Accidental Princess

My Entry in the Reluctant Princess Contest

By Maryanne Peters

I was really too old to be a babysitter. Too old and a guy. But the truth is I was looking for work that made me money but was casual. I was finding things tough at college and I did not need the pressure of a regular job adding to my stresses. I guess I am just one of those people who does not handle stress well. Babysitting is easy. Play with kids and wear them out. Put them to bed. Raid the fridge. Do some study.

College set up a network to find work. I got a few jobs looking after boys. Everybody assumed that I would be able to go to the park and throw a ball to them, or whatever. I have never been very sporty. I would rather play video games, but even that gets boring for me, after a while. It is just the way I am, I guess.

The I got a job sitting for Daniel Watts Bryant, a banker big in the City, although I had never heard of him. But why would I have? He had two daughters, but he said that he was going to try having a guy to look after them when he was out.

“My girls manipulate other girls too easily,” he said. I had no idea what he was talking about.

The truth is that his situation was a bit of a tragedy. His wife had died a year or so before I turned up, of some kind of blood cancer. She had been a socialite, whatever that is. I heard some say that she was a bit of bitch too, but I never speak ill of the dead, or the living for that matter. So, her death left Daniel with two daughters Lea and Nora, to look after. I guess they were aged only 11 and 12 when she died, as they were 12 and 13 when I met them.

So, I called them “Princess Types” because they had been brought up to believe that if you were sweet and pretty you would find your prince and life would be perfect. I didn’t believe that was possible, at least not then. Who would? Princesses only exist in fairy tales – right?

I suppose they had the example of their mother. By all accounts she was pretty, and charming, and she married a wealthy man. She must have seemed like a princess to them, dressed in her fine clothes and jewelry, as she kissed them goodnight before going out to some grand ball or whatever.

I never met her. Now she is dead. So, it seems that her life did not turn out perfectly. Whose does?

Well, mine, as it turns out.

Daniel had a function to go to straight from work so he called to ask if I could be at his place after school. He had left a key for me to collect and I got around to his inner-city mansion before 3:00pm. I had some books with me, but I was not in a mood to study. Somehow, I seemed even more listless than usual that day – at least, that is what I put it down to.

When Lea and Nora got home, they were keen to play. I said that it was always my policy to play some games with kids in my care. Keep the tempo up and soon they will get tired and be ready for bed. There is no sense in sending kids to bed before they are tired because they just keep getting up, and with two you can find yourself against a tag team that can never be beat.

But usually I arrived much later. Daniel was not expected back until midnight. That was over 8 hours away.

So, the game was dress up. That was their favorite game. They played it all the time. I was just never there long enough to get immersed in it. But this time, I was. And I did. Get immersed, I mean.

Lea and Nora were experts well before their time. You don’t expert expect girls just on teens to be experts in hair and makeup, much less know all about body shape. I guess little girls brought up on Barbie dolls know what the shape of mature woman ought to be, in the world of princesses.

“You can be a princess too,” they said.

Why not? Do it. The look of excitement on their faces was priceless. I just sat back and let it happen. There would be plenty of time to “de-princess” after they were in bed.

“We kept some of Mommy’s dresses,” Lea explained. “Just the princess ones. “They are too big for us. Maybe when we get older. But they will fit you.”

“Surely not,” I said. I was sure that their mother would be smaller than me, although I am not big. It turns out I was wrong about that. The dress was pink with petticoats and beaded detail everywhere. It looked fabulously expensive. It came with clip-on earrings and a tiara to match the beadwork. It had a see-through section in the front, so Nora said that I needed to take off my T-shirt and wear a bra.

“We need to tape across your chest to make a cleavage first,” she said.

I could not believe it. I asked her where she learned this stuff. On the internet, of course. Little girls know that princesses have breasts, and internet savvy little girls know that tape and padding can make their chests look like a princess’s chest.

As for hair and makeup, there must be hundreds of video bloggers out there, and it seems like a good chunk of them are barely teenagers. Nora and Lea just lapped this stuff up.

Their mother had a wig. They said that it was auburn hair just like she had before the chemotherapy, although I have to say that there was just so much hair that did not seem possible. She was so sick she never got to wear it, they told me.

Just those words made my heart melt. These girls had no mother. If their mother had been there she would have been sitting quietly while they went about their work with such obvious joy.

“I am just going to tidy up your eyebrows,” said Little Lea, smiling at we sweetly.

“You go ahead, Sweetie,” I said. I hardly noticed what was going on. I was so unfamiliar with the whole thing. I was just watching them have fun. I seemed as if I was not participating in their game at all, even as their little hands, with skill beyond their years, painted my lips and tended my eyelashes.

Once they had finished with my face, they put the fabulous wig on my head and arranged it, with the tiara just so.

“Can I look at myself now?” I asked.

“Not yet,” said Nora. “You don’t sound like a princess. You need to talk like a girl. You need to say how much you like being pretty.”

Was I? They were getting each other ready, so I had time to practice a princess voice. I cleared my throat, and trilled a high C to get my voice to pitch. I twirled my pink skirts.

“I just love being pretty,” I trilled. “Who would want to be a boy. Boys are so dirty and yucky. Girls are best. Girls like us. We are pretty and happy and just looking for a prince to make happy. I so want to find my prince charming and make him the happiest man in the world. That is what I live for …”.

Both of the girls were smiling and looking behind me.

I spun around and there was Daniel standing there, staring at me.

For some reason the only sound to come out of my mouth was a startled and totally feminine: “Oh. I was not expecting you …”.

“I had changed my mind,” he said. “It is an important function, but it is really the kind of affair that requires a man to have an escort. And of course, I did not have one. Until now, that is.”

“It’s me,” I laughed, telling him that it was just the babysitter underneath all of this stuff. But somehow even those words did not sound like me. It was a bashful titter.

“I know,” he said. It suddenly occurred to me that he was the only person in the room not smiling. He looked very serious as he made his proposition. “I’ll find another sitter,” he said. “Since you are dressed for it, you can come with me.”

“You want to take a guy in a dress to some function?” I asked him incredulously. Why was my voice still up there?

I still had not seen myself, and he must have realized that. He reached out and took me by the hand, and I let him as if that were a natural thing. I suddenly realized that Nora had been at work there too. My nails were painted pink. My hand in his looked so small and soft, and feminine.

He led me into the hall where there was a huge mirror. It allowed me to see myself from head to toe.

I could not believe what I saw. In that dress and with that hair and face, there was a princess standing before me. My dual fairy goddaughters had worked magic – there is no other word for it.

“You look fantastic,” he said, standing behind me and looking over my shoulder. “A princess”.

“Aurora,” Lea suggested. Both girls were standing beside their father.

“I am not one for cartoon princesses,” said Daniel. “You are too real for that. I think Giselle. Princess Giselle. Enchanting. What about that girls?”

“Yes,” the girls both agreed. “Giselle”.

“Come with me to the ball, Princess Giselle,” he said, taking my hand and dropping on to one knee.

It was all so unreal. The transformation was so complete. The atmosphere was magical. The look in his eyes was … beyond understanding. I was if something in my core changed. The right thing to do was to laugh and politely refuse, then change my clothes and go home. But somehow that was the very last thing I wanted to do.

“Your wish is granted,” I squeaked, as if my voice had somehow reached a pitch beyond physical possibility.

The very idea was ridiculous. But I stood there entranced by my own reflection as he called the back-up sitter. I had agreed after all.

But with my ornate dress stowed in the passenger seat of his Bentley coupe as we drove to the ball, my only thought was that I must not embarrass Daniel. That would be the worst thing that I could do. Where had the voice come from? Could I draw from deep inside myself the inner princess that seemed to be hiding there? Could she come out for the night, and shine?

I have thought ever since about her – the concealed me. She must have been there all along, like a Cinderella hiding in the shadows, awaiting her special night. Then that night arrived and she was suddenly in her element, chatting and giggling, and moving with grace and elegance, among the crowd and on the dancefloor. Somewhere inside me there had always been a princess. How else can you explain it.

“You’re wonderful,” Daniel said to me as we danced the waltz in a close clinch.

“You too, my prince,” I teased. And yet I could see that he was looking at me seriously. I found myself staring back at him. If the moment I first saw the princess in the mirror had not already turned the world on its head, that moment would have done it. I longed to kiss him. I ached to do it. But, how could I? How could I kiss a man?

I didn’t have to. He did it.

I had found my prince charming.

We drove back to his house in a dream. “I don’t want this to end,” I said to him. I meant the night. I did not want the night to end. Is that what I meant to say?

“Does it have to?” he said. “You can stay the night if you like. With me.”

It sounded heavenly. Swept of my feet. Kissed. Bedded. What could be more complete? An entire romance compressed into less than 6 hours.

But I was suddenly aware of what lay under this beautiful dress. Hairy legs and at the top of those, what now seemed to me to be an obvious obscenity. The princesses ugly secret. She was really a monster. Not an ogress but an ogre. If only fairy tales were real and I could wish it away. If I could wish myself a perfect fragrant tunnel of love for him to drive into.

But wishes don’t come true, do they?

Well they do, but it takes time. Time and money and a little pain.

But he had money, and we both had time, and I bore the pain. I had to put things right. Princesses can’t have penises – right?

The End

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