightly and raised her wand to what she hoped looked like a threatening angle. This had to work. If it didn't, he'd discover she was only bluffing. She'd never have the heart to turn him into a frog.

The prince shut his eyes and lent forwards slowly. His lips brushed against Princess Beauty's hair and sent a cloud of dust into the air.

"Aatchoo!" sneezed the prince.

"Get on with it," said the Good Fairy as she stood behind him with her wand poised for action. "This is your last warning."

The prince didn't hesitate any longer. He shut his eyes, screwed up his face and kissed Princess Beauty firmly on the lips.

The princess stirred, slightly then woke up and opened her eyes.

The prince looked surprised. He licked his lips thoughtfully. "That was good," he said and kissed her again.

For a fleeting moment, Gloria felt triumphant. She was right. He had grown out of it. Then she noticed Princess Beauty.

The princess was sitting up in bed with her face wrinkled in disgust. She looked very, very cross. "How dare you!" she yelled. Then she pushed the prince away so hard that he staggered backwards across the room.

"Be careful!" shouted Gloria, but she was too late. The prince fell onto the spinning wheel and pricked his finger.

"Kissing is yucky," yelled the princess. But the prince didn't hear her. He was fast asleep.

The Good Fairy sighed. "I expect she'll grow out of it."

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