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THE FROG PRINCE

Once upon a time, there was a princess who lived in a beautiful castle. She had lovely dresses, large gardens, and many toys, but what she loved most in the whole world was a golden ball. She loved to play with it near a fountain in the forest, not far from the castle.

Every afternoon, when the sun was shining and the air was fresh, the princess went to the fountain with her ball. She tossed it up into the air, caught it in her hands, and laughed again. It was her favorite game, and she could spend a long time playing without getting tired.

One day, while she was playing as always, the ball slipped from her hands. It bounced once, then again, and then fell straight into the fountain.

Plop.

The princess ran to the edge and looked into the water. The fountain was very deep and dark. She could not see the bottom.

—Oh no! —she said sadly—. My golden ball... how am I going to get it back now?

She sat by the fountain and began to cry. She was so sad that at first she did not even hear a little voice coming from nearby.

—Princess, why are you crying?

The princess looked around and saw a green frog sitting on a stone beside the water.

—I am crying because my golden ball fell into the fountain —she answered—. It is my favorite toy, and I cannot reach it.

The frog tilted his head and looked at her carefully.

—I could help you —he said—. But if I bring back your ball, what will you give me in return?

The princess thought for a moment and answered quickly:

—I will give you whatever you want. My ribbons, my crown, my rings, or my dresses.

The frog slowly shook his head.

—I do not want your ribbons, your crown, or your rings —he said—. I want you to let me be your friend. I want to sit with you, eat from your plate, and stay by your side.

The princess did not want to say no, because she wanted her ball back as quickly as possible.

—Yes, yes, all right —she answered in a hurry—. I promise all that. But please, bring back my ball.

Then the frog jumped into the water.

Splash.

He disappeared for a few seconds, and the princess stared at the fountain anxiously. Soon the frog came back up with the golden ball in his mouth. He placed it on the grass right in front of the princess.

—Here is your ball —he said.

The princess smiled with joy.

—My ball! Thank you! —she cried.

She quickly grabbed it in her hands and began to run back to the castle.

—Wait! —cried the frog—. Take me with you! I cannot run as fast as you.

But the princess kept running without looking back. She thought a frog could never follow her and that everything would simply be forgotten.

The next day, when the royal family was sitting at the table for dinner, a noise was heard at the door.

Knock, knock.

The king looked at the princess.

—Go and see who is knocking —he said.

The princess stood up, went to the door, and opened it. When she saw who was there, she turned pale. It was the frog.

—Princess —said the frog—, yesterday you promised that I would be your friend. Now I have come so that you may keep your word.

The princess quickly shut the door and returned to the table.

The king noticed the worried look on her face.

—Who was at the door? —he asked.

The princess lowered her eyes and answered softly:

—It is a frog. Yesterday he helped me get my golden ball out of the fountain, and I promised that I would be his friend. But I did not think he would really come.

The king looked at her seriously.

—If you made a promise, you must keep it —he said—. Open the door and let the frog come in.

The princess did not like that idea at all, but she obeyed. She opened the door, and the frog came in, hopping slowly.

—Lift me onto the chair —said the frog—. I want to sit beside you.

The princess made a face, but her father looked at her firmly once again. So she carefully picked up the frog and placed him on a chair.

The frog looked at the table full of food and said:

—Now bring your plate closer. I want to eat with you.

The princess no longer knew where to look. She felt embarrassed, and also a little disgusted. But the king reminded her again:

—You must keep your word.

So the princess moved the plate closer. The frog ate a little and then said:

—Now I am tired. Take me to your room so I can rest.

The princess opened her eyes wide.

—To my room? —she asked.

—Yes —answered the frog—. You said I would be your friend and that I would stay by your side.

The princess felt very upset, but the king spoke again, calm and firm:

—A promise matters not only when it is easy. It also matters when we do not like keeping it.

Then the princess took the frog to her room. When they entered, the frog looked at her and said:

—I am very tired. Let me sleep near your pillow.

The princess was already fed up. She thought all of this was too much.

—I do not want to! —she said angrily.

The frog kept looking at her in silence. Then the princess, full of annoyance, picked him up in her hand and threw him down hard onto the bed.

At that very moment, something surprising happened.

A strange light filled the room. The frog disappeared, and in his place stood a young prince with a kind face and sad eyes, as if he had been waiting a very long time for that moment.

The princess stepped back in amazement.

—Who are you? —she asked.

The young man bowed his head and answered gently:

—I am a prince. A long time ago, a witch turned me into a frog with a spell. It could only be broken when a princess truly kept her promise and treated me like a friend.

The princess looked at him in surprise. Little by little, her anger faded away.

—So... all of this was because of the spell? —she asked.

—Yes —answered the prince—. And thanks to you, I am free now.

The princess stayed quiet for a moment. She remembered how she had tried to run away from her promise and how her father had taught her to keep her word.

The next morning, the king met the prince and heard the whole story. He was very happy to know that the spell had been broken. As the days passed, the princess and the prince began to know each other better. They talked, walked through the gardens, and discovered that they understood each other very well.

In time, they became great friends, and later, when they truly knew one another, they decided to stay together.

And so, the princess learned that keeping your word is important, and also that true kindness is sometimes hidden where we least expect it.

THE END

