

PRINCE OF THE SWAMP

Written by

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EXT. MEADOW - DAY

PRINCESS PENNY, 10, glamorous and carrying a basket of flowers, skips down a path of stepping stones. A tall castle sits on the horizon behind her.

Princess Penny hops from one stepping stone to the next. The hem of her dress catches on one and she loses her balance. She flails her arms in the air and manages to steady herself.

She looks around, clears her throat, and continues down the stone path with careful, refined steps.

The path leads her to a dark forest. Princess Penny stops at the edge of it and looks up. The forest looms over her.

Princess Penny reaches into her basket and pulls out a piece of parchment covered in sketches of various flowers. All but one have been crossed out.

PRINCESS PENNY

Alright, moon lily. You can't hide from me.

Princess Penny steels herself and marches into the forest.

EXT. DARK FOREST - DAY

The tree canopy blocks out almost all sunlight. Princess Penny squints as she walks further into the darkness.

The stone pathway gives way to dirt, then mud. Princess Penny gasps as one of her shoes sinks into the mud and gets stuck.

Mud squelches around her shoe as she pulls it free. Her face scrunches up.

PRINCESS PENNY

Ugh, gross.

Princess Penny pulls the parchment out of her basket and frowns at it. She scrutinizes the moon lily drawing, then looks around.

She huffs and continues deeper into the forest. The ground gets muddier and dirties the hem of her dress.

A mosquito buzzes by her ear and lands on her arm. She smacks it with her hand.

A vine stretched across the path catches her shoe. Princess Penny trips and falls into the mud.

The flowers from her basket scatter, and mud splashes on her face. She wipes it with her arm, but it only smears it.

PRINCESS PENNY (CONT'D)
Come on! All this for one flower.

She sniffs and starts to place the flowers back in her basket. She picks one up and reveals FROG PRINCE, wearing a small crown, behind it. He blinks at Princess Penny.

Princess Penny shrieks and bats her hand at Frog Prince. His crown falls off as he lands a few feet away.

Frog Prince stumbles upright and rubs his cheek.

FROG PRINCE
My apologies, Princess. I should
have made my presence known--

Princess Penny squeals again and throws her basket at Frog Prince. It lands on him upside down.

After a moment, Frog Prince lifts up the edge of the basket and peers out from under it, dazed.

FROG PRINCE (CONT'D)
That time just seemed unnecessary.

PRINCESS PENNY
You speak!

Frog Prince turns the basket over and gathers the flowers that fell out, wrapping his arms around the stems to carry them all at once. He places them back in the basket.

FROG PRINCE
Of course I speak.

He hops to the crown on the ground, picks it up, and situates it on his head.

FROG PRINCE (CONT'D)
I am the prince of this swamp,
after all.

Princess Penny's eyes widen as she looks closer at the crown.

PRINCESS PENNY
A prince! You startled me so bad I
didn't even notice.

Suddenly, she gasps and claps her hands together.

PRINCESS PENNY (CONT'D)
I've read about princes like you.
Say, are you like the Frog Prince?
The one from the story?

FROG PRINCE
I don't know about any story, but I
am a frog, and I am a prince.

He pushes the basket of flowers over to Princess Penny. She
picks it up.

FROG PRINCE (CONT'D)
And you, it seems, are a princess.
What brings you this deep into my
forest?

Princess Penny reaches into the basket and rummages around.
She frowns and looks at the ground.

The piece of parchment rests in the mud. She picks it up and
shows it to Frog Prince.

PRINCESS PENNY
I came here looking for a moon
lily.

She pulls the parchment away before Frog Prince can look at
it closely and stuffs it back into her basket.

PRINCESS PENNY (CONT'D)
But the flower can wait. You need
my help more.

FROG PRINCE
I need your help?

PRINCESS PENNY
You're a frog prince, which means
someone cursed you to be a frog,
right?

FROG PRINCE
Cursed?

PRINCESS PENNY
The Frog Prince is one of my
favorite stories. I know all the
tricks. We'll get you back to
normal in no time.

FROG PRINCE
Normal?

Princess Penny, not hearing his confusion, looks around the forest, shudders, and rubs her arms.

PRINCESS PENNY

The sooner the better, too. I want to get out of this terrible place.

Frog Prince frowns.

FROG PRINCE

If it's so bad here, why not get your flower and hurry back home?

PRINCESS PENNY

I'm a princess. It's my duty to help you.

FROG PRINCE

I believe you may be mistaken, Princess. There really is no need--

PRINCESS PENNY

Nonsense. Like I said, the flower can wait. Wherever it is, it's not going anywhere.

Princess Penny reaches down and scoops Frog Prince up in her hands. She holds him up and smiles.

PRINCESS PENNY (CONT'D)

Friendship might be enough to break the curse. Frog Prince, I'd like to be your friend!

Frog Prince stares back at her. He doesn't transform.

Princess Penny sets him on the ground.

PRINCESS PENNY (CONT'D)

That would've been too easy, huh? Maybe we can strike a deal.

Princess Penny plucks a flower from her basket and drops it to the ground.

PRINCESS PENNY (CONT'D)

Oh dear, my flower!

She looks at Frog Prince expectantly. He stares back at her.

Princess Penny sighs and lays her hand over her forehead dramatically.

PRINCESS PENNY (CONT'D)
Oh, if only there was someone
nearby to retrieve my flower for
me.

The Frog Prince tilts his head. He hops to the flower, picks
it up, and holds it up to Princess Penny.

FROG PRINCE
Here you go.

PRINCESS PENNY
In exchange for...?

FROG PRINCE
Oh, uh... I'll get your flower for
you if you'll be my friend?

Princess Penny takes the flower and puts it in her basket.

PRINCESS PENNY
Perfect.

She watches Frog Prince with a grin. A beat passes. The smile
drops from her face when Frog Prince still doesn't transform.

PRINCESS PENNY (CONT'D)
I don't understand.

FROG PRINCE
Listen, Princess--

Princess Penny waves a hand at him.

PRINCESS PENNY
No, no, don't fret. I'm not giving
up on you.

FROG PRINCE
That's not--

PRINCESS PENNY
I suppose we could try the classic
method. I must admit, I was hoping
it wouldn't come to this.

FROG PRINCE
Whatever do you mean now, Princess?

Princess Penny cups her hands beneath Frog Prince and lifts
him up to eye level.

PRINCESS PENNY
A kiss can break the curse.

FROG PRINCE
My dear, there is no--

PRINCESS PENNY
It's alright, I don't mind.

She gives Frog Prince a kiss on the cheek. Nothing happens.

PRINCESS PENNY (CONT'D)
Ugh, does it really have to be...?

She sighs and leans towards Frog Prince's mouth. His eyes widen as she gets closer... Closer...

Frog Prince pushes her face away.

FROG PRINCE
There is no curse!

PRINCESS PENNY
What do you mean?

FROG PRINCE
I'm not trapped in this form. I'm a
frog prince. This swamp is my
kingdom.

PRINCESS PENNY
This swamp can't be a kingdom.

Princess Penny puts Frog Prince on the ground and gestures.

PRINCESS PENNY (CONT'D)
It's muddy, and humid, and dark.
It's gross.

Frog Prince's expression hardens.

FROG PRINCE
And yet, here you are. Looking for
a flower, was it?

Frog Prince turns and hops away. Princess Penny frowns and watches him go. After a moment, she follows.

They walk through the forest. Frog Prince hops in a mud puddle and continues without pause.

FROG PRINCE (CONT'D)
The mud keeps my skin moist.

A mosquito buzzes by Princess Penny's ear. Frog Prince turns, and his tongue shoots out and snags the bug.

FROG PRINCE (CONT'D)
The mosquitoes keep me well-fed.

They stop just before a break in the tree canopy. Dim light casts dappled shadows on the ground through the leaves.

FROG PRINCE (CONT'D)
Say what you will, but this is my
home. It suits me.

He turns to look at Princess Penny.

FROG PRINCE (CONT'D)
It may not suit everyone, but...

He hops forward, into the light. Princess Penny follows, but soon stops and gasps.

In the dim light sits a moon lily. The light catches on its petals and makes it sparkle.

FROG PRINCE (CONT'D)
If you know where to look, finding
beauty is easy, even here.

Frog Prince picks the moon lily and holds it out to Princess Penny. She hesitates, then takes the flower and holds it close to her chest.

PRINCESS PENNY
I'm sorry for not listening to you
about the curse.

Frog Prince smiles and hops up on a log next to her.

FROG PRINCE
It's alright, Princess. Royals can
come in all shapes and sizes. You
fit well in your kingdom, and I
love being in mine.

Princess Penny wilts.

PRINCESS PENNY
Does that mean I'll never see you
again? Should I stay out of your
kingdom?

FROG PRINCE
Oh? I didn't think you'd want to
return to this "terrible place."

Princess Penny rubs a thumb on her cheek and looks at the mud that comes off on it. She grimaces, then looks at the moon lily again. Her expression softens.

PRINCESS PENNY

Well, I didn't give it much of a chance, did I? I don't know a lot about the swamp, but I do know I'd like to be your friend.

Frog Prince smiles.

FROG PRINCE

Even if you get a little dirty?

PRINCESS PENNY

Even if I get a little dirty.

FROG PRINCE

In that case, you're welcome back any time. I'd love to show you my favorite parts of my home.

Princess Penny smiles back.

PRINCESS PENNY

I'd like that. Next time, I'll bring tea.

Princess Penny waves at Frog Prince and turns to leave the forest.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

Princess Penny walks down the stone path towards the distant castle. She looks at her basket of flowers and pulls out the moon lily.

For a moment, she twirls it between her thumb and forefinger and watches the petals dance.

Then she brings it up to her face and inhales deeply. When she lowers it, she smiles and holds it to her chest.

THE END