

Pafthrunckle, and How She Came to Have More Than Twice as Many Names as She Could Count

Once upon a time, when the face in the moon was a good deal clearer, there lived in the north-west corner of the forest a poor little twig gatherer, whose name was Pafthrunckle. She had no idea that that was her name, for her father had never mentioned it, and usually addressed her as Oy. Nor did she have any idea how old she was, though she remembered being younger. All his life – for he was dead now, or anyway, he had not moved for quite a time – Oy's father had grumbled at her and clouted her and shoved her out of the way, and at night made grunting sounds like a pig when he lay on her from behind and left a sticky mess in the crack of her bum. This was because he had no wife, as other men do; though why he had no wife Oy did not know, unless it was because he was so grumpy.

She would have asked her mother why, but by coincidence she had no mother either, as other children do, which is why she grew up wondering how her father had managed to beget her. Since the nearest thing she had ever seen to herself was a person who appears in the stream when you bend over it to scoop water out or wash, she had thought perhaps that her father had begat her of this pretty water fairy, or whatever she was, especially as she always smiled up at you so nicely. But how he could have captured her or held her for long enough to do his begetting, and grunt like a pig, Oy could not for the life of her think. For whenever you reach into the stream to touch her shoulder or grab her long hair she shivers and wriggles away and all your hand feels is water. Oy had also wondered if perhaps her mother was a sacking boulder, an old fur cloak full of moth holes, or a nanny goat that she had seen her father bend over and grunt; but none of them looked anything like her, nor seemed to recognise her at all, except perhaps the goat.

One day, a wizard came into the forest. Oy could tell he was a wizard because he was dressed as a wizard, and also because a raven followed him and perched on a branch by the shack, all the while he was there. But she did not know whether he was a famous wizard, nor if he was any good. In the days when her father was alive she would have had no truck with a stranger, wizard or lizard, she remembered often scuttling to the woodpile or the back of the shack and crouching in the shadows until the stranger left. But she was younger then, and now that her father was dead, or anyway, he took no notice of strangers any more, she thought perhaps she was probably grown up. At any rate, Oy told herself – for she was quite sensible, even if she knew little – she had better *try* and be grown up, for she was all alone now. So she greeted the wizard with a shy smile, and offered him a beaker of water.

Oy told the wizard that she did not know if she had one, when he asked her what her name was. The wizard said that everyone must have a name, but it mattered not, for he was going to call her Starfrungle and stay for thirteen nights, and during the day she could cook for him while he told stories. Since he was a wizard, Starfrungle asked him whether he could make wishes come true, and he said he could. She told him she wished she knew how her father had begat her. After thirteen nights the wizard left, but before he left he told Starfrungle that he had enjoyed staying with her and would never forget her pretty smile, nor her kindness in sheltering him and cooking for him, because if the truth be known he had been in a bit of a pickle, he said, and had nowhere else to go (but he did not elaborate on it). In reward he would give her three gifts, by way of magic: what three things would she most like to have (other than untold riches and the power of witchcraft and the hand in marriage of a prince).

Oh no of course, Starfrungle said, she did not expect those three things. What she would most like, she said, was to know who her mother was, and to have a picture of her; and also to have a little brother or sister to play with; and also to have a true friend to keep her company all of her life, perhaps probably if possible the water fairy or whatever she was, because she was so pretty and was already her friend really, or would be if only she could come out of the stream; or if that was not possible as she knew it was not, really, perhaps (and she blushed slightly at daring to say it) perhaps it might be nice to have a boy as a friend, who, if she pleased him by day and by night, working hard at the cooking and lying patiently on her straw, might sooner or later kiss her, and want to be her husband. But if that was too many things – it did sound a lot – she would be happy with just one. The wizard took a mirror from within his cloak and gave it to Starfrungle. That was all he did: he made no magic signs and uttered no magic words, though his raven fluttered its wings at the sight of the mirror; that was all he gave her. But he added after handing her the mirror that since it was a magical gift she must be very careful with it, and never be naughty, for it had great power but was easily shattered.

Starfrungle gazed and gazed and gazed and gazed and gazed at the beautiful picture of her mother the wizard had given her. It was the most wondrous magic she had ever seen (though to be honest she had never seen any magic before), and the nicest gift she had ever been given, ever (though in truth she had probably never been given a gift before either). And she thought he was certainly a good wizard, and probably a famous one, even if he *had* been in a pickle. That he could take from his cloak a picture of her mother, just like that, without so much as uttering a spell was nothing short of miraculous. And it was certainly her mother, she knew that, for it looked just like her (for mothers and daughters look alike, Starfrungle did not know much but she knew that), and smiled even more prettily than the girl in the stream, the water fairy or whatever she was. If only I were as pretty, she thought, and said, for of course she knew she was her father's

daughter too, a grubby little twig gatherer with sticky-out ears (when her long hair was drawn back) and a pimple on her cheek, worth nothing but being grumbled at all day and clouted, and lain on without kisses in the night.

One afternoon as she gazed happily at her mother's smiling face – now holding the picture at arm's length, now hugging it to her breast – Starfrungle accidentally dropped the mirror and it broke. At first she was upset, and also afraid that the wizard would know (by magic) and punish her for not being careful. He might even think she had been naughty; she even wondered if she might have been herself, perhaps, without knowing, for she had little enough idea which things were naughty, her father having grumbled at her whatever she did, and however hard she tried. But when she carefully picked up the three pieces of the mirror, all different sizes and shapes, and sharp at the corners, she found not just that the magic had not stopped working, but that even more magic had happened. Starfrungle had not minded for a moment, the wizard promising her three gifts but giving her only one, for it was such a lovely one; yet suddenly now the magic was complete and she had all three gifts she had wished for – a picture of her mother, a picture of a little sister, and a picture of her friend, the fairy girl or whatever she was in the stream. And she thought they were all three pretty as pictures.

One day, some louts came into the forest. Starfrungle did not know they were louts, but she thought they were probably naughty boys because of how rough they were with her, and there were five of them, and by coincidence they stayed five nights, and also made her cook for them by day. One of the louts, it was true, seemed nicer than the others, and while Starfrungle cooked and went about her chores he strummed a harp. Rather than clown around with his mates, pulling up Starfrungle's shallots and trampling her gooseberry bushes and kicking down the twig fence that kept wild pigs away, he sat strumming, gently, and looking at her. And eventually he asked her her name. Starfrungle said she did not know if she had one, really, but ... She was about to say what the wizard had called her, when the lout said that Broomfrattle was nearly the nicest name ever, would she mind if he called her that. Not minding one way or the other, Broomfrattle said she did not mind one way or the other. And so he carried on watching her, gently, and strumming his harp.

For the five nights they stayed Broomfrattle got very little sleep, there being five of them; except she noticed the nice gentle one did not do as the others did, in fact he slept soundly. Yet it was this lout who came back for the sixth night alone, with a present for Broomfrattle – a posey of forest flowers. He strummed his harp and looked at her all the next day (except for dinner, which she worked hard at cooking for him and he ate up without spitting once) and stayed for a seventh night. In the morning the posey had wilted, for such gifts are transitory. As he was leaving the gentle lout said he had got himself into a bit of a

pickle, going around with those boys, and knew he was no better than he was, a lout and a layabout; but he would never forget Broomfrattle's kindness to him, nor her pretty smile, and was going to try and turn over a new leaf. All he had in the world was his father's harp, but if there was anything she wanted he would come back with it when he had had some harp lessons and made a name for himself. Broomfrattle looked down shyly and said that she had never been kissed, yet kisses cannot be all that hard to come by, even though she knew they were precious. If he should happen to have one, just a teeny little one, that he could bear to part with ... The boy kissed Broomfrattle, and went off to turn over this leaf and get some harp lessons. It was ever so nice, and gentle too, the kiss he gave her, and not all that teeny. She treasured it for ages, it was precious indeed. And she thought he was probably not a lout really at all, but a nice boy who had got himself into a pickle.

Winter came round, and when it did Broomfrattle was surprised, for she had assumed it had gone away for ever. It seemed such a long time since there had been one before, and so many things had happened. She was grown up now, she felt sure she was, for she had met wizards, one anyway, and surely a famous one, and got pictures of her mother and a little sister and a friend, all by magic. And she had been visited by louts and given a posey. She had even been kissed. It seemed a long time ago, that her father had stopped eating his dinner, or burping, or bringing home rabbits to be put in a pie. Yet there had not been a winter since, not that she had noticed.

It was strange to think that what it was like back then, was now no more than a memory: when her father used to do smelly farts and wee on her straw and spit out his rabbit gristle on the newly swept floor; and smack her bum for no reason (when she asked he smacked it some more) and send her to break ice on the stream in the coldest of blizzards and say the food she worked so hard cooking for him was dung. Sometimes, of course, it was, for they were very poor. There were frequent winters then, in those days, and life was hard; and dinner had to be ready just when he was hungry or she got some of it thrown at her and if she dodged it it went on the floor and she had to clean it up, and when she bent down to clean it up she would get another gobful, and a kick up the bum. And in winter when Broomfrattle was younger she was often cold and hungry, she remembered. And now it was winter again, and she was cold and hungry again.

One day, a giant came into the forest. Giants do not usually venture into the forest, because the trees are too close together. But Broomfrattle knew he was a giant, because men, except for her father (who come to think of it was barely taller than Broomfrattle herself, if a trifle more lumpish and whiskery), men were mostly twice as tall as she was, but the giant was eleven times taller, she thought, probably (more than twice as many times taller than she could count up to, anyway). Perhaps he had lost his way – he was certainly very cold (for it was in the middle of this new winter that had started) and too weary

to go another step, and in a bad mood. Broomfrattle told him she did not know if she had one really, a name that is, and was just about to mention some possibilities when the gaint said that she ought to be called Troggrugog because she was the littlest woman in the world. Troggrugog said shyly that she knew she was quite little but was not quite sure if she was quite as little as that. But the giant, as is the way with giants, would have none of it and growled that Troggrugog was the only possible name for the littlest woman in the world, and even if there might be littler women living thousands of miles away (Troggrugog was astonished, she did not know there were as many miles as that) it was neither here nor there nor mattered a wot, for she was undoubtedly the littlest woman in the north-west corner of the forest (she was the only woman in the north-west corner of the forest, of mortal persuasion, the rest were all tree fairies and fern fairies and toadstool fairies, and there was also a water fairy or whatever the girl in the stream was), so that Troggrugog must be her name, the giant said. That is giant logic for you.

Although they appeared to be squabbling, and giants are like that, they are not all that friendly, Troggrugog noticed how the giant was shivering and pale, and how an icicle as tall as a pine tree hung from his nose. She was sorry she could not invite him into her father's shack because it was a bit cramped even for the two of them, she said, so it would be no use a giant even trying; but she was happy to bring him a hot dinner to warm him up. So the giant stopped grumbling and sat on a tump and ate fourteen hot dinners and, after a restless night, seven breakfasts. He was more mellow in the morning and said he was sorry he had eaten her out of house and home, he realised now she could not possibly be the littlest woman in the world because if she was there would hardly be room in her for such a kind heart. And a pretty smile, he added. Since he could travel great distances in just a few strides (or could *now*, now she had fed him up and filled him with strength and pastry) he wondered if there was anything he could fetch her, from a warmer clime, by way of a thankyou, for he had got himself into a bit of a pickle and Troggrugog's kindness and cooking had got him out of it.

He had got into so many arguments on his journey, the giant said, that he had found himself stranded in the middle of winter with nothing in his belly. And if you are a giant with nothing in your belly and an icicle the size of a pine tree hanging from your nose and you feel jiggered up, and cannot go another step, you are stumped, he said, you slump down with a bump that wobbles the world, and become a mountain range. Troggrugog replied that she had run out of turnips, as winter had come before she could pull enough up, and off the giant went. The next morning, there was a pile of turnips as tall as the shack by the side of the shack. Although she had noticed he was weary and chilly, Troggrugog did not know the giant had been in a pickle, for she had never learned anything much about anything including about how giants manage to get enough to eat in winter, or else become

mountain ranges; and she thought he was probably not such an unfriendly, argumentative giant after all, he was just hungry.

As winter went on and the forest got colder and colder and colder, and colder, Troggrugog set off one day in the worst blizzard there had ever been, to see how the water fairy or whatever she was was doing. Although she knew nothing about anything really, she knew of course that water was all turned to ice, and she thought living in the stream in such a bitterly cold winter was probably not particularly nice. Since she was cold and hungry herself, it had come into her thoughts that very day to wonder how her friend was managing in the frozen stream, in the bitter winter, in the middle of the worst blizzard there had ever been. So Troggrugog struggled through the blizzard and dug out her own height in snow and chipped and chipped and chipped through the ice with a stone, and looked down into the water and asked the fairy if she was all right. She smiled nicely back, and even waved, in fact they both waved, and she seemed to be fine. Troggrugog reached down with her hand, and her friend reached up with hers. But the instant they would have touched, the water fairy shivered and rippled and wriggled away as ever – Troggrugog knew she would, she always does – and Troggrugog's fingers slipped into chilly water. But when they came out they held a fish, a magic fish.

By magic the water fairy had turned herself into a fish, so that Troggrugog could take her out of the stream and take her home, and warm her up and play with her and keep her in a jug. No, that was not it. There she was again, a minute later when Troggrugog looked down. She must have *given* her the fish, as a thankyou for coming to see that she was all right in the frozen stream in the bitter winter, in the middle of the worst blizzard there had ever been. Or else because by magic she knew that Troggrugog was hungry. She *was*, she was ever so hungry that day, especially after all the digging and chipping, it was a welcome gift, the magic fish. She feasted as she had not feasted for some time, for she had eaten nothing but turnips since the giant left. Although she did not like to tell him that he truly had eaten her out of house and home, so she just mentioned the turnips, the giant *had* eaten her out of house and home, and left her with nothing (but a surfeit of turnips); and it is so difficult uprooting things from the garden in winter (though she tried), and rabbits do not seem to stray into traps in winter (she went round them all, all her father's old traps, under the snow, and not a one). Poor peasant people in wintertime oftentimes starve to death, Troggrugog had heard her father say, and she was beginning to wonder if it would happen to her. The water fairy or whatever she was must have known; and thus the magic that is the kindness in Troggrugog's own heart, which made her think of her friend that blizzardy afternoon, obtained its reward. Anyway, once she got the nice cooked fish in her (with mashed turnips) she was all right.

One day, spring came. Troggrugog knew it had, because a little snowdrop – though soon there were more than she could count, for she

only had four fingers (and her other hand to point at them with) – this one little snowdrop always pushed his head through the ground by the door of their shack before the others, and her father had always greeted him with the words: Spring has come. (It was the nicest thing she had ever heard her father say, apart from Oy, more pie.) Troggrugog just could not help exclaiming the same thing, Spring has come, for that is how happy she felt to see the snowdrop; and she was not in the least astonished when it turned out that the snowdrop could speak Old Low German. Troggrugog told him she thought she did not really have one, though the giant had had a name for her which was probably nice enough where giants come from but was not really the sort of name she dreamed of having really, when the snowdrop asked her, and before she could even remember what it was (the giant's name for her) the snowdrop said Cowslip.

Just like that, he did not elaborate on it, he just said: Cowslip. It had probably not figured in Cowslip's dreams either, as a name, though it was better than whatever-it-was the giant had called her. Her new visitor stayed for some weeks, as snowdrops do, and was joined by his numerous relatives and a daffodil (now that would be a nice name to dream of), all glad that the bitter winter was over. Cowslip said she hoped it would never come back, and of course she did not know why the talking snowdrop laughed. One thing he said though, or perhaps Cowslip just thought of it herself as she sat in the sunshine admiring him and thinking of her former life, before she was all alone, was that she ought to go to market, to the village in the clearing in the middle of the forest, where her father used to go once spring had come, and Cowslip always went with him, exchanging their rabbit-furs and acorns and faggots and shallots, for things like pots and cloths and cheese. It was ages since she had had any cheese, or any new cloths; and she had never ever had any new clothes, ever. So she decided to go.

The village in the clearing in the middle of the forest was a long way away. Cowslip knew it was, she remembered how long and tiring the journey had been, even though her father had carried her some of the way (grumbling about having to of course) or let her ride on the little cart (grumbling even more about that, cursing even) and sometimes sleep as she rode (though it was very bumpy and usually if she fell asleep she fell off, or perhaps her father knocked her off, waking to a hard bump on her bum). And although she thought she was probably grown up now (in spite of the giant mistaking her for the littlest woman in the world) it was still an awfully long journey, and the forest was just as dense and fidgetty as it had been before, but more scary on her own, and the little hand-cart was everso difficult to push. It came into Cowslip's thoughts why her father had not liked her riding in it, and had always been cross, not just with her but with various spirits of the forest, grumbling at them all the way, during their journeys to market.

Cowslip being the usual butt of his gripes, she remembered being pleased to hear him cursing the spirits of the forest for a change, instead of it being all her fault. In fact she found herself thinking – for you think lots of thoughts as you push your hand-cart of twigs and shallots and rotten turnips through several days and nights worth of dense bumpy forest – she thought perhaps it was hardly her fault at all, really, how difficult life was for him and how poor they were; how often she did naughty things when she was a teeny girl, like spoil the cooking or spill some goat's milk from the heavy pale or have fingers too small to sew his leather jerkin when it must be mended; and that he had no wife and she had no mother and their donkey died one winter and they could not get another without thieving (which was something he could never again do, on account of an oath he had sworn in the presence of angels, the day that Cowslip was born, he said); and it certainly could hardly be her fault that the village in the clearing in the middle of the forest was very far away. Eventually she reached it, the village in the clearing. But the market-place was empty.

She asked an old man who had nothing to do but lean on a wall, and before answering he blew smoke out of his mouth, which took her aback, for she did not know that dragons could make themselves look like old men. He told her the market fell at whitsuntide. Cowslip had never learned about tides, neither whitsuntide nor yuletide nor lammastide nor ... The old man or dragon listed them, variously, and she shook her head at each one. But her name was Cowslip, she told him, before he asked. He said that was no sort of a name whatsoever, for a mortal person, and suggested she go to the inn and the innkeeper might have a better idea what to call her, and let her stay until whitsun on account of her pretty smile.

Smiling was not all it took, but it was not hard work either and Brundbraggilt had had plenty of practice, and during the day she helped with the cooking and peeling and pickling, because she had had plenty of practice at that too. Though some of the things they serve at the inn in the village in the clearing in the middle of the forest she had never even heard of, like steak and fritters, pomfret cakes, and peaches. The place where she slept was nicer than at home in the shack: her straw was in a cosy corner with no puddles, and fewer frogs, though she shared it with several mice. One day, or rather I should say ...

One day, a prince came to the inn. Everyone bowed and tidied up, and scuttled about to wait upon him and fetch him things and catch a glimpse. And all the doxeys (Brundbraggilt had never heard of such persons before, they are jolly women with big boobies that their frocks will not properly fit over, and they live in inns) and even some of the scrawny maids loosened their hair and their frocks and kept pushing to the front, in the hope that the prince would see their boobies and fall in love with them. Brundbraggilt was not entirely sure what a prince was (everyone there laughed at her simpleness anyway, so she did not ask), but he was obviously someone everso important and everso handsome

and ever so rich who travels the world looking for someone to fall in love with, and take to his castle.

Needless to say Brundbraggilt barely got a glimpse of this prince past all the plump doxeys and everybody else. For princes travel with what is called a retinue, a whole procession of posh people and tall guards and stooped ministers and bustling servants, and quite a lot of dogs; and they only stay at inns if there is no great castle nearby, so he was only staying the one night. So, shortly before he left, Brundbraggilt crept under the table where his gloves and hat were waiting, and when he came to get them she peeped out. He was handsome indeed, and although he was not a giant, for of course princes are mortal men, perfect in proportion, he seemed ever so tall to Brundbraggilt, who knew for sure she was little now, now she had come to the village in the clearing alone as a grown-up (all the times she had come with her father she assumed she was a child, and you expect people to be taller than you are when you are a child; but now she was surrounded by more people than she had ever seen ever in her life ever, and they were every one of them taller than she was, even though her father was dead, or anyway, he had not come with her). He was the handsomest man she had ever seen, this prince, handsomer than she had ever even dreamed of, she wondered if he might be the handsomest man in the kingdom, perhaps, or even in the world. Oh he was ever so handsome ...

A guard grabbed her and pulled her from under the table and the innkeeper came and boxed her ear and began to drag her away. Until the prince said Hold (that was the very word he said, and just that) and bent down to look at Brundbraggilt, and the innkeeper grasping her tightly round the middle turned her to face him. The handsome prince pinched her cheek with the fingers of his large (but perfectly proportioned) hand. Brundbraggilt your high and mightyness, the innkeeper said, before Brundbraggilt could even begin to reply that she did not really have one, as far as she had ever known, when the prince asked. But the prince seemed to know anyway (and it did not surprise her, for the possibility that princes have some magic about them was at that very minute entering her thoughts) and he said he was going to call her Tannadrilf, because he had found her under a table.

All his retinue laughed, though Tannadrilf (and the innkeeper too) thought they probably laughed whenever they thought they ought, and no more understood what he was on about than they did. Tannadrilf nonetheless smiled, if a little shyly, for she knew now that smiling made people like her (and often wondered whether she ought to have smiled more for her father). The prince said that she was the prettiest thing he had ever found under a table (his retinue laughed), except of course for his prize pointer (they laughed again, but Tannadrilf did not know what a prize pointer was); he must *have* himself one of these under-the-table wenches for his court (a little more laughter). In exchange for this gold florin – he threw a shiny disc on to the table and it made a queer musical sound – to enable the innkeeper to engage

someone else to squat under his tables (the retinue laughed) he would take her with him to be one of his underlings (he had to look up this time, and pause, before they realised they must laugh); she could either tumble with his dwarfs (they laughed promptly) or wait at table, but not under (they laughed again). Or was there anything else she was good at?

Tannadrilf finally managed to speak, the innkeeper's arms having gone a bit limp, and she said she was good in bed but mostly liked vegetable gardening, and cooking and gathering twigs. The prince made some witty remark about them not eating twigs at his table (his retinue laughed) but he supposed you have little option, if you live in the forest (they laughed again), as well as spending long hours in bed (a little more laughter). Anyway, her things were fetched (there was not much: a home-made sack-cloth shift, a crude wooden comb, a mirror broken into three jagged pieces – it nearly got thrown away, but Tannadrilf would not leave without it; the hand-cart full of twigs and shallots and rotten turnips was left behind) and she was bundled into a carriage with tall well-dressed posh women – ladyships probably – and taken to the castle of Frogmerhagy, which is beyond the eastern edge of the forest.

The doxeys and even some of the maids muttered for ages – about how a prince had noticed Tannadrilf and not them, and taken her off to his castle. They simply could not see what he saw in her, especially as she had no boobies worth speaking of; the very idea that he had fallen in love with her (which, indeed, he had not) they found utterly, completely, absolutely, totally, utterly; even if she probably did have quite a nice smile, and what if she *was* kindhearted, or made out she was, that there Brundbraggilt (for they could not pronounce her new name) was so tichy and ignorant – talk about simple, she did not even know her own name never mind when whitsuntide is, and that all the dragons are now slain. Though they took consolation from having heard that the prince had a liking for dogs and dwarfs, by all accounts his castle was full of them.

It was. And everything else you could think of (and a number of things you could not). The castle of Frogmerhagy was like a whole town, except that Tannadrilf had never heard of towns, and did not know what they were like. It was like places are in dreams, except that Tannadrilf had never had *that* dream, nor even imagined anything like it. It was like the village in the clearing at market time but so much busier as to be nothing like it. It was like nothing Tannadrilf had ever heard of anything being like. All a-bustle with activity and noise and smells and colours and music and animals and curtains; and fine women in colourful frocks and fat men with gold chains on their chests and muscular tumblers in leopardskins, tall and dwarfish; and dogs barking and fiddles playing and guards saluting and bells ringing and parrots squawking and spits turning and dwarfs somersaulting and jugglers throwing things up in the air all at once and then catching them again; and manciples, who write on a scroll all the fish and dough

and steak and wine and ointment and peaches that there are in the castle. Or in the whole kingdom probably. Tannadrilf had never dreamed there were places like this, nor these many people or dogs or dwarfs or roasted ducks in the world. She had heard of castles, of course she had, and may even have dreamed of them, but she never had the faintest idea what was in them.

The place where she slept was nicer than at the inn, or in the shack: her straw was on a wooden shelf, not on the draughty floor at all. But the work was much the same, along with some cooking and peeling and pickling by day, and waiting at table. And every time she waited at table in the prince's court, the tall handsome prince remembered her name, Tannadrilf, and reached across to pinch her cheek, and made a comment about finding her under a table or what a pretty smile. And his retinue always laughed, and Tannadrilf always smiled. Being told she had a pretty smile made her think of her friend in the stream, the water fairy or whatever she was, and of course of the picture of her mother in the mirror (oh how prettily they both of them smiled). Thinking of them made her think of the giant and the gentle lout and the wizard, and thinking of them made her think of her father (for being a daughter was not really her fault either, she could not help it; and if it was her fault he did not like her, then it was not his fault). And she missed them all. For busy as the castle was, and silly as she knew she was, probably, Tannadrilf sometimes felt she was alone. And in spite of what she had learned about princes and castles and how sure the doxeys were that he would notice one of them and carry her off (and he did), and in spite of how he kept on remembering her name and pinching her cheek, the prince did not seem to have fallen in love with her, yet.

One day, another prince came to stay. A cousin from the north, from the beautiful lakes and islands. He was not tall and handsome like the Prince of Frogmerhagy, not by any means, he was not a tall prince at all, and few if any of the women seemed to think him worth loosening their frocks for. But Tannadrilf watched him arrive from a huddle of off-duty acrobats and noticed he had quite a nice smile; and when Tannadrilf saw him around the castle as she went about her chores she began to think he was quite nice looking; and one time when they were all of a bustle preparing to go hunting (which is what princes do) and Tannadrilf came close to him in the yard behind the kitchen, she realised that the short prince was not much taller than her than her father had been, which was barely taller than her at all. And each time she waited at table in the court where the princes and posh people dined and the prince (the tall prince) greeted her by her name, Tannadrilf, and pinched her cheek, and commented how he had found her under a table or how she reminded him of his prize pointer (it was a type of dog, as it turned out), the other prince (the short prince) looked at her. He looked at her directly and knitted his brow the first few times; and he looked at her directly and smiled the next few; and then it happened, one time. One day, it happened.

One day, while the tall prince ruffled the ear of his dog and everyone laughed at his witty remark, whatever it was, the short prince looked and smiled at Tannadrilf as if there was no one else, short or tall, dog or duck, in the entire court or castle of Frogmerhagy, or anywhere in the kingdom. And Tannadrilf smiled shyly back at the short prince and felt something queer going on in parts of her person, a feeling she had felt for neither water fairy nor snowdrop, neither for harp strumming nor for grunting like a pig. Though she could not help thinking again of her father, for somehow there were so many feelings when she thought of him, real or remembered, inside or outside, it might almost have been one of them, one of those feelings that come in between the hurt in your heart when the pie you have worked so hard making is spat on the floor, and the hurt in your bum after the grunting, or a good smack; or perhaps it was because she hardly knew of anyone else to think of. Except the kiss (speaking of a harp strumming), the gentle lout's kiss, which she treasured still and sometimes closed her eyes to enjoy all over again in her memory: yes, that (now she came to think of it) probably felt a bit like the feelings the little short prince made her feel.

Rumour was that he too, the short little prince, for all princes do (so everyone seemed to think), tall or short, was looking for someone to fall in love with, and take back to his castle in the north, which was very draughty. It was said among the servants (who do a type of talking called gossip, that makes sure secrets are known all over the kingdom) it was said that what his castle in the north needed was a woman's touch, and so did he, since his grandmother had died after bringing him up sternly and showing him not an ounce of affection. They said that he came to Frogmerhagy for gaiety (something else you get in castles that Tannadrilf had never heard of, like peaches) because he had none at home, even though he had a retinue that followed him about as all princes have. Or perhaps it was just the draughts. Yet little as she knew of the world or castles or princes or falling in love, or anything, Tannadrilf thought that perhaps it might be true, what they were saying, and she wondered if the short little prince felt all alone like she did, sometimes, since his grandmother had died. Even in a big busy castle, even surrounded by people, she thought she understood, simple as she was and so different their stations, how he might feel that way inside, and miss her ever so, his grandmother that is, even though she had not loved him.

Feeling all alone, even if she was not, as well as a sort of bellyache under her heart and wanting to wee, were part and parcel of the feelings that looking at or thinking of the little short prince made Tannadrilf feel, inside, and in some of her parts. And when she was not looking at him she was thinking of him; and when she was not thinking of him she was asleep, or busy. And then she was probably dreaming of him, or daydreaming. Nice as she thought he was, and what a sweet smile, and oh, when he looked at her that time ... yet thinking of him did not make her happy. It made her feel more lonely than she was

while struggling with her hand-cart through the dense fidgeting forest; more lonely than after she noticed her father was not coming to lie on her any more, nor eating the dinners she made him, in fact he would not budge; more lonely than all those years of times before, when her father did eat her dinners but did not seem to like them very much, when her father did come to lie on her, but did not seem to love her.

Then one day, a giant came to visit. Some of the servants were frightened, for giants are irritable and argumentative, and very big, but the two princes and their retinues were not afraid of him; and nor was Tannadrilf. A declaration was shouted from the ramparts, all around the castle, with a shrill trumpet blast, that the good giant Thuddocksfuttle, hereditary high guardian of the kingdom and great great grandson of the famous giant Thuddocksbrangtwigog who slew the last griffin, was always a welcome visitor in the principality of Frogmerhagy, no matter how hungry he was. He sat on a tump outside the castle walls and was served by a longish procession of maids and pages carrying large platters of steaming food. He hardly stopped eating for a day and a half and a bit, except for once. He stopped once, he stopped for the platter borne by Tannadrilf.

Troggrugog, my little friend and saviour, he said; and Tannadrilf Troggrugog curtseyed (something she had just learned to do). And as the world stood and watched in amazement they chatted like old friends, the giant wanting to know How came she thither to the prince's castle, and also to apologise again for eating her out of house and home; and Tannadrilf Troggrugog wanting to thank him for the turnips, and tell him how well he was looking. The two princes were curious to know how they came to be acquainted, so giant a giant and so little a woman; and so the good giant Thuddocksfuttle told the tale, and concluded that he would not be in such fine fettle today and might even have turf on him if the little forest woman had not been so kind. The tall prince, almost the instant he heard it, with hardly a hesitation to speak of, promoted her to chief peeler and pickler and ordered his deputy under-castellan to give her the second-best bedroom over the kitchen, where the straw is renewed weekly, and send for the cordwainer to make her a little pair of shoes, for barefoot dogs and dwarfs are one thing but it would not do for a chief peeler and pickler (his retinue laughed). And the short prince looked at her as if he was pleased. And so was Tannadrilf Troggrugog.

And then one day, a harper turned up. All the servant women thought he was dishy (it was another of those words they use in the castle that do not exist in the forest), and definitely the kind of boy you would like to fall in love with you if you could not get a prince to; and so did Tannadrilf Troggrugog. A declaration was shouted from the ramparts, all around the castle, with a deep bang of drums, that the young harper Anatumpat, hereditary high harper of the kingdom and son of a second cousin of the prince's cousin's cousin, was always a welcome guest in the castle of Frogmerhagy, especially since he turned over a new leaf.

His lovely young wife had come with him, and everyone was eager to see her, the women because they were disappointed and jealous, the men because she was said to be so exceptionally lovely. For he had found her in a far land where all women are beautiful, even the ugliest outdoing anyone that was ever seen at Frogmerhagy, and she of course was not *that* one but one of the loveliest. Her hair was long and black and her skin was amber and her nature was sweet and affectionate as a kitten: she was ever so lovely. And as the young harper Anatumpat and his lovely young wife Ching-Chang-Chong (or it sounded something like that, like bells ringing) were being introduced to the retinue and guests and chief servants, it came to be Tannadrilf Troggrugog's turn as chief peeler and pickler, and everyone was astonished when Anatumpat stepped forward and embraced her.

Broomfrattle, my little friend and saviour, he said; and Tannadrilf Broomfrattle would have curtsied had he not been hugging her so tight, so instead she gave him part of his kiss back. And as the world stood and watched in amazement they hugged like old friends, the harper wanting to know How came she thither, and also to apologise again for coming to her shack with a bunch of louts; and Tannadrilf Broomfrattle wanting to thank him for giving her her first and only kiss, and tell him how lovely his lovely young wife was (she *was*). The two princes of course were curious to know how they came to be acquainted, so skilful a harper and so little a woman; and so the young harper Anatumpat told the tale, and concluded that he would be nothing but a lout and a layabout today and certainly not a skilful harper with a lovely wife from a far land if the little forest woman had not been so kind. Almost immediately he heard it the tall prince barely paused worth mentioning before making her a ladyship and instructing the chamberlain of the south wing to prepare the third-finest bedroom there, where the bed-straw is covered in a quilt, and send for seven tailors to fill her wardrobe with frocks and frillies suitable for a little ladyship (his retinue laughed, just in case). And the short prince looked at her and smiled and seemed ever so pleased. And so was Tannadrilf Broomfrattle.

And finally one day, a wizard arrived, for what is a prince's court and castle without a wizard. He was a famous wizard, and a good one too, in fact he was chief wizard to the court of the tall prince, so everyone was pleased to see him; including Tannadrilf Broomfrattle. A declaration was shouted from the ramparts, all around the castle, with a bang of drums *and* a trumpet blast, that the famous wizard Quopquopquuxllqwomp, without doubt the best and most famous wizard in the kingdom if not in the world and direct descendent of wizards too numerous to mention and anyway their names would be impossible to pronounce, was always a welcome wizard at the court of Frogmerhagy, no matter where he had been or what wizardly deeds he had been doing. Doubtless he had been on a magical mission working wonders for the kingdom, defeating an enemy by magic or saving a river from drying up (Tannadrilf Broomfrattle hoped it was not the

stream that flows through the forest, or her water fairy friend or whatever she was might have dried to death).

At the great feast to welcome the wizard Tannadrilf Broomfrattle came in late (she was not accustomed to all these clothes you have to wear when you are a ladyship, it took ages longer than putting on her usual teeny-weeny goat-hair liberty-bodice and little fustian tunic with three toggles, and lots of maids had to help her, for there were many different layers and they were all nearly impossible to fasten), and she curtsied to the prince by way of apology for being late (the tall prince, that is), and he made a joke of it and leaned across the table and pinched her cheek, and said how pretty she was in her new clothes even though she had some of them on backwards. And all his retinue laughed. The short prince looked at her and smiled his pleasant smile and Tannadrilf Broomfrattle felt stirrings inside her, but had no time to think what they were or where nor which of her clothes were on backwards before a voice from another direction said loudly: Starfrungle, my little friend and saviour.

Wizard, said Tannadrilf Starfrungle, looking round, for it was of course the same wizard, who had recognised (probably by magic) the person dressed in the clothes of a ladyship as the poor little twig gatherer from the forest. And as the world stood and watched in amazement they smiled like old friends, and the wizard's raven fluttered its wings, which was always a good sign. The two princes needless to say were curious to know how they came to be acquainted, so famous a wizard and so little a woman; and so the chief wizard Quopquopquuxllqwomp told the tale, how this was the very little forest woman he had mentioned before, who had welcomed him with a shy smile and sheltered him in her shack, and also fed him with food by day, for the thirteen nights when he had nowhere in the world to hide, those thirteen long windy nights that the dread wolf Krapptrotzloplop was empowered to hunt and eat him by the curse of the angry Neynroks. Then Tannadrilf Starfrungle has saved our kingdom, said the tall prince, for where would we be without our wizard Quopquoxamicallit and the dread wolf Krapptrotzloplop roaming free and salivating, full of your magical power and still hungry ... His retinue had scarcely stopped their shivery oohing at the horrid thought before he declared Tannadrilf Starfrungle a duchess and commanded his highmost castellan and acting assistant architect to build her a turret, and send for the queen's under-upholsterer to make her a bed of duck-down, and for the chief goldsmith's second-best apprentice to make her a crown, small enough for the head of a duchess who was found under a table (his retinue laughed, and then cheered).

Then he asked the wizard what reward *he* had given her for so great a good deed, and the wizard bowed his head and said all he had on him that day was a magic mirror, and he gave her all he had, and she was delighted with it, for she had never had a mirror before, and the magic

in her own heart made her see her mother's face in it, which she had never seen. But he knew it was not enough, which was why he was so glad to meet her again now, for as a matter of fact, that was where he had been. He had been seeking her in the forest, and finding her shack deserted and her shallots gone to seed he was sore afraid she had perished in the late bitter winter, like hundreds of other poor peasants, till his magical powers had told him to come to Frogmerhagy. Now he could give her her true reward, the three things she most wanted in the world. And the prince turned to Tannadrilf Starfrungle and asked her, what it was in the world, the thing or three she wanted the most.

Tannadrilf Starfrungle answered that what she wanted most in the world was to know who her mother was, as well as to have a picture of her. Though also she would like to know that the water fairy in the stream in the forest, or whatever she was, was all right and would still be her friend, even now she had shoes and frilly knickers and a bed of duck-down (the retinue laughed – they always laughed when frilly knickers were mentioned), though that did not matter really so long as she was all right, for it was such a worry to hear that rivers may have dried up when the only friend you have ever had in the world lives in one. And also, as well, speaking of which, she thought it might probably be nice to have a boyfriend, or perhaps possibly a husband, but he did not have to be tall or even all that handsome, so long as he would smile at her and treat her kindly and promise not to grumble too much, or push and shove her and clout her and smack her bum ... well, she would not mind a bit of bum-smacking, if he would only stay with her all of her life and perhaps (she blushed shyly to hear herself say it) kiss her now and then, and then, perhaps (she blushed again) perhaps if she pleased him by day and by night, he might probably fall in love with her, perhaps. And straight as an arrow with no hesitation whatever whatever the short prince stepped forth and went down on one knee and there and then proposed marriage to Tannadrilf Starfrungle, and said if she would consent to be his wife and come to his draughty castle he would promise not to grumble at all, ever, nor push nor shove her nor clout her neither, but would love her and kiss her and smack her bum nicely, and stay with her all of her life, and call her name Pimplecheek. She would be Princess Pimplecheek, of Yongchullop and all its lakes and islands.

Before Pimplecheek could answer, the wizard Quopquopquuxllqwomp said that he had forgotten to mention how he had also arranged (by magic) for the Prince of Yongchullop to get what he most wanted as well, and, well, here it was, as well ... *But*, he went on, it was all more wondrous and wondrously magical than yet appeared, for it was none other than there, amid the beautiful lakes and islands of the north, in the draughty castle of Yongchullop, that Pimplecheek Tannadrilf Starfrungle would find everything she wished for, including the picture of her mother in a golden frame, hanging in state in the proudest place in the castle. For her mother was a princess too, and none other than the Princess of Yongchullop. The wizard had

visited several wise women, he said, and cast many a horary question and scried into lots of bowls since the little woman in the forest was so kind to him, in order to discover who her mother was and give her what she wanted most in the world. And so the wizard told his tale, or rather, *her* tale: the tale of Pimplecheek's mother.

It transpired nearly fifty years ago, as near as anyone could now remember, memory being what it is, that the Princess of Yongchullop, whose name was Fabbletrump, reached an age where she was ready to fall in love and fell in love with a goblin. She was thought to be probably the prettiest princess that had ever been heard of in history or legend, in this kingdom anyway, or anyway, this far north, as far as anyone could remember or had ever heard tell, and many who saw her agreed that they thought it was possible she probably might be. But she had fallen in love with a goblin. Suitors lined up, princes all, some of them handsome and tall, but prettily as she probably smiled at them when they bowed and kissed her hand, Fabbletrump was not the least bit interested in any of them; for she had fallen in love with a goblin. And no matter what her parents and friends and aunties and nannies and women-in-waiting and a witch who lived in a puddle said to her nothing could stir her, nothing could sway her from her ridiculous love for this goblin.

For love is like that, the wizard explained, seeing how his listeners were astonished. Love is completely unbiddable, unscrutable, unlogical, uncorrigible, unwrappable, and there are lots of other things you cannot do with it either. Love never happens like you expect, it defies reason. For love is a sort of magic. And so she could not be talked out of it, the pretty Princess Fabbletrump; and when her parents would not give their consent, nor make the goblin a prince or a duke or at least invite him for tea, she went off with him one moonless morning, they knew not where. No one knew where. In fact, it was into the forest they went, the north-west corner of the forest to be approximate, and there they lived for a time, princess and goblin, as simple forest folk in a shack near a stream.

By the time her father's guardsmen who had combed the kingdom for her finally found her in the forest she was full of babies, and bursting to give them birth. The women who came with the guardsmen helped as best they could, but her father had not thought of sending a midwife, and reigned in misery for it for the rest of his mortal thread. For although the twins were born and were all right, every toe and hole in its place, the beautiful Fabbletrump was dead. Nothing could stir her, nothing could sway her. The weeping women laid her tenderly on a tumbrel and swaddled her in forest flowers and ferns and fairy grass; and a sad-faced runner was sent ahead, to break her parents' hearts. The colonel of the guards was not inclined to hang the goblin Grumpstink (even though the king had said that if anything happened to his daughter he would have him hanged with his own oversized plonker), for of course the goblin's heart was broken too, at the death

of his wife, and he had also promised her on her deathbed that he would live honestly and leave off thieving and never go back to lying with sows.

So the colonel in pity left the girl-twin with the goblin Grumpstink, and fined him eleven shallots a year for the rest of his life, payable each whitsun at the village in the clearing in the middle of the forest, and admonished him to keep his promise to live honest and leave sows alone, and also to care for the baby and find consolation in her. And he took the boy-twin and the body of the princess, shaded from the rain by the most beautiful canopy of forest foliage that had ever been contrived (for that day and all the way the sky wept too), in a long and very slow procession out of the forest and all the long way to the beautiful lakes and islands of the north, to the sad draughty castle of Yongchullop.

And there she was buried, those forty-seven years ago, as was written on a tall stone for her monument (though it fell down in the late bitter winter in the worst blizzard there had ever been); and her portrait hangs to this day in a golden frame, in pride of place at Yongchullop (though it is usually crooked because of the draughts). For Fabbletrump was none other than the mother of the present Prince of Yongchullop, whose name is Pufthrinckle, Prince of Yongchullop and all its lakes and islands; and Prince Pufthrinckle is none other than the little short prince, who has come to Frogmerhagy to visit his cousin and find gaiety and, perhaps, something more. Lo and behold, said the wizard: he has found it. He has found it not just around him but in his own heart abundant, as he has looked at and smiled upon Pimplecheek Tannadrilf Starfrungle, and fallen in love, the very hour having not yet passed in which he has gone down on one knee and asked her to be his wife, and promised not to clout her. By the most wondrously wondrous of magic, not only has he smiled and fallen in love, and chosen a wife, he has found his long lost forgotten twin sister. So now at last she may know her true name, even if her father never mentioned it.

Pimplecheek Tannadrilf Starfrungle Broomfrattle Troggrugrog (and any other appellations to which she may be entitled that the wizard had left out) is truly Pafthrunckle, Princess of Yongchullop and all its lakes and islands. And in but a few days journey Princess Pafthrunckle will see the picture of her mother in a golden frame, when she returns with her new husband and twin brother to their draughty castle, to claim her twice rightful place both by birth and by marriage as the Princess of Yongchullop, and of all the beautiful lakes and islands of the north. And, the wizard added, he did not like to boast but she will notice anyway when she gets there that he has used his magical powers to bring part of the forest stream thither, so that when her retinue of women accompanies her to the lakeside to bathe, or to feed the swans, as she bends to the beautiful water she will see her friend the water fairy, or whatever she is, as pretty as ever, living happily in the great lake at Yongchullop.

And so it was. And even though she was surprised to discover she was forty-seven, and not a little surprised to learn she was a princess (if not all that surprised to know she was half goblin), she was pleased enough with her name, Pafthrunckle (it might even have been the name she had dreamed of, she thought), and ever so pleased with her long-lost adoring twin brother, and enormously pleased with her new-found loving husband, and more pleased than words can say with her mother, to know who she was at last and to have a true picture of her, in a golden frame. Needless to say they looked alike, mother and daughter, for mothers and daughters do; and needless to say Pafthrunckle thought her mother was the prettiest princess that had ever been, neither probably nor perhaps. It is perhaps worth repeating in passing that Fabletrump *was* thought pretty, in her day, and probably was, which may possibly mean that Pafthrunckle probably was too, perhaps. But it is not all that important. What is important is that they should live happily ever after. And they did. The twin brother and twin sister, the husband and wife, the prince and princess, Pufthrinckle and Pafthrunckle, who were all the same two people, lived happily ever after. And ...

The poor little twig gatherer Pafthrunckle Pimplecheek Tannadrilf Brundbraggilt Cowslip Troggrugog Broomfrattle Starfrungle Grumpstinkle Fabletrump Oy, Duchess of Frogmerhagy, Princess of Yongchullop and all its lakes and islands, was sometimes in their private chamber called nothing-at-all by her loving husband and adoring twin brother. For she knew he loved her, he loved her ever so, there was never any question of it – he did not need to say her name. Any more, she thought, at length, perhaps, than her father had.

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