

The Fairy Bride

Birion

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Simon

“Stay there and think about what you’ve done!”

The man locking the door to my bedroom was my father. And no, I hadn’t done anything, this was pretty much what he’d always tell me – or rather, yell at me – once he’d had a few beers. It had been slightly better before Mom left us – yeah, left, not died or anything, she’d just packed her things a couple years back and we hadn’t seen her since – but not by much. And right now, it was only a year – a year and three days, but who’s counting – before my eighteenth birthday and the day I get out of this place. Hopefully, I’d manage to get a job in the meantime so that I would not be entering my new life with only my name. Simon Corn. Not the best of names, but it’s the one thing I have left from my mother, and I’m not letting someone take it as well.

I picked up a book and started reading – my father, in one of his more lucid moments, took my computer and put it in the study, so books are pretty much the only thing I have left. I could probably get out through the window, but all my friends are either gone for the summer or spending all his time with his girlfriend, and I really don’t need Mitch rubbing it in any more than he had the past two months. Not that I mind not having a girlfriend – when I still could get on the Internet without five minute random check-ups from my father, I found out I was pretty much asexual – not a lot of interest in girls at all. Or guys, for that matter.

So there I was, reading about the umpteenth attempt to colonise Mars, when suddenly I heard a loud bang and, looking up, saw an alien materialise right in my bedroom. And, following a proper etiquette for close encounters of the third kind, I promptly fainted.

* * *

“Oi! Wake up, wouldyeh?”

Huh? Something was slapping my cheek. Stop that! I reached out to push that something away, and the voice seemed pleased.

“Oh, yer up, good.”

I dared peek open my eye and was greeted with the sight of an... alien! I screamed and tried to scramble away along the wall. “Wh-what do you want? I-I’m not good for probing, I swear!”

“Wha?” was his surprised response.

Now that I was wide awake, I realised that he was remarkably human-like. Fairly short – maybe 130 centimetres or so – and *very* hairy all over, almost like a monkey or something, but still pretty human. In leather trousers and a Marlboro T-shirt.

“No, I’m not into that stuff, ya dumbass. All I need is for you teh show me the way to yer sister, and Ah’ll be outta yer hair in a flash.”

My sister? “I don’t have a sister,” I ventured carefully. The alien seemed fairly non-threatening – at least to me – but I was wary of what he might do if he found a girl.

“Yeh don’t? Forest,” something in his voice told me this was a curse, “any cousins? Any cute neighbours? Hel, any woman should do.”

I shook my head, already decided not to let this creep near any woman I know. Maybe he’ll go back to his spaceship.

So I want to be a knight in a shining armour sometimes. Sue me.

“Eghh,” he sighed and leaned against the wall, looking crestfallen, “the King will have my head for dinner!”

“The... king?”

“Oh, yeh know, Oberon. I was s’posed teh bring a lass for his youngest son, Prince Llyr, on account of his royal kidness being too shy teh get one fer himself, but yer the first person not to run away screamin’.”

“The door is... locked,” I felt compelled to explain. Wait, wasn’t king Oberon in some play or something?

“Huh,” he walked over to the door and tried the handle. “So it is. S’ppose I should lock the door afore I try to talk to the lasses?”

I boggled. On one hand, I had a real life *alien* in my bedroom! How cool was that? But then, he was also clearly interested in kidnapping human women, something I...

“Shakespeare!” I shouted suddenly when I remembered where I heard the name Oberon before. “Wait, he met with *aliens* too?” I couldn’t believe that.

“Wha? Where?” my guest looked up, surprised by my shouting. “Wha aliens? I’m no bloody alien, yeh dumbass!”

Oh great. I juſt offended the alien who can teleport. At least. If I’m lucky, maybe he’ll juſt incinerate me on the spot.

“I’m Fae!”

I blinked. “A what?”

“A Fae, moron. A Fairy. An Elf. Momma never read you no fairy tales when yeh was a wee little kid?”

I nodded with dumb expression in my face. A fairy? “Aren’t you supposed to have... butterfly wings or something?”

He snorted with disgust, “Aren’t yeh s’posed teh have brains in yer head or something? Tha’s juſt something yeh mortals came up with. No bloody butterfly wings for me. Think Ah’m a ponce or wha?”

I quickly shook my head no.

He sighed and looked at me with gentler expression. “Ah s’ppose it’s no really yer fault. Oh well.” He seemed to think for a moment, watching me. “Look, kid, er, what’s yer name anyway?”

“Simon. Simon Corn.”

“Right. Ah’m Robin Goodfellow, but yeh can call me Puck on account of us bein’ acquainted now. Anyway, I need –”

“Puck? As in *the* Puck? The Midsummer Night’s... Dream and all?”

He grinned and nodded, visibly pleased. “Heard of me, have yeh? Good. ’Course, runnin’ around the world’s no wha it used teh be back in the day, but Ah’m ſtill King Oberon’s beſt man for the job. And tha’s wha I wanted to talk to yeh about.”

I nodded. Faeries? Oberon? Puck? I ſtill couldn’t believe it. But he did appear out of thin air... “About what?”

“Look, as Ah was sayin’, the good king and his lovely queen Titania has a son, the young prince Llyr. He’s no the first, or the laſt, but he’s their youngest kid right now and the royal parentage really dote on him. And he’s juſt about the right time to marry, but the kid’s made it clear he doesn’t want teh marry another Fae, on account of them bein’ too ‘flighty’. Says the kettle. He’s not got a hobby laſt him a month.

“But anyway, since none of the family can leave Faerie for nothing save the end of the world, the king decided to send me, ’cause Ah haven’t a drop of nobility in me, to search for a girl to agree to marry the prince. But since everyone was runnin’ instead of listenin’ to me, I thought I’d get yeh to persuade some o’ the lovely ladies to agree, wha d’yeh say?”

“Um, not that I’m suggesting it or anything, but can’t you just... spirit away whoever you want? I can’t really leave the room, so I don’t know how much help I’d be anyway.”

“Wouldn’ work. Needs to be agreeing and willing ’cause of these damn nuts.” He reached into his pocket and pulled out three walnuts to show me. “Look, the prince is pretty picky ’bout his bride-to-be, how she should look and stuff, and the king wants her teh be a good wife for him. I can take any ol’ biddy and make her the kid’s wet dream, but that’ll last a month. A year and a day at best. An’ it should last for a couple centuries at least. So, every five hundred years, Dagu’s old tree in the centre of Annu’s garden grows these three nuts. An’ each one of ’em will turn one spell into reality. So it’s one to change the lass into a real Fae beauty, one to support and love her husband to eternity an’ ever and the last one to break the first spells if she decides teh go against it in the end.”

I must have looked really surprised, because he sighed and explained, “Look, kid, eh, Simon. We’re not all contrary to the general mortal public. ’Course, there’s dreams, and then there’s nightmares. But at king Oberon’s court, we always give them a way out. And the only way to break a Dagu’s nut enchantment is with another of the three. The king’s eldest once spent a century as a duck afore we found the last nut of them that turned him fowl.”

“Wait,” I got off the bed and started walking across the room. Once I accepted the existence of Fae as real, it all started to somehow make sense. “So, you just get a girl – any girl – to agree to marry this prince Lir –”

“Llyr.”

“Right, do your magic and poof, she’s happy living in Faery land?”

“In a nutshell, yeah. ’Course, it’s the first part tha’ss the problem.”

“Don’t worry about that. I think I have a plan.”

His face beamed and I think he nearly hugged me. “Yeh do? Tha’ss fantastic! Wha do we do first?”

“First I’ll need a couple answers. Those spells of yours, can they transform absolutely *anyone* into the prince’s ideal bride? I mean, are there any restrictions – age, height, hair colour, anything?”

“Well,” Robin scratched his beard, “can’t be animal or flowers. Or trees. In fact, the spell only works on humans. ’Cause of dreams, yeh know? No one else dreams.”

“So, the spell works on anyone who dreams?”

He nodded.

“Good,” I smirked. “Now, do you have some picture of the prince, something to show the ‘lasses’?”

His smirk was a mirror of mine. “Do yeh have a mirror here?”

I looked around and pointed at the window, which could, under right circumstances, be quite reflective. “Will this work? The only mirror is in the bathroom, and I can’t get out of the room, remember?”

Puck examined the window, then shrugged, “It’ll work, I s’ppose. Just look into it.”

I followed his instructions and looked into the window glass. At first, only a wisp of my reflection greeted me, but as I looked deeper, I felt like pulling away heavy curtains and suddenly, a handsome face appeared before me.

“Cute. Yeah, that’ll work. One more question – how old is he?” I asked as I studied the reflection before me.

“The prince? ’Bout as old as you. Twenty-five, his last birthday.”

I pulled away from the window and looked indignantly at Puck. “I’m not twenty-five! I’m six... seventeen!” Three days, Simon. You can just as well get used to it now.

“And I’m older than yer whole island. Anyone under a century is the same teh me.”

“Oo-kay. Well, I think I have everything I need, now.”

“So we can go find some girls? Where to first?”

“Faerie,” I tried to keep the smirk off my face.

“But wha about... oh, yeh have a sister, yeh little weasel, an’ she’ll come with us, right?” he tapped the side of his nose with a grin.

“I don’t.”

“Yeh don’t? But who’s gonna be the prince’s bride then?”

“I am,” I smirked and became the first person in a thousand years to see Robin Goodfellow lose his voice.

Lissa

“Oi! Wake up.”

I slapped Puck’s cheek, mirroring his previous actions.

“Wha? Wha happened?”

“You fainted. I didn’t know fairies could faint.”

“Yeah, well, Ah... You! Are yeh crazy?”

I jumped up as he started shouting. This was not part of the plan.

“Why? Just for wanting something better from life than I can get here?” I realised I was shouting back, and had to stop myself and reflect for a moment. Why did I feel so strongly about this? As far as I could remember, I’d never even thought about something like that before.

“But... yer a guy!”

“Not if you do the spells! You said so yourself!”

That slowed him for a moment, and our shouting match subsided into heated discussion.

“So... yer a ponce, then?”

I sighed – apparently, wanting to change your life ranked low on the masculine scale. “No. I’m... look, I could try to explain to you exactly *what* I am, but I have a feeling you wouldn’t understand, so can we just drop it and get to the spells?”

He looked at me with both question and faint disgust in his eyes – pretty much the same I got from my formerly best friend of ten years when I told him I’m not interested in girls three years ago.

I sighed and decided to explain the situation to the hairy fairy. “Look, Robin, I know what you’re thinking about me right now, but it’s not like that. My life sucks, okay? My mother left when I was thirteen, my father hits me ’bout twice a day for no reason, everyone at school thinks I’m gay, so I can’t get a girlfriend, but the gay guys think I’m too straight for them, so I can’t get a boyfriend either.”

“Ponce,” he snorted.

“I’m not! I just,” I sighed and sat on the bed, “I just want someone – anyone – in my life. And if I have to be a girl for that,” I looked him straight in the eye, “I’ll be a girl. Simple as that.”

“Yeh need a shrink. Ah’ll just – Aah!”

“Whoa!”

The reason for our surprise was the face of a man that suddenly appeared in the middle of the room. I should really get used to this weirdness if I’m to live with the Fae.

“My king!”

Aaah, so this is king Oberon. He looked distinguished, but if Shakespeare was right, he must have a sense of humour. I just couldn’t see it. Then again, I made myself sort

of scarce as he turned toward Puck.

“Aah, Puck,” his voice boomed and echoed in the room, “have you found a bride for Llyr yet?” His tone left the promise of terrible punishments lying open in the air.

“Ah, uh, o-of course, my lord. I was just talking to... ’er, and –”

“Has she agreed?”

“Y-yes, o king.”

“Then make her presentable and bring her to us. My son is most anxious to meet her. And Puck?”

“Yes, my king?”

“If you fail me, you will spend the next thousand years living in a primrose!”

The face vanished and I could no longer hide my amusement at Puck’s situation as I jump off the bed with a victorious “Yes!”

“Yeah, yeah, hold yer horses. Yeh got what yeh wanted, after all. The king commands and the fool listens. But if yer thinkin’ Ah’m gonna help ye afterwards, don’t count on it. Just keep yer secret and we’ll all be one big happy family of freaks.”

* * *

“So, how do we do it? Do I need to take off my clothes or something?”

“Egh, it’s enough I have to go along with this. Don’t need teh look at yeh too. Catch!”

With glee in his eye, he threw one of the nuts at me. I barely managed to catch it in time before it dropped on the floor, and cried out when I felt it bite into my palm. “What the... Aaagh!”

“Hurts like Hel, huh? Coulda find a proper lass, would been much easier on her, but even yer better than primroses.”

I was barely paying attention to him as I became suddenly aware of a melting sensation. As I got over the initial shock of the biting nut, I managed to focus on my arm and watched, part in horror, but mostly with interest, as most of my muscles vanished into thin air, taking what hair I had, and cutting off a couple centimetres from the bones as my arm seemed to grow backwards. The fingers were almost as long as before, but much more slender, more... fragile to the look.

The changes spread over my shoulder (I didn’t have particularly wide shoulders, but the difference was still markable) and onto my head. I reached up with my (already transformed) hand and felt my face grow narrower, my cheekbones more pronounced, my lips now pouty, my sparse beard disappearing. “Wow,” I whispered and my voice sounded different – lighter, higher, with more breath to it. I quickly checked – yup, my Adam’s apple was gone. Vanished. Disappeared. I tasted cherries on my lips and realised I was wearing a makeup.

The world suddenly floated around on a roundabout. “Ow!” I cried out and quickly took off my glasses as my eyes changed, my sight now perfect after a decade of correction. The world around me seemed... different, but not in any way I could recognise. It was perhaps more vibrant, more alive, even the man-made furniture and stuff in my room almost aching to spring to life.

My train of thoughts was derailed as my mousy blond hair burst out into fiery red locks, and soon I felt them tickling my thighs. Wow, I thought, I don’t think I’ll end up any lighter than I was before. I had to make an effort to hold my head straight to keep the hair from pulling it back.

The tug at the front of my chest pulled my attention from my hair and I looked down at my... “Breasts!” I whispered and reached to touch them. “Didn’t really expect my first experience to be with my own.” They were rather more sensitive than what I used to have, but nothing of the supposed ‘orgasmic thrill’. With no knowledge of the

size, all I had to go on were other guys bragging in locker room, but I judged myself to be a... B cup? That seems to fit.

As I looked up from my chest, I noticed that in the meantime, I'd lost about twenty, twenty-five centimetres in height as my stomach caved in and my hips blossomed out. I couldn't see myself, but I was certain I looked pretty girly already, with only my legs still retaining the boy shape, though not for long.

The change I noticed the most came next. Now, I hadn't been using little Simon very often, but it was the main symbol of my masculinity, so I couldn't help but feel a twinge of hesitation when I felt it shrivel and crawl back into my body, with the sack below it following, leaving a weird feeling behind. It seemed clear to me I was now a full woman, but I wasn't about to check it out with Puck leering at me. It was a strange feeling, part emptiness, part something I couldn't recognise.

This time I noticed when I dropped another couple centimetres – if I were to guess, I'd say I was about thirty centimetres shorter than when I started. My legs and feet reshaped as well – I couldn't see them under my jogging bottoms, but I was certain my feet dropped at least a couple sizes – not exactly dainty, as such, but certainly smaller.

I was still marvelling at the changes in my body when I felt my T-shirt tighten around my chest and... a bra? Yes, a bra split from the fabric, hugged my new breasts, and actually gave me a – another quick check – fairly modest cleavage. The shirt meanwhile changed from worn cotton to – Was it silk? Perhaps – and spread down to my trousers.

My legs were quickly encased in a form-fitting skirt as the trouser legs melted together and tied my calves together – I couldn't even move without tripping. As the former shirt reached down to my hips, the skirt suddenly flared and spread wide in a flurry of wisping silk. When it settled down, I realised I was wearing a very nice short-sleeved dress of dark green silk, with skirt reaching down to my ankles.

My underpants suddenly grew tight around my hips – not that they were loose before, with my hips much wider than when I was a guy – and their material changed into something smooth and comfortable. So this is what girls feel like, I thought, and suddenly yelped in surprise when the... underwear shifted and split in the middle, forming a short skirt under the dress. I – I'm naked, I gasped silently and checked my crotch, but I couldn't see anything through the dress skirt. Shouldn't girls wear... knickers or something? I boggled.

I felt a slight tingle in my left palm and that the nut has almost entirely melted away. And with the tickles at my feet and calves, it vanished entirely and I rose maybe five or so centimetres as a pair of black high-heeled shoes appeared on my feet and my socks crawled up under my dress and turned into smooth stockings.

Couple seconds later, the quiet whisper of shifting clothes and changing bodies lingering in the air died out. I was now a girl – a pretty one, if Puck's gaze were anything to go on (and judging how much against it he'd been...). I needed a mirror.

"Wow, er, yer lookin' pretty good for a ponce there." I was really getting tired of that word. "Here, next part," he threw the next nut at me.

This one didn't bite. Instead, it melted right into my palm, and suddenly I felt... confident. Powerful. I knew I could win any argument, deal with any situation, and get my lazy husband to get off his arse and govern his fief as he should. Husband? I checked my thoughts, and couldn't find anything contradicting that. Well, I shrugged, that was to be expected.

"Now," I looked at Puck, "I believe you have a duty to take me to your lord's court? Get to it!" I was really starting to enjoy having authority.

“Now, now, lass, er, lad. Hold yer horses for just a moment. There’s one last thing to do.”

“What is it?”

Instead of an answer, he chuckled and threw the last nut at me. With instinct, I caught it... and as it melted in my palm, I realised that my one chance to change my mind vanished with it.

“You!”

I didn’t get any further as my mind was suddenly filled with every bit of feminine knowledge I’d ever need. Simon Corn was now officially dead. I still had his memories, but every little detail, every instinct that made him what he was, were gone, replaced by Lissa. Lissa? Simon would have cried at the loss of his last connection to his mother, but as I was now, I just steamed and glared at the grinning Puck.

“Yeh wouldn’t have been presentable like yeh were afore. Still too much lad in yeh. Now yer a proper lass and none’ll know different. Saves me from primroses.”

I took a deep breath and walked over to him, as natural as if I’ve been doing it my whole life (and in a way, I have). Leaning down, I gazed into his eyes, and snarled, “Do not presume our debts settled, Puck. You *will* slip one day, and I shall make sure the king’s punishment will be swift and terrible. Now, do you have any more surprises, or are you ready to do your duty and introduce me to my future husband’s court?”

I must have been pretty scary, as he squeaked and waved his hand. The whole room was suddenly covered in mist. I turned around, but my guide had vanished.

“Puck!”

The mists suddenly cleared and I was standing in the royal court of King Oberon of Faerie.

Llyr

The first thing I noticed were the flowers. Well, not flowers per se, more like floral motifs all over the walls in the large hall I was standing in, except they seemed to be almost but not quite alive.

The next thing I noticed were the people. Or Fae. They were everywhere, all of them more beautiful than anyone I'd ever seen before, and suddenly a doubt crawled into my mind – what if I was just average among them? I still haven't seen myself properly, after all.

My doubts were banished, however, when group after group became aware of my entrance and turned to look at me... and froze with looks of stupefied adoration. I allowed myself a little smile. I might make an impression on this court after all, I thought.

"My king, my queen, allow me to introduce..." I suddenly heard the little troll's voice and turned around to face the royal throne and the King and the Queen. With the capital letters. They were... indescribable. They were Summer and Winter and the Sky and the Earth, they were Beauty and Radiance and Royalty and Divinity, all in two beings.

"...Lady Sim-"

To this day, I still have no idea how I managed to cross those ten or so metres to grab Puck and stop him from continuing. The courtiers who saw me say I did not bother with all the space between points A and B.

I stopped with a blush in my cheeks and a hand on Puck's mouth – eyugh, gross – and quickly dropped into a curtsy. "My King. I fear your servant was to play a trick on you by changing my name."

"And what is your name, child?" The melody of the Queen's voice reached out and caressed my very soul.

"Lissa, my Queen," I replied, eyes downward.

"The Spring Flower? How fitting for a vision of beauty."

"Thank you," I whispered.

"Llyr!" the King called for my husband-to-be.

"Father?" a melodious voice replied from somewhere behind me. I rose and turned to look at its owner – I needed to look at him – and time stopped as our eyes met.

* * *

The love between the Fae has nothing of the awkward bumbblings of mortals' struggling to find a perfect mate. For us, the love is physical – it can make minutes last like days and days as mere seconds just with a glance to your lover's eyes. For the rest of the court, we were still for a few moments, but between us, we watched each other for hours, before he finally broke the silence and bowed deeply, his dark auburn hair sweeping the air in a flamboyant arc.

“My lady.”

I curtsied equally deep, my eyes still lost in his.

“My lord.”

Our voices, though whispered, carried across the hall as every lady and courtier watched as he walked closer to me and offered me his hand. It was hard and strong and I let him lead me in front of the throne.

“My lady,” he turned to me, “I wish to give you all my love and ask for yours in return.”

I grabbed his other hand and spoke up, the words coming naturally to me, “My lord, I give you my love and accept all of yours.”

“Ha!” the King’s boisterous laugh broke the silence. “Heralds, to me! Let every in Faerie and outside that my son shall marry lady Lissa in a month’s time on the night of the full moon! Now, let us be merry on this most joyous occasion!”

I smiled at the King’s mirth and let myself be swept into the dance in my lover’s arms.