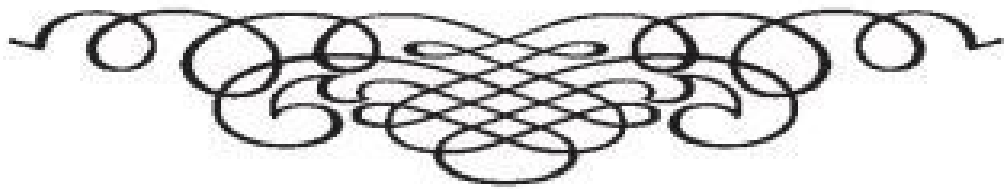


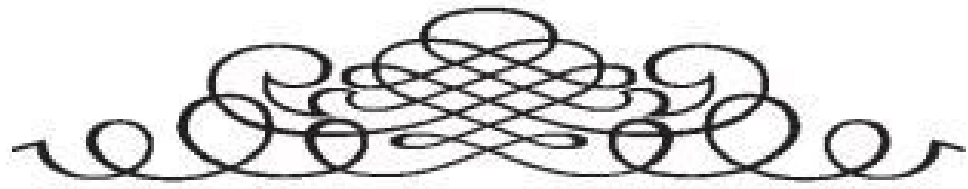
Bedtime STORIES

A Collection of Erotic Fairy Tales



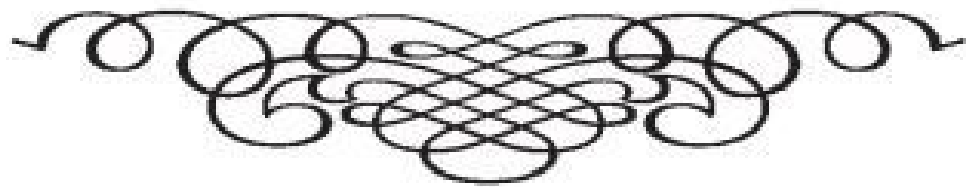
JEAN JOHNSON

HEAT
New York



Bedtime
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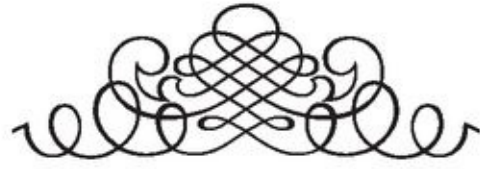
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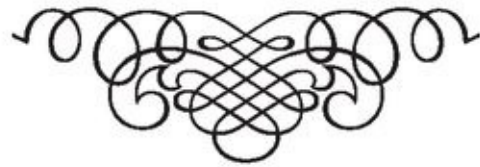
SHIFTING PLAINS
BEDTIME STORIES

THE SONS OF DESTINY
THE SWORD
THE WOLF
THE MASTER
THE SONG
THE CAT
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New York

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I really have the coolest job in the world . . . and the best readers. You have all been very kind in taking the time to contact me and let me know what you liked, and even what you didn't like, about my stories. (Yes, I include the didn't-like stuff, because it can still be helpful in shaping my future works, particularly when phrased politely and thoughtfully.) So thank you very, very much.

Also, I'd like to extend a thank-you to all the editors and compilers of folklore, legends, and fairy tales everywhere, and to the many, many tellers of those tales over the centuries. I'm proud to be part of this long-standing tradition of entertaining people, and I'll do my best to keep it up.

~Jean



The Frog Prince

Author's Note: Welcome, and I hope you'll enjoy my versions of erotically revised fairy tales. Revising them erotically isn't as strange as it might seem, either; I'll bet you didn't know that in the oldest German version of this story, the princess didn't own a golden ball so much as she owned a golden ballus . . . which was a local corruption of the Latin word *phallus*. Puts a whole new twist on this classic tale, doesn't it? In an effort to preserve the true spirit and meaning of this classic fairy tale, I feel it should be told in a way that honors that original, adult intent.

PRINCE Henrik was a frog. It wasn't his idea, but he was one. There were worse things he could have been enchanted into, of course. The flies he ate, for one; it was bad enough how the wings tickled on the way down into his gullet, but to actually *be* a fly would have been horrible. A disturbingly short life span and an unnatural attraction to animal droppings were not at all on his list of must-have experiences.

Still, there was the mud between one's toes; that wasn't as bad as it could have been. At least, not on a warm summer's day like today. It was soft and squelchy, and satisfying in a way he hadn't felt since he was a lad. The only problem was, he wasn't a lad, and feeling like a lad was what had gotten him into this predicament.

Prince Henrik was doomed to remain a frog, unless he either married the Fairy Tilda—who was more than twice his age, and Henrik just couldn't bring himself to marry a woman who had been bored before even his own mother—or found a young woman willing to fulfill the fairy's codicils.

I shouldn't have said to her face that I didn't need a ♠♠second mother." That wasn't well done of me. Nor did it help when my father's chief counselor pointed out she was surely in the last gasp of her childbearing years and thus unlikely to bear a suitable heir . . . and I definitely should not have agreed, let alone concurred so wholeheartedly.

I also should have paid more attention to my geography lessons as a lad . . .

Part of the Fairy Tilda's curse had been to translocate Henrik to a foreign land. Instead of the birch trees he was familiar with, this forest boasted a plethora of broad-trunked oaks. The only tolerable things about it were the mild weather and the large, tasty flies. One full month of life as a frog had taught him the different flavors of a variety of insects from spiders to gnats, and the fat, fuzzy, flies were the best. Except they tickled when they went down. Tasty, but disturbing at the same time.

If ever a frog could pray to the ears of the angels in Heaven, Henrik certainly tried. Every single meal, he offered up a prayer for deliverance. Every single mouthful, he worried he would never again be a man.

A strange, beautiful sound tickled his ears, or what passed for them. For a moment, the transformed prince wondered if he was hearing angels laughing. It was coming from the far bank of the river he had been deposited by, the river which was his temporary home. The near bank had a gentle slope to the green and mossy, with the occasional thicket of bracken ferns. The far side was steep and clifflike; had he been a man, it would have been taller than his head, counting from the rippling surface of the water.

The noise echoed across the little valley again; his wide, blinking eyes swiveled and focused as through

pastel-clad figures came into view. One of the three maidens—for they seemed to be young and lively and full of laughter, though he couldn't be completely sure at this distance—was holding aloft in one hand something gold and glinting. She twisted and turned in her attempts to dodge as the other two leaped and grabbed, trying to wrest it from her grasp.

Cries of “No, it's mine!” and “Oh, please!” and “I just want to hold it!” echoed across the water along with a particularly odd, almost lasciviously voiced, “Just hold it? *I* want to *try* it!”

Intrigued, but unable to make sense of what the golden thing was, Henrik cursed his amphibian eyes. They were good enough for seeing things clearly within a few yards, but not so good for viewing things at a far distance. Hopping along the edge of the water—he never went far from the water, as his skin seemed to prefer being moist—he twisted his eyes this way and that, trying to focus on the object in the dark-haired maiden's hands.

The three of them dodged and grasped, laughed and shrieked, begged and protested, until an accidental bump and an unexpected trip sent the owner of the gilded whatever tumbling to her hands and knees. The gleaming object, flung free of her grasp, tumbled over the edge of the low cliff and *splotted* into the river.

The other two girls, with their brown hair and their giggles, caught themselves before they also fell. Huddled together, they gaped at the water, dark with the thick mud coating the river bottom. From their disappointed, rueful looks on their faces, he guessed they couldn't see whatever had been dropped. The way they sheepishly backed up as the other maiden struggled to her feet told Henrik they weren't about to help the girl look for her fallen treasure, either.

“Wonderful. Just wonderful!” the grass-stained maiden muttered as she dusted off her gown. “Well, don't just stand there. Help me get down the bank!”

The other two girls warily eyed the muddy edge of the cliff and backed up. Henrik heard them muttering something about “chores” and “embroidery” as they shook their heads. Without further ado, they hiked their skirts and ran up the slope, heading deeper into the woods. The young woman they left behind dropped to her knees and stared glumly at the river below.

Mindful of the terms of his enchanted imprisonment, Henrik hopped into the river. Whatever the girl had lost, if he could help her find it, she might consider herself indebted to him. It was a slim chance, but the only one he had. All he had to do was find a golden, metallic object in the mud of the riverbed.

It didn't take long to find it, since logic dictated the object had fallen straight in, given the heavy splash it had made. Though it hadn't been swayed more than an inch or two from its trajectory by the river's current—geometry had been one of Henrik's favorite classes as a lad with his tutors—the bottom was very muddy at that point, giving him only a glimpse of polished gold. Orienting himself underwater, Henrik made sure he could find the spot again, then stroked up toward the surface.

His wide-swiveling eyes spotted the maiden gingerly picking her way down to the river's edge, several yards away. Letting the current carry him toward her, he watched her test the water with one hand, flinching at the chilly temperature. He was used to it, as it was one of the hazards of amphibious life, but she was clearly dubious about getting wet in search of her lost treasure. Leaping onto a head-sized rock at the water's edge, Henrik cleared his throat.

“*Ahem*. Good afternoon to you, fair maiden!” he called out.

Startled, she lifted her gaze from the water. This close, Henrik could finally make out the details of her features, since as a frog he was woefully shortsighted. She had lovely light blue eyes and curly brown hair, a slightly turned-up nose, and a hint of freckles on her otherwise creamy complexion.

“Who . . . Who's there? Who spoke?” she demanded, twisting to look up and down the bank.

“Down here, on the rock. The frog,” Henrik clarified. She turned and peered his way.

“The . . . *what?*”

Executing a courtly bow wasn't easy in an amphibious form, but Henrik did his best. “Greetings, fair maiden. I am, as you see, an enchanted frog, capable of speech, including intellectual discourse and helpful hints.”

She blinked at him.

“I believe you have lost a golden object in the muddy depths of this river, yes?” he inquired politely.

“A . . . talking frog,” she muttered.

“Yes,” Henrik repeated patiently. “My name is Henrik. About a month ago, I said the wrong thing to a fairy—for which I am ever so sorry—and now I am stuck in the body of a frog. But I still have the wit and courage of a man. I noticed how you lost an item to the river, and I just happen to know exactly where to find it.”

She blushed. It wasn't a shy, maidenly, becoming blush. It was a bright red, full-faced, all-the-way-down-onto-the-sternum blush, as revealed by the square neckline of her gown. Henrik wondered what could have embarrassed her so much.

“Would you like my assistance in recovering it?” When she said nothing, he prompted, “Or would you rather leave it in the mud and forget the expense of its fine gilding?”

She buried her face in her hands for a moment. “My mother is going to kill me . . . And a frog! *frog* offers to help me!”

“A talking frog,” Henrik reminded her. A gnat buzzed into range of his tongue. Gnats were tasty, but not very filling. He carefully ignored it so as not to upset this maiden with too much froggi-ness. “Do you want my help, or would you rather splash around in the cold water and squish around in the mud, trying to find your lost item on your own?”

Face still red, she lowered her hands and gave him a tight-lipped look. Hitching up her skirts, she gingerly waded into the water. Henrik stifled the urge to point out that the knee-deep section she was wading through was a good eight feet or more from where she needed to be wading. Instead, he mustered his patience and waited. She finally gave up after several more minutes, shivering as she crawled out of the water.

“Oohhh! It's no use! I've lost it forever!”

“No, you haven't,” Henrik countered. At the sound of his croaking confidence, she started and glared at him.

“Haven't you gone away yet?” she asked, struggling to wring out her skirt without baring too much more of her lovely pale legs.

“My offer still stands . . . if with a small price,” Henrik stated. “I know exactly where your lost item has fallen. In fact, it can be done in a mere handful of minutes, with the assistance of your belt. And I will gladly help you retrieve it . . . *if* . . .”

“If?” she asked warily.

“Well, first you should introduce yourself. I, as I have stated, am Henrik.” He left off the part about being a prince. Such things would be impossible to prove unless and until he was restored to his human form. “What is your name?”

“Gisette.” She lifted her chin a little, though her proud look was spoiled a little by her shivering. “Princess Gisette.”

“A pleasure to meet you, Your Highness.” Again he attempted a bow, though his stubby body wasn't exactly built for such things. “I would be willing to help you retrieve your fallen item, Princess Gisette . . . *if* you would be willing to help me recover my humanity. Suffering as I do from an enchantment, I require your assistance to break the fairy's spell that traps me in this form. You want

your lost valuable, and I want to be a man once again. Swear you will assist me, and I will assist you.

Abandoning her hem, she rubbed her upper arms. “What . . . what sort of assistance?”

“That you take me home with you. That you treat me as your closest companion. That you let me eat off your plate and drink from your cup. That you let me spend an entire month as your constant closest companion,” he clarified. “And . . . that you let me sleep in your bed with you.”

“Oh! Oh, how dare you! I am a princess, not some village trollop!” Gisette immediately protested. “I am an unmarried maiden of genteel birth, and I will not—”

“My lady, I am a *frog*. I can hardly endanger your chastity in this form,” Henrik said, chiding her dryly. “Now, you can either acquiesce to this simple enough request, or you can risk freezing yourself in this chilly, muddy river looking for something you haven’t the first clue how to find.”

She eyed him dubiously.

“I assure you I can be an entertaining, delightful companion,” he added. “You won’t regret it.”

“How will my belt help you retrieve my lost . . . item?” Princess Gisette inquired warily.

“I will take the end of it into the river with me, wrap it around the item, and allow you to draw it out without getting wet. At least, any more wet than you already are,” he added. “Once you have it back, you and I can travel back to your home where I shall be your companion for the next month. We shall eat together, sleep together, laugh together, and play together. Hopefully somewhere in there I shall be released from my enchanted state, whereupon I will go merrily on my way back home, and you shall be able to rest contentedly, knowing you have done a good deed in aiding me. Just as I will have done a good deed in aiding you . . . Are we agreed?”

Sighing heavily, Princess Gisette unbuckled the long belt wrapped three times around her hips and around her waist. “We are agreed . . . I suppose.”

Lifting his foreleg, Henrik gestured her closer. She inched toward him and he patiently beckoned until she was almost standing upon him, the long strip of leather trailing from her hand. Taking the end of the belt in his mouth, he dove into the water. The golden object still glinted in the mud right where he had found it.

Frog paws weren’t the kind most suited for digging, but the mud was soft. Kicking up clouds of thick silt, he managed to work enough of the oblong object free and wrapped the belt around it. Tying the knot was a bit complicated, but he managed something that looked like it would hold.

A kick of his hind legs popped him back up to the surface. “Pull it up gently!” he warned the princess. “I have no thumbs, so I wasn’t able to secure it as tightly as I’d wish.”

Nodding, she gingerly tugged on the belt. The leather went taut after a moment, then angled itself through the water as she dragged the object up out of the mud. Stooping, Gisette picked it up. Despite the mud and the leather wrapped around it, Henrik could see it was longish, somewhat lumpy, and not just gilded, but plated in gold, or perhaps even crafted from solid gold. She turned from him as she picked off the leather, then stooped and swished it in the river, but he caught a glimpse of its true shape all the same. Henrik gaped.

“It’s a *phallus*?” he croaked, as much from surprise as from his enchanted state. “You dropped a gilded *phallus*?”

“Oh! You . . . you . . . horrible beast!” Flushed with embarrassment, Princess Gisette hiked up her skirts and fled.

“Wait! Wait—our bargain! Please, wait?” Grimacing as she sprinted away, Henrik stared glumly after her. So much for fulfilling Tilda’s demands on how to break his unlucky enchantment. About to consign himself to spending the rest of his life as a frog, he spotted a glint of gold with his swiveling eyes. It was from the buckle of her belt, abandoned on the ground when she had freed her rath-

naughty toy.

Peering up at the hillside, Henrik made up his mind to follow her. He tucked the leather of the belt into his mouth, letting its ends trail after him like two flat, brown snakes, and started hopping in the direction she and the other two maidens had gone. It might take him all day to hop his way after her, but he doubted she had wandered overly far with her amusing, symbolic prize.

With her muddied belt in his possession as proof of their bargain, he just might have the means of enforcing that bargain, and thus have a chance at ending his enchantment. *If he could find where she had gone.*

Nothing like a long hike, a difficult quest, and an uncertain chance of success to make a man-turned-frog feel humble, he thought. *Well, that and stubborn. I will not let Fairy Tilda win. I will break her curse. Somehow.*



THE knock at the door disrupted supper. It wasn't often the royal family came to this hunting lodge, but when they did, King Henri preferred not to be disturbed. Dinner, the midday meal, was the time for requests and interruptions, but not the evening meal. The guards knew this, and it was a hesitant knight who poked his helmed head through the doorway.

"What is it?" King Henri inquired, his attention deliberately focused on cutting into his lamb chops. Queen Jeanne eyed her husband, then the guard, waiting to hear his excuse for disturbing the tranquillity. Princess Gisette picked up her goblet and sipped at the freshly squeezed grape juice it contained, unconcerned by the interruption.

"Um . . . sire . . . there is a . . . well . . . a talking frog outside," the guardsman said apologetically. Gisette choked.

Her father stilled the movements of his fork and knife. "A what?"

"A talking frog, sire. He claims he assisted Her Highness with a certain task earlier, in exchange for a certain set of privileges and, erm, has even returned with Her Highness's belt as proof of the lawfully made barter, in order to claim those privileges."

Henri rested his wrists on the edge of the table. He studied his blushing, throat-clearing daughter. "Take it from your reaction that this . . . talking frog . . . has a truthful claim?"

Embarrassed, Gisette nodded glumly. There was no way out of this, though she'd hoped she had left the memory of her humiliation and that frog far behind this morning. *If it's not to be, the only thing I can do is control any possible damage. I hope.* Cheeks hot, she watched as the guard ducked out again, no doubt to fetch the talking frog she had met. *My best hope is to make sure he doesn't mention what he helped me retrieve.*

She snuck a glance at her father, but he had gone back to carving up his meat. A glance at her mother showed Queen Jeanne's blue eyes studying her daughter. Her mother said nothing, though. Not quite hungry anymore, Gisette waited for the guardsman to return.

When he did, the knight entered with the green and yellow frog balanced on his chain-mail-clad hands. Her belt was caught in the frog's mouth and draped over the knight's wrists, visibly damp and muddy. The golden buckle had little tufts of grass caught along its hinge, a testament to the long journey the frog had undertaken, hopping from the riverbank almost half a mile away.

Guilt seeped into her thoughts, mixing with her embarrassment. *He's so small, and it's such a long way from the river . . .*

“This is the talking frog?” her father asked, skepticism coloring his voice.

The frog removed the belt from his mouth. “Greetings, Your Majesty. I am Henrik, and I do apologize for disturbing your meal, but I have business with Her Highness. Earlier today, I helped your sweet, kind daughter fetch her lost possession from the mud of the river, in exchange for a certain promise, which she now needs to fulfill.”

“Lost possession?” King Henri repeated, glancing at his daughter. “What did you lose in the river, Gisette?”

“My ball!” she blurted quickly, flushing with the fear the frog might answer for her. “The wooden one you gave me when I was twelve, the one that was gilded? I took it down by the river to play with it—you know how I love to play with my ball . . .”

Her father gave her an indulgent smile. “That’s my little girl . . . Now, what is this about a bargain you made with this frog?”

“It’s quite simple. Your daughter tripped and accidentally dropped her . . . ball . . . in the river. I offered to help her fetch it from the river in exchange for finding out what it would be like to live like your daughter does. To eat off the same fine plates as she does every day, to sleep on the same fine sheets as she does every night—to live in the lap of luxury, as it were, rather than on the banks of a cold, muddy river.”

“A frog who wishes to live like a princess?” Queen Jeanne questioned. “A *male* frog?”

“More to the point, a male frog who wishes to sleep in the same bed as *my little daughter*?” King Henri growled.

Gisette wished she could crawl under the table and hide without making matters worse.

“As much as I am willing to respect Your Majesty’s rank and title,” the frog explained calmly, “such an accusation is patently absurd. *I am a frog*, sire. Logistics alone render impossible any threat to your daughter’s virtue. Never mind that she isn’t a fellow amphibian, and thus isn’t terribly appealing—I’m certain she’s quite lovely by your human standards,” he croaked in an aside, “but her skin would have to be considerably more moist and green for me to look twice at her in such a manner.

“Your daughter gave her word that she would treat me as her dearest friend for the next month, in exchange for my assistance in fetching her . . . ball. I have upheld my part of our bargain, and have even fetched home the belt we used to fish the . . . ball . . . out of the river, which she left behind in her haste to return home. Now I am here, awaiting the upholding of her end of the matter. It is a matter of honor that I am here. Your little girl’s word of honor, in specific.”

“I see.” Turning once more to his daughter, King Henri asked, “Gisette, did you indeed swear you would treat him as your closest companion for a full month?”

“Well, yes, but . . .” Gisette wanted to protest that the whole idea was absurd, but she’d heard those slight hesitations over the word *ball*. Henrik was not only a talking frog, he was an *intelligent* talking frog. That subtle pause told her he wouldn’t hesitate to say what she had *really* lost in the river.

“Then you should have brought him home with you,” her father chided her, surprising Gisette. “When a princess gives her word, she needs to uphold it. You’ll never grow up to be a good queen one day if you don’t behave like one from the start. Guardsman, bring the frog to the table, and set him before Her Highness.”

Gisette sat there in misery as the knight settled Henrik the Frog next to her plate. She accepted her muddied belt, barely managing to murmur a “Thanks.”

Her mother cleared her throat, managing a cordial smile. “Well. I must say we don’t often entertain such . . . unusual visitors. Particularly during one of our private family retreats. But is there, err, something we can have the servants fetch for you? I’m not sure if our chef knows how to cook, e

flies and things, but I'm certain he'd be willing to try," Queen Jeanne offered politely.

"A bowl of tepid water would be deeply appreciated, if it isn't too much trouble," Henrik stated. "It was a very long hop from the river, and I'm quite thirsty. Not to mention I wasn't exactly given the time or the means to make myself more presentable. Otherwise, whatever you're having smells divine. Just be so kind as to cut it up into very small portions, and I should have no trouble at all, I think."

Queen Jeanne gestured, and the knight bowed and took himself out of the room, no doubt to fetch the requested bowl of water. "You have a remarkable air about you, Sir Frog," the queen added as she turned back to their unexpected guest. "Are all frogs so dignified?"

"When one is merely a frog, dignity is often all that one has," Henrik pointed out. "Dignity and good manners, that is. I thank you for being willing to share your meal with me."

Wishing she had never shown her two handmaidens that naughty birthing-day gift from her mother, Gisette carefully cut up some of her own lamb. She nudged it to the very edge of her silver plate, hoping she didn't have to actually feed it to the frog next to her. That would involve *touching* the frog. Gisette had never been the sort of girl to go around catching and holding frogs, snakes, and other such woodland creatures.

She jumped when his tongue shot out, snagging one of the little bits of lamb. He flicked it out again, snagging one of the chickpeas as well. A hum escaped the frog.

"Oh, my, that's better-tasting than a horse fly! Whatever did your chef fry that in?" Henrik asked her.

"Er . . . bacon drippings, I think?" Gisette offered.

"Very tasty. My compliments to your chef."

Her mother smiled. "I'll pass that along. Ah, here comes your water, erm . . . Sir Frog."

"Henrik, please; as your daughter's new companion, I would hope we could dispense with formalities. At least, when not in a formal setting," Henrik added.

"I wouldn't think frogs would have much use for formal settings," King Henri observed.

Climbing into the bowl the knight set on the table, Henrik paused to thank the man, then addressed the king's comment. "Normally we don't, I will admit. As I said, most of the others lack sufficient intellect. But the fairies do visit all manner of creatures, granting some of us unusual abilities . . . and it does not pay to insult or slight a fairy, as many of us have learned through the years. Thus, polite manners are preferred nearly everywhere one goes."

His tongue darted out again as he clung to the edge of the silver bowl, snagging another piece of meat. It was a remarkably graceful move, for he neither lost the targeted chunk of lamb nor disturbed any of the others on the edge of her plate. He was also charming, erudite, dignified, and a remarkably good conversationalist as the meal progressed. Gisette almost forgot Henrik was a frog, particularly when he related an amusing tale involving a trio of forgetful fairies who were supposed to be watching a young prince one summer day.

But every time she glanced his way, she could see his diminutive form, his glistening green-and-gold skin and his bulging, independently moving eyes. She not only had to feed him, she had to keep him by her side . . . and let him sleep in her bed.

When the meal ended, Gisette rose and curtsied, more than ready to escape. A *ribbitty* clearing of Henrik's throat reminded her of her next painful duty. To take the frog back to her quarters with her. From the dubious looks on the faces of the maidservants clearing the table, they weren't about to offer to carry him for her. Even her own father slanted her an expectant look. And her mother . . . well, Gisette blamed her mother for starting this whole mess.

Sighing roughly, she held out her hand and tried not to flinch too much as Henrik climbed onto her

palm. His skin was cool and wet, though not quite as slimy as she had imagined it would be. In fact, picking up the long, muddy leather of her belt felt worse than the frog did. Gingerly holding on to both, Gisette retreated upstairs to her bedchamber.

The royal hunting lodge was actually a modest keep. It had six bedchambers above the great hall and a large garden within its stout stone walls. Her chamber was one of the ones overlooking the garden. With the window open to the cooling breezes of the late summer night, she could hear the sounds of a pair of minstrels playing for the entertainment of the residents down in the garden, and the delicate singing of Annette, one of her wayward handmaidens.

If Annette hadn't tried to grab my present out of my hands, I would've seen that root or rock or whatever, and I wouldn't have tripped. I wouldn't have had to make a bargain with a toad to get me back from the mud, and I wouldn't be stuck with a reptile for a roommate. In fact, I would be down there right now, having fun with the others, now that our private supper is finished . . .

Henrik's deep voice interrupted her petulant thoughts. "If you would be kind enough to provide another bowl with fresh water, I would appreciate it."

"Are you so interested in being clean?" Gisette retorted. "At least you have the sense to know when you are slimy, and therefore unwanted."

Henrik twisted both of his eyes to focus on her at the same time. "Frogs drink through our *skin*, Your Highness. Depriving me of water to bathe in is literally depriving me of the liquid I need to survive. I may be merely a frog at the moment, but to slay me with thirst would still be murder."

Gritting her teeth, Gisette set him gently on her writing desk and fetched her washbasin. She rinsed out the bowl, in case he objected to soap in his precious water, then filled it from the pitcher and set the broad bowl next to him. "Your water, Sir Frog. Now, if you are quite comfortable, you can bathe in privacy all you like. I am going to go down to the garden to listen to the minstrels."

"Right now, you and I are going to have a little talk," he countered, ignoring the bowl at his side. "Would you like me to hop downstairs and apologize to your father for lying about what I *really* helped you fetch from the river?"

She narrowed her eyes. "You wouldn't."

"I *would*."

"Fine. You can come with me to hear the minstrels." She reached for him, but he scooted back.

"Not so fast, Princess. As I said, you and I need to talk first," Henrik corrected. "The first thing we need to discuss is *why* you lied to your father."

Guessing he wasn't going to let the subject go, Gisette sat down in the chair at her writing desk. "Fine. I lied because my father still thinks of me as a little girl. I just turned twenty years of age, yet he still thinks of me as if I were twelve! Do you know what he gave me for a present?" she asked, folding her arms defensively across her breasts. "A *doll*. A lovely porcelain-headed doll, imported all the way from the East, but nonetheless a doll! I haven't played with dolls since I was fifteen! He refuses to accept that I have grown up!"

Henrik croaked. It was a soft, low, surprisingly sympathetic sound. "No wonder you didn't want the phallus mentioned in his presence . . ."

She blushed. "It was a gift from my mother, given to me in private. *She* knows that I'm a woman grown, even if *he* won't admit it."

Henrik scratched his head with a hind foot. "I suppose it is a good gift for a grown woman, but . . . why would your own mother give you one?"

"Ever since I turned sixteen, princes and noblemen have been asking Father for my hand in marriage, and Father has been turning them down. He constantly insists I am far too young to wed."

Even Mother thinks he's getting ridiculous about it. She's warned him that I just might elope one of these days, should I ever find a young man worthy of me, but no, he is as blind as an owl in the daylight.

"I do confess I have been tempted, simply so that I can finally be treated as an adult . . . but I rather not run away with just anyone. Most of the young men Father allows to be around me are too young, and rather featherbrained. Handsome enough of face, but dull-witted of mind. Mother thought I should have a . . . *you know* . . . so that I can at least temper the *urges* I get, as a fully grown woman. Gisette confessed, glad Henrik was a frog and not a human. It just seemed easier to confess the embarrassing things to a mere frog. "She says it's better to use a safe substitute than to let myself be swayed by a momentary lust into doing something stupid."

"Your mother is a wise woman," Henrik praised.

"Yes, and I'm a fool for showing my handmaidens what she gave me," Gisette muttered.

Through the open window, the sounds of singing and playing came to an end. The listeners in the garden applauded, and requests were called out for another performance. Gisette glanced longingly at the window.

"Patience, Gisette," the frog on her writing desk stated. "We still have more to discuss. Now, I presume if your father knew you had a phallus, he would grow enraged?"

"Absolutely," she agreed glumly. "Not even Mother can make him see sense. I'd have to be married and pregnant before he'd admit I'm *capable* of becoming pregnant, and even then . . ."

"Well, I know it's terribly ungentlemanly of me to make this demand, but . . . if you do not assist me with *my* problem . . . I shall have no choice but to worsen *your* problem."

That caught her attention. Narrowing her eyes, Gisette stared at the frog on her desk. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean, if you do not do as I say, your father is going to learn about your mother's secret gift."

She fumed at his implication. "I cannot believe I'm being blackmailed by a *frog*!"

"If my own situation were not so dire, I wouldn't dare. My parents did raise me to be a gentleman. Unfortunately, I have little choice. Luckily for you, the sooner you cooperate, the sooner I'll be out of your life."

"I can endure a month of your presence," Gisette asserted. "It's only a month."

"It could be sooner, if . . ." He let the offer trail out.

"If, what?" she asked, suspicious.

"You are trapped by your father's belief that you are still a little girl. My situation is not too dissimilar, in that I am trapped in the shape of a frog by an enchantment. If you help me break the enchantment, I will be free to leave. Otherwise I will have to stay at your side."

"Eating off my plate and sleeping on my pillow will help you break the enchantment?" Gisette asked, confused.

"Unfortunately, no. I have to . . . uh, that is . . ."

She peered at his broad, elliptical face. "Are you . . . blushing?"

He cleared his throat with a croak. "I have to give you a climax."

Gisette blinked. "You . . . *what*?"

"The Fairy Tilda stated that, as a punishment for refusing to accept her offer of marriage, I am cursed to remain an ugly, unwanted creature until a beautiful woman demonstrates beyond a doubt that she associates me with pleasure. In other words, I must seduce, assist, or otherwise be associated with a woman as she climaxes."

She stared for a moment in horror, then grimaced. "Eww!"

“If you don’t want your father to find out about your golden phallus . . . you will have to *use* it in my presence. Under my direction, following my suggestions.”

Shoving out of her chair, Gisette whirled away. “I’m not listening to this!”

“I’ll give you a week to get used to the idea—Where are you going?” Henrik croaked as she headed for the door.

“Down to the garden, to listen to something more pleasant!”

“Not without *me*. I go wherever *you* go, remember?” he reminded her. “Or would you rather I had a word with your father?”

Gritting her teeth, Gisette walked back to her writing desk. “I suppose once the enchantment breaks you turn back into a *toad*?”

“Hardly. I was born a human prince. Second son, to be exact, and not the heir apparent,” he added. He crawled onto her grudgingly offered palm, “but a prince nonetheless. And I *would* be a gentleman and not press the matter . . . but in order to *be* a gentleman, I’d first have to be a *man*, wouldn’t I? Don’t squeeze me quite so tight,” he ordered as she curled her fingers around his fist-sized body. “I’m hardly going to escape, now am I?”

“On that much, we can agree,” Gisette quipped, heading once more for the door. “You, sir, are not a gentleman!”

Henrik didn’t press the matter. At least, not the matter of breaking his enchantment.

He did press the matter when it came to being poked, prodded, and even insulted by the others in the small court that had come with Their Majesties to the royal hunting lodge. His dignity, charm, and wit—if supplied in the form of a mere frog—managed to quell even the rudest of young men and more importunate of young women who associated with Princess Gisette. Though it did take a few pointed swivel-eyed looks at Annette and the other handmaiden, Jacqueline, to get them to stop snickering whenever Gisette’s “golden ball” was mentioned.



AS the days progressed, he strove to be as charming and entertaining and friendly as he could manage until the princess no longer flinched whenever she had to pick him up, and no longer wrinkled her nose even the slightest bit when she glanced his way. When the first week of their month was up, as promised, only then did Henrik strike.

Having changed behind a screen into a lace-edged linen nightdress, Gisette sat by the window brushing out her long brown curls. Seated on the window ledge beside her, Henrik snapped his tongue at a mosquito—tangy and bitter—which was threatening to bite her, and composed himself for his plan of attack.

“Gisette . . .”

“Yes, Henrik?” Gisette asked, her attention more on working out a stubborn snarl with her brush than on the frog on her windowsill.

“May I tell you a bedtime story?”

That caught her attention. Blinking, she focused on him. “A bedtime story? What, like a child would hear?”

“Hardly,” he snorted. Or rather, croaked. Being a frog meant it was difficult to make suitable scoffing noises. “I think we’ve long since established that you are an adult woman. No . . . I’d like to if I may, tell you a bedtime story of the sort suitable for an adult woman to hear. I’m in the mood to

tell one, you see, and I'd like to think I can tell an entertaining tale."

She smiled in remembrance. "That story you told about the donkey two days ago . . . I've never seen my father laugh so hard as he did over that one."

"I aim to please," Henrik agreed, bobbing his body in his best approximation of a bow. "So. If I may . . . I would like to tell you the tale of 'The Courtship of Wali Daad.' I learned it from a book of tales brought from the East, and I think you will like it."

" ' The Courtship of Wali Daad'?" Gisette repeated. Finished with brushing out her locks, she drew up her knees and wrapped her arms around them. "All right, it sounds interesting. I take it this is a tale of romance?"

"Indeed," Henrik chuckled, "though not quite the romance you might expect."

Launching into it, he did his best to enthrall her with the story, gesturing with his forefeet for emphasis and making full use of his deep amphibian voice to heighten the drama. At first she smiled and laughed as the amusing tale progressed. But when he mentioned the phallus, she gasped and glared at him, blushing.

Henrik wasn't deterred. If anything, he emphasized the lascivious parts all the more strongly, until she was all but covering her ears, her skin as red as a summer strawberry. Bringing the tale to its conclusion, he smirked. Frog mouths, being extra wide, were well suited to smirking.

Face flaming, Gisette glared at him. "I can't believe you said all those things!"

"Would you rather I treated you like your father does, and restrict my tales to those suitable for a little girl? The kind of little girl who only ever plays with a gilded wooden ball?" Henrik offered. "Before you protest how this story is 'beyond the pale' . . . consider the stories I *could* tell, if I weren't concerned about your delicate sensibilities."

From the curious, if wary, look she gave him, Henrik knew she was hooked.

"Oh, yes. Tales of love and lust, of passion and pleasure, of adventure and romance. Stories of seduction, stories of instruction . . ."

"Instruction?" Gisette couldn't help ask. "Isn't it just . . . Don't you just *do* it?"

Henrik croaked with laughter. "Hardly! Assuming you automatically know how to make love is like assuming you automatically know how to hitch a horse to a plow. The farmer knows how because he has been taught from an early age, but hand a city-dweller a harness and he's as likely to hang himself by the straps as get them on the horse the right way around."

The image his words conjured amused Gisette, soothing away her embarrassment. Chuckling, she rested her chin on her forearms. "All right. Let's say you *do* know how to make love so that one doesn't get all tangled around. What makes you think telling *me* about it is all that appropriate?"

"I told you. It's part of the conditions holding me captive in the body of a frog," he reminded her. Swiveling his eyes, he snapped his tongue at another mosquito hovering near her shoulder. "Bleah. Tangy, but not exactly tasty . . . As I said, I am not inclined to remain this way for the rest of my life. Thankfully, I happen to know a fair amount about sensuality and seduction."

"Do you, now?" Gisette challenged him. "And how is it you come to know all of these things, hmm?"

"Well, I did have to learn all the various ways to manage a state 'just in case' . . . but my older brother Gustav is as healthy as a horse and quite competent as a ruler-to-be, so I haven't been pressured to study the dry, boring bits extra hard. Thus I have been left with a decent amount of time for studying, shall we say, extracurricular materials?"

"I'll bet," Gisette snorted. Still, her curiosity got the better of her after a moment. "So . . . what exactly did you learn?"

“That men and women are different. That women take longer to find their pleasure than men, but when a man learns properly how to help her find it, it’s far more delightful for both of them.” His tongue snapped out again, catching another mosquito. One of the wings snagged on his throat, making Henrik cough. “Bleh . . . Could you carry me to the water bowl, please? I think I’m getting a little dried out.”

“Certainly.” Scooping him up, Gisette left the bench under the window and carried him to the nightstand and the silver dish filled with cool water. Once he was in the basin and splashing around, sighing happily, she returned to the window to close the shutters and fetch her brush. As she turned back toward the bed, her gaze fell on the inlaid chest sitting in the corner. “Henrik . . .”

“Yes, Gisette?” Hooking his forelimbs over the edge of the basin, he swiveled both eyes in her direction.

“Could you, erm . . . *can* you . . . well . . . teach me?” She blushed as she asked it, but she didn’t take it back.

Henrik struggled manfully—or rather, frogfully—not to smirk too much. *Finally, she’s in the mood to cooperate with my needs. Which means I must take extra care to attend to hers . . . however limited in usefulness this form may be for such things.* “Of course I can. It would be my honor to guide you in exploring your adult sense of pleasure.”

Her lips twisted ruefully. “Not to mention the means to release you from your enchantment?”

Henrik coughed, hastily raising a forepaw to his broad mouth. “Well, that is a bonus, to be sure . . .”

Gisette blushed, but moved toward the chest. Unlocking it, she dug through the cloth, down to the cool, hard lump of metal hidden beneath the layers of her best dresses. Once the gilded phallus was exposed, however, she started having doubts. Henrik was a frog, yes, but if he was indeed an enchanted frog, then he was also a man underneath his damp green and yellow skin. *Whereas I am a maid, and so shouldn’t be thinking such thoughts . . .*

“Come along now,” Henrik croaked, cajoling her. “No need to be shy. I may not have one at the moment, but I do know what it looks like, so it won’t shock me to see it.”

Somehow the thought of a man being shocked at the sight of a phallus struck her as funny. Giggling, Gisette bit her lip and faced him. Her face was hot with embarrassment, but she still managed to meet at least one of his swiveling eyes without flinching. Much. Moving back over to the bed, she perched herself on the edge, facing the nightstand and its amphibian-occupied bowl. She lifted the oblong object and cleared her throat.

“Um . . . what’s this part?” she asked, pointing to the knobby bit at one end.

“Those are the bollocks. If you respect a particular man, treat them very gently and he will enjoy it. However, if the man tries to disrespect you, and particularly if he tries to maul you in some unwelcome manner, hit them as hard as you can,” Henrik advised her. “But we’ll presume this is a man who respects you, and a man whom you like, so touch them gently. Obviously they will be made of flesh and not metal, so there will be some warmth and some give, but you can stroke, pet, and very gently knead them.”

“I see.” Blushing a little, Gisette petted the rounded bulbs, then trailed her fingers up to the shaft. “And this part?”

“That is called the shaft, or the rod. It can be grasped more firmly than the bollocks, but the best way to treat it is to encircle it with the fingers . . . or one’s lips, or other body parts,” Henrik allowed as she gingerly stroked the gleaming metal, “and rub it up and down. Men can get excited just by looking at a beautiful woman such as yourself, but if you rub a man’s rod, he’ll definitely get excited, making him turn stiff and ready for copulation.”

“Like . . . this?” she asked, following his instructions. The metal was slowly warming under her touch, but it was also beginning to stick to her skin a little, thanks to the way her embarrassment and blushing made her palms a little damp. She grimaced as her hand bumped unevenly up the shaft of the phallus. “How do I keep my hand from dragging on it, like that?”

“Lubrication. Moisture. One can use a salve . . . or one can simply use one’s spit.”

“Eww.” She wrinkled her nose, eyeing the dildo, then the frog. “That sounds messy.”

“Sex, when properly done, *is* messy,” Henrik croaked. “When a man is excited and his rod stiffens, moisture will leak out of that little dimple at the top. Just as when a woman is excited, her slit will leak fluids of its own—don’t wrinkle your nose at me. The moisture is perfectly natural, and makes everything work together a lot more easily than if everything remained dry. It’s also a lot more pleasurable when things are moist, and if you deliberately make them so, it helps. Nature doesn’t always provide sufficient liquid for the job.”

“Why not?” Gisette asked, curious.

“Think of it this way. If you haven’t had enough to drink in a while, does your mouth get dry?” Henrik asked.

“Of course it does. But all I have to do is find something to drink and it’s moist again . . . Oh. Right. Of course. But women don’t look like this,” she pointed out, lifting the phallus in her hand. “Not that I’ve exactly peered at everything down there, but I don’t have one of these. How do I get moist down there?”

A pity this is only an abstract exercise for me, Henrik sighed silently. Stuck in this form, I literally am unable to get aroused, at least one presumes not outside of mating season . . . which I hope Dear Sweet Heaven I won’t have to experience as a frog. Clearing his throat, he explained briefly.

“You have various folds of flesh between your legs. Some project outward a little, and feel marvelous when gently rubbed—or so I have been told by women, since I am not a female myself—and you have other bits where it’s like a pocket of flesh. That is your womb. A man pushes his rod into that pocket, rubbing it in and out, which feels good for both of you, until you both shudder with pleasure, and that is the point when the seed for a baby is planted. If the man pulls out before that point and spills his seed on the bed or the ground, it isn’t as likely for a baby to be planted.

“But for now, we’re talking about how to pleasure a man. The bollocks are where the rod is rooted at the front of the man’s hips. At the tip is that little offset ridge. There are three parts to that end which you should know about.”

“Yes?” she asked, tilting the phallus so she could examine the indicated end.

“The first, the ridge itself, feels nice when it is rubbed, licked, or otherwise stimulated. On a real one, there is also a little sleeve of skin which often covers the head before the rod is fully stiffened. Once it does stiffen out, that cowl-sleeve gets stretched and pulled out of the way. The second one is the little slit at the top and the soft skin in front. These two spots feel good when touched, if in a different way. You can stroke them, rub them, knead them, kiss them, suckle them, and even flick them with something soft and moist, such as your tongue. All of that will feel good to the man.”

“And the third spot?” she wondered.

“Where the ridge sweeps up into a little point. On some men it is more blatantly visible, and on other men it is less noticeable, but all men have this spot,” Henrik told her. “This is what I like to call the Dear Sweet Heaven spot, and if you stroke it just right, you will have a man begging to do anything you please, so long as you keep stroking it until he squirts his seed.”

“Really? This little spot here?” Gisette asked, touching the arrow-like section of dimpled metal. “It’s so small . . .”

“Yes, that spot there. Stroke that just right, whether it’s with your fingers, your lips and tongue, or even the moist folds of your womb, and you will make a man very, very happy. And if you combine all the spots I’ve mentioned into one, you will put him into Heaven while he’s still alive.”

She pouted a little. “Well, that’s not very fair. I know I don’t have anything shaped like that on my body. Why should a man get to have a spot that makes him think of Heaven, but a woman doesn’t?”

“Trust me, you have your own special spots,” Henrik said, chuckling.

“Really? Where?” Gisette demanded.

“First, you’ll have to set down your golden *ball*,” he teased. “Then fetch out that little hand mirror you have. And you’ll want to sit on the bed so that the light from the candles falls on your body. You’ll have to be able to see yourself, since we don’t have a gilded substitute on hand.”

Tucking the phallus under her pillow, Gisette fetched her silver mirror. Seating herself on the bed so she faced the candles, which meant facing Henrik in his bowl, she eyed the frog on her nightstand. “Now what?”

“Now you’ll have to be very brave, and lift up the hem of your nightgown. All the way up to your waist,” he added in clarification.

Staring at the green and yellow frog, with his swiveling eyes, broad mouth, and moist skin, Gisette hesitated. “Erm . . .”

“I’m a frog,” Henrik reminded her. “Unless you are green and warty, you will not be able to arouse me physically. The only part of me which is still a man is my mind, and as such, I will only be able to enjoy the view in an abstract, intellectual way at best . . . which makes it all the more imperative to regain my human form. Now, don’t be shy; I’m hardly going to tell anyone about this. Even a frog could be arrested if word got out I was tutoring you in such matters.”

“Father’s dungeons are damp, but not *that* damp,” Gisette agreed. “You wouldn’t like them very much.”

“Exactly. Go on,” he encouraged her.

Biting her lower lip, she gathered her courage and worked the material of her nightdress up above her knees. Up until now, she had taken care to dress and undress behind the carved wooden screen at the corner of her chamber. Now she bared her calves and her knees, blushing as she did so. Beneath the finespun linen, she wasn’t wearing underdrawers. The rising hem hesitated and halted near the top of her thighs.

“Go on,” Henrik encouraged her. “You need to bare your loins, part your thighs, and position the mirror so that you can see what lies between them. Once you see what you have down there, I can explain to you how you and whatever man you choose can have fun with it. You *do* want to have fun, don’t you? Adult fun?”

“Well . . . yes,” Gisette admitted. She firmed her conviction, nodding. “Yes, I do.” Bunching up the front of her nightgown, she lifted one foot onto the frame of the bed and lowered the mirror, angling both it and herself so that no shadows obscured the reflected view. “Um . . . now what?”

“Use your free hand to part your folds. At the top, you’ll see a triangular bump of flesh. That is your Dear Sweet Heaven spot. You can touch it, stroke it, tickle it, rub it, and even lightly pinch it, and if you try several different things, you’ll figure out what touches are most enjoyable for you. As with everything,” Henrik lectured, eyes swiveling as he followed the movements of her free hand, “pleasure varies from person to person, so it is best to experiment.

“Some things will be similar, others will be different. Some men prefer a firm stroke upon their rectum right from the start, while others prefer to start with a feathery touch. The same goes for women—you might find that easier if you lick your finger to moisten it, so that it glides rather than drags.”

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