



Prince Charming meets Princess Not-So-Much

By Bobby Gibler

Once upon many times in a land not exactly too far away, it'd been six days and I'd been sulking in my room doing nothing more than watching reruns of awful cartoons and endless streams of weather forecasts. My "big day" was coming up, and all I cared to notice was the fact that the meteorologists screwed up their forecasts as often as they predicted rain – 90% of the time.

Grudgingly, I peered out my bedroom window. But soft! What light from yonder run-down house breaks! It's definitely toward the east, but it's probably not the sun, considering the dilapidated house's wooden frame was beginning to crumble like dried leaves in mid-September. As the door creaked open, the alleged love of my life, the so-called center of all my emotions, paced into her garden of fresh, rotten tomatoes and beamed ambitiously at the delightfully dead daffodils she'd planted only days earlier.

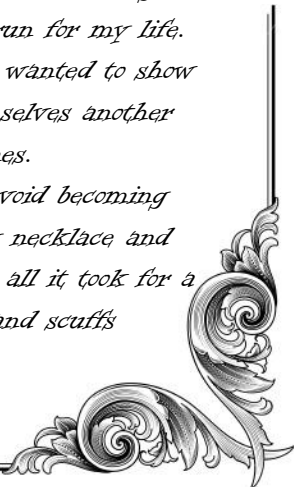
Her greasy pigtails framed the contortions of her jagged, craggy face and the tacky eyeliner smeared down to her nose bridge accented the striking listlessness of her sunken, baggy eyes. The warmth of her smile brought a certain joy and discomfort to all as her coffee-stained, chipped front teeth met the eyes of those lucky enough to witness them. Her breath, fresh as sulfur; her eyes, bright as rusting metal; her eyes, empty as her pockets.

My parents decided it would be in the best interest of my future to compile a list of the most disturbing princess' names and randomly choose one to determine my fate quickly; kind of like a reverse underworld lottery where first prize causes you to lose your dignity.

It's not like she didn't have some charming traits to go along with her appearance. In fact, she was truly lovely – she had a personality which drove away bluebirds with every overused joke, caused primroses to wither with every snort and chortle, and made the sun hide behind storm clouds with every repeated quote from 1950s movies. Some ducklings just aren't cut out to become swans.

The sky seemed to share my pain as thunder agonizingly howled over the church ceiling, rattling the foundation with wails of contempt and anguish, like God telling me to run for my life. Bertha's mother and father sat alone in the tired, lonely pews; not even my family wanted to show up to our wedding. By now they'd all moved thousands of miles away to spare themselves another day of Bertha's endless anecdotes of horoscopes and her collection of platypus figurines.

The priest stifled a laugh as he read lines directly from a teleprompter to avoid becoming completely distracted by Bertha's obnoxious hoop earrings, poorly crafted Hello Kitty necklace and miserable attempt at a wedding dress. \$19.99 in Wal-Mart's clearance section was all it took for a beautiful blue dress complete with wrinkles, tears near on the shoulders and back, and scuffs throughout.



"Prince Robert, do you take Princess Bertha to be your lawfully wedded wife?" enquired the priest, gazing into my eyes with a "God have mercy on your soul" look.

"I...," I began, voice twisting more violently than a cyclone. "I do? Maybe?" I turned to Bertha. Seeing her bright, blue eyes staring into mine made my heart melt like ice cream in an 800-degree oven; except not in the cute, Disney, aww-that's-adorable way.

"And Princess Bertha, do you take Prince Robert to be your lawfully wedded husband?" Bertha turned to me, clutching my hand with her ogre-ish grip. My fingers turned purple.

"I do," she said, breathing heavily and jumping up and down like a five year old, rattling the floor beneath us and surely creating readings on the Richter scale.

"Then I now pronounce you husband and wife," the priest said. "You may now kiss the bride . . . after I leave. Because I don't really want to see that." The priest scurried out of the church, knocking over trowels of holy water on his way, knowing that God's judgment and wrath had been executed upon my unfortunate head.

Bertha's eyes slammed into mine, and her face began to inch closer. Her chapped, disfigured lips pursed, approaching mine as her tongue poked through her mouth like a snake searching for food. Barely able to maintain my composure, I drew my lips back in and waited for the moment of impact; that which was undoubtedly more devastating (and more disgusting) than any asteroid could inflict. But right when I began to smell her sulfur-y breath, she pulled away.

"You know what Mr. Perfect, I don't really like you," Bertha bellowed obnoxiously. "You think you're so great with your normal teeth, your young skin, and those stupid eyes that actually look like somethin'. But to be honest with you, you ain't good enough for me."

Bertha careened off the stage and stormed out of the church, tripping several times before completely vanishing into the suddenly fresher spring air. My eyes immediately darted toward her parents, whose mouths were as agape as a crocodile's. Bertha's mother seemed to stare into space for hours before locking her eyes into mine.

"I mean, it's whatever," she said with a southern, twang-y accent. "But who's gonna have my grandbabies now?"

Suddenly, Bertha's deep, bellowing voice pierced the silence. Through the church windows, I noticed her talking to a pimply-faced man with curly brown hair and disfigured teeth; a seemingly perfect match. They gazed into each other's eyes, blissfully disregarding the disgusted stares of normal people.

"And now it looks like we just got ourselves a new prince charmin'," the mother said, slyly peering into my eyes with a literally half-toothed smile. "Score!"



Adam and Eve by Jessica Miller