



The Penguin Prince

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Animals, Humor, Magic

It was a typical day in the Village of Gorshin. The baker was baking, the teacher was teaching, the grocer was...grocing? Anyway, everybody was doing what they normally did and everything was going the way it normally went.

Until the penguin arrived.

This was before zoos and things, so the people of Gorshin had never even seen a penguin before. Most of them didn't even know what a penguin was.

"It's a giant magpie!"

"It's a duck in a fancy suit!"

"Uncle Herb?"

But it wasn't any of those things, not even Uncle Herb. His name was Leroy and he was a penguin. Luckily the Mayor's wife, Sylvia, was the type who read books so she knew at once what Leroy was and she invited him to lunch.

"What brings you to our village, fair penguin?" asked Sylvia's husband, the Mayor

"I'm not really a penguin," said Leroy. "I'm actually a prince. But I've been turned into a penguin by a wicked witch."

"Oh, how dreadful!" said the Mayor's wife, Sylvia. "Is there no way to break the spell?"

"There is one way; I need to be kissed by a beautiful princess."

"Do we have one of those?" asked Sylvia's husband, the Mayor.

"No, we don't," said the Mayor's wife, Sylvia. "The nearest beautiful princess is Princess Fred of Alden Castle."

"Then I'll go see her," said Leroy.

"I'm afraid that won't be so easy. You see, being the only beautiful princess in the area, Princess Fred is constantly being asked to break curses. So she's made a new rule: She only breaks curses for people who can make her laugh so hard milk comes out her nose."

It was a tall order, but Leroy wanted to be a prince again, so he had to try. The Mayor's wife, Sylvia, was nice enough to lend Leroy a horse...which she immediately replaced with a donkey because Leroy was much too small to ride a horse. The donkey (whose name was Mule) took Leroy to Alden Castle while the small, semi-aquatic bird tried to think of a joke that would make a princess laugh.

"How about this," he said, trying out his material on the donkey. "Why did the penguin cross the ice floe? To get away from the elephant seal!"

That's what they call "Penguin humor," and it's really only funny in Antarctica which is why the donkey didn't laugh.

But just then the path before them was blocked by a tough-looking dwarf with an eye patch and a hook for a hand. "Stand and deliver!" he shouted. "This is a robbery! Hand over all your gold!"

"I don't have any gold," said Leroy.

"You don't? Well, I guess that makes sense. Whoever heard of a penguin with gold?"

“I’m not really a penguin. I’m a handsome prince who has been turned into a penguin by a wicked witch. But I’m on my way to Alden Castle where I will meet Princess Fred, make her laugh so hard milk comes out her nose, and in return she will kiss me, breaking the spell.”

“Well, this is a coincidence! I happen to be the best comedy writer in the kingdom! I just do this robbery stuff during the slow season.”

So Leroy the Penguin Prince hired Tony the Comedy Dwarf to write him fresh material with which to win the favor of Princess Fred. They rode Mule the Donkey together for a ways, working on Leroy’s act, when their way was once again barred, this time by a very small dragon.

“I’m a poor little orphan dragon,” said the poor little orphan dragon. “Can you spare some silver so I can buy bread?”

“Neither of us have anything, Poor Little Orphan Dragon,” said Leroy. “But we’re on our way to Alden Castle to see Princess Fred. Maybe she’ll be able to help you.”

So the Poor Little Orphan Dragon also climbed up on the donkey’s back and they all proceeded toward Alden Castle together. It was a little awkward, the three of them sitting on the donkey’s back, so Tony and the Dragon sat on the donkey’s back and Leroy sat on the dragon’s back. They continued in this way until they were at last in sight of the castle. That’s when they ran into another traveler, a tinker of some kind, pulling a cart which contained exactly one pot.

“Need any pots?” said the Tinker of Some Kind. “Only a copper coin for this lovely stewpot.”

“We don’t really need a stewpot,” said Leroy. “And none of us has any money anyway. But we’re about to visit Princess Fred in Alden Castle. Maybe she’ll buy your pot.”

So the donkey (who was getting pretty darn tired of all this, let me tell you!) was hitched up to the cart and began to pull, with the dwarf and the dragon still on his back and the penguin still on the dragon’s back.

By the time they got to the castle, Tony had been able to come up with some really good gags for Leroy. The Dragon and the Tinker of Some Kind agreed that it was “A” material and the princess was sure to laugh at it.

They were shown in to the throne room and Princess Fred saw the penguin sitting on a dragon sitting with a dwarf on the back of a donkey who was pulling a big cart with only one pot in it...and she laughed so hard milk came out her nose.

“Really?” said Tony, a little disappointed. “Just that easy?”

“Yeah, I know,” said Leroy. “Seems kind of anticlimactic after all that stuff in the woods, doesn’t it?”

Still, the important thing was that Leroy had made her laugh and she therefore agreed to break the spell he was under. Leroy hopped off the dragon, waddled across the floor and was picked up by the princess who held him on her lap and gave him a kiss on the very tip of his beak.

And then...

And then...

AND THEN...

Nothing happened.

She kissed him several more times on the beak, the head, even his wings, but he remained a penguin.

“Are you sure you’re under a spell?” asked Princess Fred.

“Of course! My mother told me so.”

“Your mother?”

“Yes, I remember it perfectly. She was turning purple and floating away and she told me to get kissed by a princess so I could turn back into a prince then she was suddenly my third grade teacher and I realized I was on a spaceship with Walter Matthau and...oh...wait...there’s just the tiniest chance that this was a dream I had.”

So, it turned out that Leroy was not a handsome prince who had been turned into a penguin by a witch. He was just a penguin after all. Not exactly the happy ending we were shooting for, but things still worked out okay. Princess Fred thought Leroy was pretty cute even without being a handsome prince so she invited him to live with her in the castle. Tony the Dwarf was hired as court jester and the Poor Little Orphan Dragon was adopted

as a sort of palace pet. The Tinker of Some Kind became a Royal Tinker of Some Kind and the donkey got lots and lots of carrots and sincere apologies for his rotten treatment all throughout this story.

And they all lived happily ever after, which points to the moral of this story. Which is...er...I'm not sure. I'm pretty sure there is a moral, though I could be wrong. I guess there is no moral. Still, I guess every story can't have a moral...hey, that's kind of like a moral. Let's just use that until we can think of something better.

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