The Frog Prince

The Brothers Grimm

There was once a handsome young prince who had the misfortune to offend a wicked fairy. To avenge herself she turned him into an ugly frog and put him into a well.

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Now it happened that the well was in the courtyard of a king's palace and on fine days, when the sun shone warmly, the king's youngest daughter sometimes came there to amuse herself by tossing a golden ball high into the air and catching it as it fell. The poor frog watched her running to and fro in the sunshine. He thought she was the prettiest princess he had ever seen.

One day, the princess threw the ball up so high that when she stretched out her hand to catch it the ball bounced on the stones and fell with a splash into the water. She ran to the edge of the well and gazed down. But the golden ball had sunk far, far out of sight. Only a little ring of bubbles showed her where it had disappeared. She began to cry bitterly.

The frog popped his head out of the water. "Don't cry, Princess!" he said.

"What will you give me if I bring your ball from the bottom of the well?"

"Oh, I will give you anything I have," replied the princess. "My pretty pearls, my diamonds—even my crown. Only please bring my ball back to me!"

"I do not want your pearls or your diamonds or your crown," said the frog. "But if you will promise to love me, and let me eat from your plate, and drink out of your cup, and sleep on your bed, I will bring your ball safely back to you."

And the princess promised. For she said to herself, "What a silly frog! As if he could ever get out of the well and walk all the way to the palace! He will never find me."

The frog dove to the bottom of the well and presently came up with the golden ball in his mouth.

The princess had no sooner snatched it from him than she forgot all about her promise and ran back to the palace laughing with joy.

The next day, as she sat at dinner with the king and his courtiers, something came flopping up the great staircase—flip flap, flip flap!

And a voice said:

"From the deep and mossy well,

Little princess, where I dwell,

When you wept in grief and pain

I brought your golden ball again."

The princess dropped her spoon with a clatter on her plate, for she knew it was the frog who had come to claim her promise.

"What is the matter, daughter?" asked the king. "There is someone knocking at the door and your rosy cheeks are quite pale."

Then the princess had to tell her father all that had happened the day before how she had dropped her golden ball into the well, and how the frog had brought it up for her, and of the promises she had given him.

The king frowned and said, "People who make promises must keep them. Open the door and let the frog come in."

The princess opened the door very unwillingly and the poor frog hopped into the room, looking up into her face with his ugly little eyes.

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"Lift me up beside you," he cried, "that I may eat from your plate and drink out of your cup." The princess did as he asked her and was obliged to finish her dinner with the frog beside her, for the king sat by to see that she fulfilled her promise. When they had finished, the frog said, "I have had enough to eat. Now I am tired. Take me up and lay me on your pillow, that I may go to sleep."

Then the princess began to cry. It was so dreadful to think that an ugly frog, all cold and damp from the well, should sleep in her pretty white bed.

But her father frowned again and said, "People who make promises must keep them. He gave you back your golden ball and you must do as he asks."

So the princess picked the frog up between her thumb and finger, not touching him more than she could help, and carried him upstairs and put him on the pillow on her bed. There he slept all night long. As soon as it was light he jumped up, hopped downstairs, and went out of the palace.

Now, thought the princess, he is gone and I shall be troubled with him no more.

But she was mistaken, for when night came again she heard tapping at the door of her bedroom. When she opened it, the frog came in and slept upon her pillow as before until the morning broke. The third night he did the same. But when the princess awoke the following morning, she was astonished to see, instead of the frog, a handsome prince standing at the head of her bed. He was gazing at her with the most beautiful eyes that ever were seen.

He told her that he had been enchanted by a wicked fairy, who had changed him into the form of a frog, in which he was fated to remain until a princess let him sleep upon her bed for three nights.