

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

By Claudia Haas

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

KING FROG: Loves lily pads more than courtrooms.

SNOW WHITE: Spokeswoman for princesses.

PRINCE CHARMING A: The defendant.

RAPUNZEL: Princess tired of long hair.

PIA: Princess tired of being tested.

CINDERELLA: Princess tired of cleaning.

AURORA: Princess who's just tired!

TIME: One year after all the "happily ever after" story endings.

PLACE: Courtroom in the Kingdom of Faraway Lands.

THE STORY

Five well-loved fairytale princesses have had it! Married one year, they are definitely not living happily ever after. Rapunzel is tired of her long hair, Pia is tired of peas under her mattresses or any other test, Cinderella is tired of cleaning, and Aurora of Sleeping Beauty fame is just tired period! Snow White, leader of the princesses, helps them present their cases to King Frog while Prince Charming tries to defend himself and his brothers. But why should the princesses wait for the king's decision? They take matters into their own hands to happily ever after!

SCENE 1

(AT RISE: All PRINCESSES are in a huddle having an active discussion. KING enters.)

KING: I hereby call this special meeting of the royal princesses to order. I understand from this paper that they wish to unionize. Is that correct?

PRINCESSES: Yes!

KING: Have you appointed a spokeswoman to speak for all of you?

SNOW: Yes, I am that person, your highness, although we all wish to be heard.

KING: Very well. Is there anyone here to represent the assorted Prince Charmings in all of this?

(Enter PRINCE CHARMING A, rushed, overloaded with paperwork.)

PRINCE: Ready, willing and able, sire.

KING: Excellent, let's get started. Snow White, you may begin.

SNOW: Thank you, sire. As you are aware, we have all had traumatic pasts. Poisoned apples, poisoned spinning wheels, forced imprisonment, evil stepmothers, well, you get the picture. I, for one, cannot even look at an apple without getting the willies. We feel that our princes have taken advantage of our good natures so far, and so we are here to petition the court for more equality in the kingdom. Our princes seem to think that because they rescued us and took us to live in their castles, we should be endlessly grateful and expect nothing more out of life.

KING: Well, Snow ... or should I say Ms. White? We all have our traumatic pasts to live down. I, for one, spent ten years as a frog. Something that my wife will not let me forget. Do you know that she constantly makes fun of my lily pads outside my castle? She thinks I should have a moat.

Happily Ever After

- 4 -

SNOW: Well, that is all very interesting, I am sure. But we are not here to discuss you, sir.

KING: All right. Let us continue.

SNOW: I would like you to hear Rapunzel's story first.

RAPUNZEL: *(Stands and comes forward.)* Your kingship, I have a simple request. All I would like from you is permission to get a haircut.

KING: I have no problem with this request. What say you Prince Charming A?

PRINCE: As you know sire, Prince Charming B, Rapunzel's husband, is my brother. When he first met Rapunzel, she had long flowing hair that had never been cut. That is why he fell in love with her. Ever since her evil mother cut her braids off, he has been waiting patiently for her hair to grow again. It is a simple request in exchange for rescuing her from the tower.

KING: That seems a satisfactory answer. Rapunzel, your request must be denied.

RAPUNZEL: But your lordship, he wants me to grow back my braids and use them as an elevator to get to the tower of the castle. He thinks there are too many stairs to climb. Do you have any idea how much that hurts? I suffered from migraines for years when my mother climbed up my braids. I was so grateful when she finally cut them off. Not to mention having to wash and dry that amount of hair. I do not want to live my life as a slave to a hairdo.

KING: I see your point. Do you see what advantages there would be if we all were frogs? This problem would never crop up. I was so happy during my frog days. Ah well, back to the business at hand. I will have to take this under advisement. I will rule later.

RAPUNZEL: Thank you, your graciousness.

KING: Well, let's forge on. There's a leap frog tournament in the next kingdom that I am judging in an hour. Who's next?

PIA: I am, you cute toad-king.

KING: That's King Frog to you. What's your problem?

Happily Ever After

- 5 -

PIA: I am sick of being tested, sire. I am sick of living my life under a microscope. All the whisperings behind my back. Is she a princess or isn't she? Well, I passed all the tests, didn't I? My education, bearing, and breeding bears me out. Sire, be honest. Am I not lovely and a joy to be around? Didn't I lie awake all night when my in-laws put a simple pea under twenty mattresses? Not to mention that sleeping twenty feet up in the air does not make for a restful nights sleep.

KING: Put all that behind you. You are the princess now. You have been accepted.

PIA: That's what I thought. But just last week my prince put a can of Coca Cola in front of me along with a can of Pepsi. He then blindfolded me and ordered me to take the Pepsi challenge. He said that only a true princess could taste the difference. Now, I ask you, is that supportive? I think not. You, sire, would never treat a princess with so little respect.

KING: That is very true. What say you, prince?

PRINCE: Your highness, as you know, Pia's husband, Prince Charming C, is also my brother. You have no idea how many women came knocking at his door claiming to be princesses. They had letters of introduction, an entourage of servants, were richly dressed - yet all were proven to be false. When Pia came in the rain that long ago night, she had nothing - no proof whatsoever and was not dressed as befits a person of noble birth. In fact, she looked like something the cat would drag in. Yet my dear brother took her in. When she claimed to be a princess, it was only my sweet brother who believed her and arranged for her to be tested. After she passed the tests, he married her. What greater proof of his love and support is there? If for once in a blue moon he feels like having a little fun and giving her a test to amuse himself, well, what harm can that do?

KING: I don't see the harm.

PIA: Now Mister King, you just mentioned that you tire of having to live down your frog past. It has not been easy being criticized and scorned, has it?

Happily Ever After

- 6 -

KING: Hmm, I also see your point. This, too, will have to be taken under advisement. Next. Let's speed this up please.

PIA: One last thing, sire. Not to influence your decision of course, but leap frog tournaments are my favorite thing in the whole world, and if ever another judge is needed, I would be thrilled to just leap right in!

KING: Very kind of you. Next.

CINDERELLA: I am next, sire. I am Cinderella. Prince Charming A is my husband. I feel a bit nervous testifying in front of him.

KING: So stated. Please continue.

(During speech, SHE dusts the PRINCESSES, KING, table, chairs - everything and everyone in room but PRINCE CHARMING A.)

CINDERELLA: As you can see, I am well prepared to clean. I clean all day and half the night. I can't stop. I would like to, but I just can't. I would like the prince to hire some servants to take the burden off of me, but he refuses. He thinks that since I spent the first half of my life as a servant, I should continue to do the same now. He has fired all the servants and has left all maintenance of the castle up to me. It is 200,000 square feet of cobwebs and dirt. The walls are rotting from moisture. I can't keep up with it and I can't take a break. I walk in my sleep with a broom. I haven't left the castle since my wedding day, and in one year I haven't finished cleaning the first floor of the castle. This is worse than living with my stepmother.

KING: This is a serious accusation. What say you, prince?

PRINCE: I had to fire all the servants, your grace. None of their work satisfied her. One wouldn't do the windows, the floors never sparkled enough. Then she complained about the food - not nutritious, not garnished properly. In a fit of anger, I told her I would fire them all and see if she could do a better job.

KING: And what were the results?

Happily Ever After

- 7 -

PRINCE: She does a much better job, sire. Our meals have earned a four-star rating and the first floor of the castle smells like a pine forest. I can't wait until she gets started on the second floor! Why should I deny her use of her natural talents?

KING: I quite agree. Cinderella, in your spare time could you possibly help out in my castle? (*SHE bursts into tears.*) It seems I will have to think on this also. Next.

AURORA: I am next, sire. I am Aurora, although my critics call me Sleeping Beauty.

KING: Ah yes, I am familiar with your story. It is one of my favorites. What is your complaint?

AURORA: Well sire, after one hundred years of sleeping, I am now an insomniac. I just can't sleep anymore.

KING: Well, surely you can't blame that on your prince?

AURORA: No, sire, THAT is not what I blame on the prince. It's the constant little jobs that he has me doing during the night so that I don't waste any time. (*Yawn.*) He is constantly (*Yawn.*) leaving me paperwork to finish up with little notes attached to it.

"Dear Aurora: If you happen to be up at 2 a.m. (*Yawn.*), please finish my speech to the loyal subjects. Prince." Things like that. (*Yawn.*) It seems that he can't budget his time very well and sees fit to burden my already sleepless nights with more things to keep me awake. (*Yawn.*) Forgive me, sire, I am very tired. (*Nods off.*)

KING: Prince Charming A, do you have a defense?

PRINCE: Of course, sire. Prince Charming D, Aurora's husband, is also my brother. The burden of running a kingdom lies heavily with him, and he does not see the harm in letting his wife assist him when she is already awake and able.

KING: Yes, I see. Another problem that would be solved if we were frogs. Frogs need very little sleep. I rule that ... Aurora? Aurora? Hmm ... I find it very disheartening to rule when the complainant is asleep. I really do have to go. Is there anything else?

SNOW: There is still me, your highness.

KING: Ah yes, Ms. White. Please proceed - quickly.

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