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THE FROG KING, OR IRON HENRY

Once upon a time there was a princess who went out into the forest and sat down at the edge of a cool well. She had a golden ball that was her favorite plaything. She threw it up high and caught it in the air and was delighted by all this. One time the ball flew up very high, and as she stretched out her hand and bent her fingers to catch it again, the ball hit the ground near her and rolled and rolled until it fell right into the water.

The princess was horrified, and when she went to look for the ball, she found the well was so deep that she couldn't see the bottom. So she began to weep miserably and to lament: "Oh, if only I had my ball again! I'd give anything—my clothes, my jewels, my pearls and anything else in the world—to get my ball back!"

As she sat there grieving, a frog stuck its head out of the water and said: "Why are you weeping so miserably?"

"Oh," she said, "you nasty frog, you can't help me! My golden ball has fallen into the water."

"Well, I don't want your pearls, your jewels, and your clothes," the frog responded. "But if you will accept me as your companion and let me sit next to you and let me eat from your little golden plate and sleep in your little bed and promise to love and cherish me, I'll fetch your ball for you."

The princess thought, "what nonsense the simple-minded frog is blabbering! He's got to remain in his water. But perhaps he can get me my ball. So I'll say yes to him." And she said, "Yes, fair enough, but first fetch me the golden ball. I promise you everything."

The frog dipped his head beneath the water and dived down. It didn't take long before he came back to the surface with the ball in his mouth. He threw it onto the ground, and when the princess caught sight of the ball again, she quickly ran over to it, picked it up, and was so delighted to have the ball in her hands again that she thought of nothing else but to rush back home with it. The frog called after her: "Wait, princess, take me with you the way you promised!"

But she didn't pay any attention to him.

The next day the princess sat at the table and heard something coming up the marble steps, *splish, splash! splish, splash!* Soon thereafter it knocked at the door and cried out: "Princess, youngest daughter, open up!"

She ran to the door and opened it, and there was the frog whom she had forgotten. Horrified, she quickly slammed the door shut and sat down back at the table. But the king saw that her heart was thumping and said, "Why are you afraid?"

"There's a nasty frog outside," she replied. "He retrieved my golden ball from the water, and I promised him that he could be my companion. But I never believed at all he could get out of the water. Now he's standing outside in front of the door and wants to come inside."

As she said this, there was a knock at the door, and the frog cried out:

"Princess, youngest daughter,
Open up!
Don't you remember, what you said
down by the well's cool water?
Princess, youngest daughter,
Open up!"

The king said: "You must keep your promise no matter what you said. Go and open the door for the frog."

She obeyed, and the frog hopped inside and followed her at her heels until they came to her chair, and when she sat down again, he cried out: "Lift me up to the chair beside you."

The princess didn't want to do this, but the king ordered her to do it. When the frog was up at the table, he said: "Now push your little golden plate nearer to me so we can eat together."

The princess had to do this as well, and after he had eaten until he was full, he said: "Now I'm tired and want to sleep. Bring me upstairs to your little room. Get your little bed ready so that we can lie down in it."

The princess became terrified when she heard this, for she was afraid of the cold frog. She didn't dare to touch him, and now he was to lie in

her bed next to her. She began to weep and didn't want to comply with his wishes at all. But the king became angry and ordered her to do what she had promised, or she'd be held in disgrace. Nothing helped. She had to do what her father wanted, but she was bitterly angry in her heart. So she picked up the frog with two fingers, carried him upstairs into her room, lay down in her bed, and instead of setting him down next to her, she threw him *crash!* against the wall. "Now you'll leave me in peace, you nasty frog!"

But the frog didn't fall down dead. Instead, when he fell down on the bed, he became a handsome young prince. Well, now indeed he did become her dear companion, and she cherished him as she had promised, and in their delight they fell asleep together.

The next morning a splendid coach arrived drawn by eight horses with feathers and glistening gold harnesses. The prince's Faithful Henry accompanied them. He had been so distressed when he had learned his master had been turned into a frog that he had ordered three iron bands to be wrapped around his heart to keep it from bursting from grief. When the prince got into the coach with the princess, his faithful servant took his place at the back so they could return to the prince's realm. And after they had traveled some distance, the prince heard a loud cracking noise behind him. So, he turned around and cried out: "Henry, the coach is breaking!"

"No, my lord, it's really nothing
but the band around my heart,
which nearly came apart
when you turned into a frog and your fortune fell
and you were made to live in that dreadful well."

Two more times the prince heard the cracking noise and thought the coach was breaking, but the noise was only the sound of the bands springing from Faithful Henry's heart because his master had been released from the spell and was happy.