



The Witch and the Little

Prince

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Humor, Magic

Once there lived a wicked old witch called Hermia, who lived on her own in a shack in the woods with nothing for company but a one-eyed, three-legged black cat called Creepers. Because she was ugly, misshapen and evil, she was an outcast and had to live in darkness. So one day she came up with a plan to make herself queen of the world.

First, she would have to mix a magic potion containing some very hard to find ingredients. The tailfeather from a Bird of Paradise, soil from a kinder-garden, the juice of a Has-bean, two petals from a Wallflower, the mane of a dandy-lion, two scales from a silverfish (which is actually a bug) and, finally, Royal Baby Tears.

Hermia spent eight years gathering the other ingredients, and a lot happened in the kingdom where she lived during that time. The prince came home from a long journey and his father, the king, held a great ball in his honor to which every eligible maiden in the kingdom was invited. He hoped his son would find a girl to marry, and he was right. The prince fell instantly in love with a beautiful, mysterious woman. But just at midnight she suddenly ran away and she might have disappeared forever, but she left one of her shoes on the steps and the funny thing is, the shoe was made of...oh, sorry, that's another story.

That was a while ago and the king had passed away, making the prince and his new princess bride (also another story, but a good one if you get the chance) the new king and queen. They had a baby and named him Maverick which, in the ancient, forgotten language of the kingdom where this story takes place, literally translates to

“He who giggles all the livelong day.”

No, really, it does.

The point is that the timing was perfect because now Hermia knew how to get Royal Baby Tears: From the Royal Baby! She put on a cloak which hid her ugly face and went to Brandt Castle, where the king and queen lived. “I am a soothsayer from a far-off land!” she said. “I hear this castle has recently been blessed by the arrival of a little one. I want to offer my blessing.”

The king and queen led Hermia to the royal basinet. She looked wickedly at the little child, then took off her hood and said “Boo!” She had expected her ugliness to make the baby cry...but he just kept on giggling. She saw that making Prince Maverick cry was going to be harder than she had thought. “Sooth!” she said loudly (remember, she’s pretending to be a soothsayer, and soothsayers always say sooth), “I see a long and happy life for this little one. And almost no chance that a witch is going to kidnap him and use his tears in a potion that will make her queen of the world.”

“Well, that’s a relief,” said the Queen. “Cuz we really wouldn’t want that to happen, would we, dear?”

“No, definitely not,” said the King.

But on her way out of the castle, Hermia cast a little spell on the door, so that she (and only she) could open it even after it had been locked. And that night, under cover of darkness, she broke in, took the baby and ran back to her shack in the woods.

Not being what you might call the “maternal” type, Hermia didn’t have a cradle or anything in which to put Baby Maverick, so she just put him in the Comfy Chair by the fire. To her surprise (and no little frustration) he had slept soundly throughout his kidnapping, but now he was waking up.

“Yes!” said Hermia. “Babies always cry when they wake up!”

But not Maverick. He looked up at Hermia and smiled. Had she been less evil, it might have made her go “aww!” As it is, she was just annoyed. “Okay, then how about...this?!” And she stuck out her tongue and rolled her eyes and made ugly faces at Maverick...but they just made him giggle. “Clearly you’re not afraid of me, but maybe you’ll cry when you see my familiar.” Creepers the cat was sort of frightening when you first saw him. Mangy, missing an eye, and usually in a bad mood, he hissed and snarled at Maverick...but he just kept smiling.

For the rest of the night, Hermia tried everything she could to make the little prince cry. She made loud noises, conjured images of fierce animals, told him scary stories, rubbed balloons, ran her nails across a chalkboard, told him Santa Claus wasn’t real, even showed him ‘Pan’s Labyrinth’ but nothing she did made him sad, angry, upset, or scared. As the sun began to rise, Hermia had to face the fact that she had failed.

Frustrated and defeated, Hermia took Maverick back to the castle. She didn’t even try to sneak him in. She just walked up to the front gate and said to the guard, “I’m here to turn myself in for kidnapping the prince.” She was brought before the king and queen who were, understandably, confused.

“You kidnapped the prince?” asked the King. “Why?”

“I needed Royal Baby Tears for a potion I was working on,” said Hermia. “But the stupid brat wouldn’t cry! He’s a freak!”

“See, this is why you witches don’t have any friends,” said the Queen. “Most people would consider a baby not crying to be a good thing. But you just get annoyed by it. Seriously, what’s with you?”

“Hey! I’m evil! What do you expect? Anyway, the potion’s ruined, I screwed up, so just throw me in the dungeon already.”

The King gave the order and the guards came to drag Hermia away. But, before they got very far something happened that no one was expecting:

Maverick started to cry.

“What’s wrong, sweetie?” asked the Queen. “You don’t want the witch to be thrown in the dungeon?” Maverick continued to wail. “I guess that’s why you couldn’t get him to cry, witch. He likes you.”

“He...he likes me?” Nobody had ever liked Hermia before, so this was huge.

“I guess we can’t throw her in the dungeon now, can we?”

“She kidnapped our son!” cried the King. “She must be punished!”

“Of course,” agreed the Queen. “But not like this. There must be something we can do to teach her a lesson besides throwing her in the dungeon.”

As if specifically to answer this query, a powerful smell was detected in the vicinity of Prince Maverick. And, just like that, everyone knew the proper way to punish Hermia for kidnapping the baby.

From then on, Hermia was the Official Royal Diaper Changer To The Prince. It was, let’s face it, a dirty, smelly job, but it was better than spending the rest of her life in a dungeon. And, it meant she got to spend more time with Maverick, the first person who ever liked her, which meant she was actually happy for the first time in her life.

Once Maverick was potty-trained, Hermia was promoted to governess. By then she was a new woman. The love of the little prince had melted her cruel heart and now she was hardly evil at all. Just a bit evil, really. Like using the last of the milk and putting the empty carton back in the fridge. Or crossing the intersection when someone else has the right of way just because you’re in a hurry. You know, that sort of every day evil we all do from time to time.

Oh, come on, don’t deny it!

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