

## The Unlucky Princess

Once upon a time, there was a small kingdom surrounded on all sides by powerful empires. To the north was Bragshire, to the east was Rumpington, to the south was Blogbum, and to the west was Bottomsbury. In the middle of all these rich, mighty, and prosperous realms was Sugarbun, ruled by King Howie-Bob XIV and a half, and Queen Marine. They had twelve children, all girls, which was lovely, as twelve was a magical number, and they could be married to the princes of the surrounding kingdoms to strengthen the political relationships between Sugarbun and its relatives.

But then, something horrible happened to disrupt the peaceful atmosphere of Sugarbun and its inhabitants. A thirteenth princess was born. It wasn't meant to happen; on the day the child was born King Howie-Bob was beside himself. He spoke to his Royal Advice Givers about the unlucky babe.

"Ah, thirteen is an unlucky number, to be sure." said the most wise of the Advice Givers. "I proclaim that this child will die, so as to return the number to what it was before, which was twelve."

But the child did not die, so the baptism went ahead, for King Howie-Bob could not abandon the child, as it was an act of Immorality (although it did cross his mind). A fairy was reserved, invitations were sent, and a beautiful white dress decorated with pearls was sewn by the Royal Sewer of Things for the princess.

Fairies were important for baptisms, as they had the power to give princes and princesses a trait that would help them in their royal lives. Most often Beauty and Obedience were given to girls, and Bravery and Intelligence to boys. Sometimes a Royal Family would

have the misfortune of accidentally inviting (or not inviting, in some cases) an evil fairy, who would give the child something horrid, like Selfishness, Abnormal Facial Hair, Tendency Towards Violence, or No Arms. There were a few fairies who decided to be non-conformists, and give the babies they bless extremely odd traits, which led to uncomfortable situations when one was introduced as “Prince Victor, who Can’t Eat Rice.”

On the day of the baptism, Queen Marine was quite anxious. She ordered every spinning wheel, apple, and glass slipper in the kingdom to be destroyed. But this act still could not calm her down, so she lifted the baby, whom she had decided to name Karine, out of her canopied cradle, and went down to the church where the baptism to take place, hoping the holy and revered silence would soothe her.

However, instead of it being holy and reverently silent, the church was filled with the sound of someone crying. Marine soon found the source of the sound in the second pew. It was the fairy Orangeblossom, the one who was to bless the princess Karine.

“Whatever is wrong, yonder fairy?” said the Queen, slipping into noble speech in her nervousness.

“I lost my fairy wand!” Orangeblossom sobbed, “And now I can’t bless the newest princess! And she’ll be forever unlucky, since she is the thirteenth child!”

“Dear me!” said Marine, “How awful! Wherever did you lose it?”

“If I knew where I lost it, then I would have found it by now!” the fairy cried angrily.

“I say!” the Queen said, “We will have to find another to replace you, I suppose.”

But every other fairy in Sugarbun was gone, attending to the baptisms of other princes and princesses, especially that of King Tatimahasupimalorak, who had octuplets. So it came to pass that the Princess Karine was not blessed by a fairy, and so remained an unlucky princess. As she grew up among her twelve sisters, she was the one that broke her collarbone when they climbed the tree in the castle courtyard. She was the one who got sick with pneumonia when they went swimming in the moat. She was the one that got stung by wasps when they went for a stroll in the Royal Forest. And when they started dancing lessons, she was the one that tripped over her own feet, tore her dress and broke two vases and a chalice when she fell on an end table.

Years passed, and Princess Karine became more and more unlucky. Even the Royal Dogs Used For Hunting Purposes stayed far away from her, as something usually fell from the ceiling, or broke, or took it upon itself to try and impale as many thing livings as possible. Her life continued in this unlucky manner until her sixteenth birthday, (when her hair caught fire, the cake was eaten by rodents, and her gifts were sat on by the wisest Advice Giver, who was a very fat man). Karine decided that she had enough. She was tired of chandeliers falling on her dinner plate, losing every one of her tiaras, and the Royal Washer of Windows and Things Window-Like falling off his ladder whenever she walked by. She waited until her oldest sister, Serene the Beautiful, was about to marry Prince Ralphonse the Intelligent of Rumpington, to leave on her quest to become lucky. This meant that everyone would be too busy to try and convince her to stay, or even

notice her absence. Her plan was to travel around Sugarbun until she found a fairy, persuade them to give her a trait, and if necessary, take their wand by force and give herself one, like Pretty, Nice, or Good At Dancing.

The day of the night she was planning to leave, Karine went to her sisters and told them of her plan, for they would like to know where she was going if anyone did.

“That’s ridiculous.” said Henrine the Honest, who was closest to Karine in age.

“Well, I think it’s a fine plan.” Turrine the Mild said, “You can borrow my sword, Karine.”

“She’d probably cut her own head off.” sniggered Josephine the Lovely.

“The next time you see me, I will no longer be unlucky.” declared Karine.

The Princess packed two of her unripped dresses, a pair of slippers, and some food into a cloth sack and slung it over her shoulder. She put on her travelling cloak, and mounted her horse, Chersterham. But before she was out of the courtyard, her dresses were ripped into shreds, her slippers had two holes, the food had been pooped on by a raven with exceptional aim flying overhead, and Chesterham had gone into labour, putting an end to Karine’s life long belief that Chesterham was a male horse. So Karine was forced to leave on foot.

No sooner had she gotten out of sight of the castle did she hear voices talking. Karine did not think these voices could belong to fairies, however, as they were arguing quite loudly. So she chose to avoid

them, but no sooner had she chosen that particular course of action did two robbers burst out of the bushes in front of her.

“Ah look, Cutthroat Cornelius!” said one robber to the other, “A Princess!”

“Let’s kidnap her and hold her for ransom.” said the one called Cutthroat Cornelius. They tied Karine’s hands and feet (so she couldn’t run, only hop) and led her to their robber’s den, which was a dank and gloomy cave, where their stolen loot (two spoons and a birdcage) was stashed. The two robbers were joined by several more. They ate a meal of sausages and rum, without offering any to Karine, (not that she would have taken it), and fell asleep, snoring loud enough to cause a small avalanche.

“This is just my luck.” said Karine. “Things couldn’t possibly get any worse.”

But she was wrong. No sooner had the sun sunk below the western hills did the princess hear a terrible sound that did curdle the blood. It sounded like metal scraping against metal, undertoned with the sound of a thousand piercing whistles, while a bull bellowed in the background. That was the sound Karine heard, and she knew it for something that every noble, knight and peasant in Bragshire, Rumpington, Blogbum, Bottomsbury and Sugarbun feared above all else: a Dragon.

The dragon’s voice woke the robbers, and the ground began to shake. “Run away!” shouted Cutthroat Cornelius, though not one of his associates heard him over the din of the dragon, they did perceive the general gist of his warning. But Karine couldn’t run, only hop, for her feet were tied, so hop she did, until a giant Claw caught her by the hair,

and jerked her backwards, so that she was looking up into a Nostril so big that Karine could have fit her head in it, if she was of that nature.

“Why, what a pretty little thing I have caught.” said the Dragon, “It must be a princess! I shall take it back to my lair and make it keep house, I shall!”

“You mean,” said Karine in a timid voice, “that you aren’t going to eat me?”

“Goodness, no! Why would I do that?” the Dragon said in its Voice that was starting to give the princess a headache.

“I suppose that this is marginally better than being held for ransom.” Karine thought, until she noticed that the Dragon exhaled a great deal of flame when it talked, and her heart sank as she realized that living with the Dragon, she would not survive long, especially if it continued on having conversations with her.

But then Karine heard a fanfare of trumpets blow. The Dragon unhooked its Claw from her hair and looked about for what made the noise. Out of the forest, into the smoldering clearing in front of the robber’s den, came a knight riding a pure white horse, carrying a banner in one hand and a trumpet in the other. Both were clad heavily in shining armour.

“Fear not, fair maiden!” cried the knight valiantly. “I, Sir Bobbington of Blogbum, will slay this Beast. Have at you!”

Sir Bobbington put down his banner and drew his sword. He pointed it at the Dragon, and spurred his horse onward. The Dragon rose into the air so suddenly that the knight nearly trampled Karine, but she was able to dive out of the way. The Dragon evidently decided that

having a princess was not worth fighting a knight, so it flapped its Wings and flew away.

Karine sighed in relief, or would have if her mouth wasn't full of dirt. But her relief didn't last long, for the knight got down on one knee close to where she lay and looked at her expectantly.

"Yes?" she said after she'd spat out the dirt, which was followed by an uncomfortable silence.

"Well, aren't thee going to thankest me?" said Sir Bobbington.

"What?" Karine exclaimed in disbelief.

"I slayed yonder dragon, milady. I, Sir Bobbington the Proud."

"The dragon flew away! You didn't slay it!"

"Ah, but 'tis the same thing. Would thou likest to look upon your rescuer's face?"

"Why would I want to look at your face?" queried the princess, who was beginning to be annoyed with the knight, who hadn't even offered to untie her hands and feet.

"For you shall sooner or later, as we are to be married." he replied.

"WHAT?!"

The knight lifted off his helmet, revealing his curly blond hair, blue eyes and arrogant smile. He stood, and Karine realized that he towered over her. Still smiling, Sir Bobbington leaned closer, until their faces were but a few inches apart. She could see nearly every one of his eyelashes, and was beginning to wonder why he must examine her so closely when . . .

"AAAAAHHHHRRRRGG!" Karine pushed Sir Bobbington so forcefully he fell on his bottom, and started to hop away from the

conceited fool. The knight cried, “Stop, yonder maiden! I beg of ye!” but was wearing so much armour that he couldn’t get up.

Karine hopped long and far, until she could hop no more. She collapsed at the bottom of a tree and curled up, sure that any moment something worse than the robbers, the Dragon, and the doltish knight put together was going to come crashing through the bushes. Karine slept fitfully, as it is hard to be comfortable on the hard ground when one’s feet and hands are tied.

The princess awoke to the clip-clop of a horse’s hooves. For a moment, she was afraid that Sir Bobbington was coming back to try and kiss her again, until she saw that this horse was brown, and that it was ridden by a man who was not wearing armor, shining or otherwise.

The horse halted in front of her, and the rider hurriedly dismounted. “Are you . . . are you alright?” said the man, who was not much older than Karine. He had short black hair, dark eyes, and a dusting of freckles on his nose.

“Yes,” said the princess, then looked down at her bound hands. “Well, no, actually . . .”

“Here.” said the rider, and pulling a knife from his belt, freed Karine’s hands and ankles.

“Thank you.” the princess said gratefully, smiling at her rescuer, who was quite handsome.

“And might I ask why a maiden like yourself is out in the middle of the woods? Unless . . .” His face suddenly clouded over. “Are you a princess?”

“Yes, I’m Princess Karine of Sugarbun. Why?”



“You see,” said the man, “I’m Prince Carl the Lucky of Bottomsbury.”

“Lucky?” Karine repeated. “That’s a bit of an odd trait. But it’s better than none, I guess.”

“I know it’s odd. I don’t know why the fairy gave it to me. Maybe she was feeling creative.” Prince Carl said, “But ever since then, I’ve been so lucky it’s unbearable. I’m good at everything I do. I win every race, contest, and competition I enter. I never spill anything or break something, even if I try.”

“That doesn’t sound so bad.” Karine said.

“It gets rather dull after a while. Imagine that every time you step outside, the sun is shining and the sky is clear, even if it was raining a moment before. I read a lot, but I’ve never gotten a papercut. Sometimes, when I get bored, I jump off the highest tower of my castle. I always land in a pile of feathers, wagon-load of mattresses, or a really fat and squishy lawn chair.”

“Oh, I see. Then why are you out here all alone?” asked the princess.

“I ran away. I couldn’t stand to keep having candy and chocolate for every meal, and never get any cavities, you see. I wish that once, something bad would happen to me.” explained Carl.

“I ran away too, because I was tired of bad stuff happening to me.” Karine said, “You should come stay at my castle. Bad things and accidents always happen there.”

Carl agreed, and smiled at Karine, who was smiling back. The two rode back to the castle on Carl’s horse. On the way, Karine fell into a river, but when Carl pulled her out, there was a fish in her hand.

When Carl made a fire to cook the fish, Karine caught her dress aflame, but a sudden downpour put it out.

“That was rather lucky.” said Princess Karine when she found a full picnic for two in a bush.

“That was rather unlucky.” said Prince Carl when a squirrel spooked the horse, causing him to fly from the saddle and roll to a stop in a bunch of thistles.

When they arrived at Karine’s castle, the drawbridge was lowered to the trumpets sounded in their honour. (Although it did lower on Carl’s head.)

King Howie-Bob gave his daughter a big hug, for though she caused many injuries to herself and others, he truly loved her. The King was surprised but pleased to see Prince Carl the Lucky of Bottomsbury, and didn’t miss the shy smiles he exchanged with the youngest princess. Shortly thereafter, Prince Carl and Princess Karine were joyously married, and it was hoped throughout the kingdom of Sugarbun that the Prince’s luck would counter the Princess’ bad luck. And often it did.

But more often, one would win the lottery, and then break a finger getting out of the bath. Or rats would infest the kingdom, but a mysterious Piper would lead them all away. Or one would have a bad night’s sleep, but the next morning, find a pea under their mattress. Or .

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