

*A "pedagogical" fairy tale as antidote to vanity and snottiness.*

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## *The Toad under the Castle*

Once upon a time, a large and ugly toad lived beneath a stone castle. Every evening the toad plopped into the moat, and croaked: "Ribbit-ribbit! Ribbit-ribbit!"

Within the castle lived a young and beautiful princess. She was as lovely as the sun and stars, and her hair shone like gold.

One day the princess went for a walk in the woods, and as she wandered by a stream she stubbed her toe on a rock.

"Ow! Ow!" she cried, "My poor toe!" and went limping back to the castle. In her room she sat down on a chair and wrapped her toe in a bandage. But as she was doing so the toad came plip-plop, plip-plop up the stairs and stopped in front of her.

"Ribbit," croaked the toad. "I can make your toe better."

"How can you do that?" asked the princess.

"Ribbit-ribbit," answered the toad, "I can kiss it."

"Eeeeeyou!" squealed the princess. "How gross!" And turning her head in disgust told him to go away.

That night, after she went to bed, her toe grew bigger and bigger. It swelled up until it was as big as a grapefruit.

In the morning it was so sore that all the princess could do was limp to her chair and sit down.

Before long the toad came plip-plop, plip-plop up the stairs. He hopped to the princess, and said: "Ribbit! Ribbit! I can make your toe better."

"How can you do that?" asked the princess, hoping the toad would give a different answer. But the toad replied in a croaky voice: "I can kiss it – ribbit – I can kiss it."

The princess turned her nose up into the air, and said: "Eeeeeyou! How gross and disgusting! I definitely don't want *that!* Not from such an ugly toad as *you!*"

That night her toe got worse. It swelled until it could swell no more. Her toe should have burst, but her nose began to swell instead. It swelled until it was as large as a ripe tomato – and just as red!

In the morning she got out of bed and looked in the mirror.

"Eeeeeyoo!" she cried when she saw herself. "How gross and disgusting!"

She hobbled painfully to her chair, sat down, and waited. Soon the toad came plip-plop, plop-plop up the stairs and stopped in front of her.

"Ribbit! Ribbit!" croaked the toad, "I can make your toe better."

"How will you do that?" cried the princess in agony.

"Ribbit," croaked the toad, "I can kiss it. I can kiss it."

This time the princess was glad to say 'yes' to the ugly toad, and he hopped over and kissed her toe. Instantly her toe was better. But, in the same moment, the toad vanished and a handsome prince stood in front of her, and asked for her hand in marriage.

It was not long before wedding bells were ringing from every church in the land, and they lived happily ever after.

But, you might ask, what became of the ugly red swelling on the end of the princess's nose?

Well, the swelling did go down, but not quite. For the rest of her life the beautiful princess had a pimple on the end of her nose – to remind her how snotty she had been, once upon a time.