



The Aftermath

Kirstie Bingham

Humor, Retold Fairy Tales

And they lived happily ever after.

That was supposed to be the end, the Princess thought. A big “The End” in elegantly fussy, gloriously serif, curlicued handwriting. She’d had her ball. Her fairy godmother had been in attendance. And dwarves. And elves. And a leprechaun. Even the shoemaker’s son was there, the shoemaker having been called away to a neighboring kingdom for emergency shoe replacement for another princess. There had been sparkles and silver and diamonds and satin, champagne and caviar, tiaras and wands. It was, in essence, the epitome of the perfect fairy tale.

Until now, as she awoke far too early the next morning with sore feet, a post-party headache and a snoring, drooling prince sleeping next to her with very un-princely, horrifically bad morning breath.

She had the sneaking suspicion that she hadn’t really quite thought everything through.

“Just bridal jitters,” she said to herself as she staggered into the bathroom to wash the grime of too much revelry from her face. The magic mirror waited at attendance to tell her how beautiful she was, but it was far too early and her head was throbbing far too much for her to want to talk to anyone. She also knew with her bed hair, smeared mascara and dark circles under her eyes she wasn’t anywhere near the fairest in the land and she didn’t need a gaudy old mirror to tell her so.

“Oh hell.”

She sipped quickly from a glass of champagne perched precariously on the counter next to a misplaced slipper, hoping for a little relief. She cringed, her head pounding, and turned around...a little too fast for her unruly stomach, causing her to eye the toilet with a bit of trepidation. And, admittedly, almost with hopefulness to get the worst of it relieved. But her stomach calmed, at least somewhat, and she stepped forward to survey the damage.

Clutching the glass and bracing herself on the doorway she reviewed the carnage of the previous night's adventures. An overturned chair covered in a brocade vest. A lonesome glove tossed haplessly on the bureau. A couple of half eaten apples on the side table. Her ball gown crumpled on the floor by the foot of the bed, covering what looked like the smashed remains of a pumpkin. And perhaps a tail.

“Oh no.”

With a panicked start she looked closer, quickly relieved to see no equally smashed mice nearby. Just a piece of discarded ribbon emanating from the pumpkin pile. As her heart calmed, she vaguely remembered seeing the slightly overserved mice playing quarters at the bar with a bunch of equally inebriated trolls as she and the prince staggered back to their room. Though she wasn't sure if they really were trolls. Open bars did tend to attract all sorts. At her cousin's wedding last year they had caught a bunch of billy goats attempting to crash the party. “The desperate measures creatures will go through for a free shot of vodka,” her cousin had said as the bodyguards had sent them out. “Good thing we caught them before they got to the buffet table.”

A long winded, rumbling fart emitted from the bed as the prince rustled and turned over.

“Oh god.”

What did she really know of him? Their romance had been a whirlwind, to be sure. All horses and carriages, secrets, songs and fairy dust. But it had been four or five pages, typed, single spaced, at best. Was that really enough to base a relationship on? There were so many important things she realized they hadn't talked about. Would he want their children to be taught by banshees or silkies? Whose family would they spend the feast days with? Did he believe in unicorns? She had been so sure, so absolutely sure of him when her stepmother

had questioned the marriage, asked did she really feel like she was ready. But now, in the daylight and the day after, her confidence waned. What had she gotten herself into?

“Oh damn.”

Sipping again from the glass of champagne, she glanced at the bed and her heart give a little hiccup. He was a truly fine form of a man, his chiseled features, the lock of hair tumbling over his forehead. If it wasn't for the drool, the bad breath and the farting he would be exactly what he was supposed to be. The man of her dreams. No. The prince of her dreams. But other than a prince, what was he? Who was he? She leaned on the window and sank into her thoughts.

“Ah-hem.”

Startled from her worrying, she looked to see a nattily dressed cockroach standing on the windowsill, looking at her expectantly.

“Yes?”

“Do you think he's a good man? In your heart of hearts, in all that you know, do you think he's a good man?”

She thought of him: smiling on as fairies danced around her, touching her cheek with a fragile joy, graciously hearing the frog's protestations that he was also a prince, whispering in her ear in their private moments, commiserating with the foreign princess on her bruises from a most uncomfortable slumber, cheerfully retrieving her godmother's wand when she had forgotten it in the loo for the 800th time.

“Yes.”

“Then have faith. Do your best. And expect the same from him. Just remember he's a prince. But he's also just a man. As you are a princess. But also just a woman. ”

She looked at the prince on the bed, smiling in his sleep. And took a deep breath. And downed in a large gulp the remains of the champagne. And regarded the cockroach.

She looked at him for a long time.

“What?” finally he asked.

“I would have expected a cricket.”

“That wasn’t a fairy tale. Which story format do you want?”

And with that, he bowed, turned and flew away.

Putting down her glass, she staggered across the room and with a most unladylike and graceless clump she fell back on the bed.

And the prince, still sleeping, turned over and threw his arm around her waist. And tugged her close. And snuggled himself up to her. And, in his sleep, whispered her name.

She winced.

His morning breath was really, truly, horribly awful. They’d have to work on that.

But still....she smiled. And sighed. And stopped worrying. And drifted off back to sleep.

For it was still her fairy tale. However it ended, for now....it was all right.

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