

# Fantasy and Science Fiction

OCTOBER

Including Venture Science Fiction

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*Our mind is as broad as the next man's (and, increasingly, perhaps, our waist-line, too), but we view with equally increasing dismay the growing tendency to have story titles as long as the stories themselves. Only the conviction that Mr. Don White, perpetrator of the outrage below, is a funny man, persuaded us to buy his story and pocket the cash-in value of his International Reply Coupons for ourselves. We rejected, you will be encouraged to hear, his next submission, which he had the presumption to entitle "Eril, Ethel, Maude, Zelda, Kitty, Tulip and Vanessa and the Leprechaun." He says of himself: "For the first sixteen years of my life I was a normal, maladjusted Londoner. Then I won a junior essay competition which boosted my life savings to the grand total of £25. This, I thought, would be as good a sum as any to finance a round-the-world tour. And it was. For the past ten years I have been creating international situations in Panama, playing bit parts in Hindustani movies, editing a film page in a Suva (Fiji) weekly, and touting for a money changer in Ceylon. I also found time to acquire a unique collection of opera records (and opera singers), give lectures, write innumerable articles and a purely terrestrial travel book ("Get Up and Go", Wingate's London, 1959). I became inspired, Fantasy-wise, whilst travelling in the luggage racks of third-class Indian trains. All my characters are drawn from life (this always makes people wonder about me—and my friends!)"*

## **TWENTY-FOUR HOURS IN A PRINCESS'S LIFE, WITH FROGS**

**by Don White**

PRINCESS PETUNIA WAS FAR HANS Christian Andersonville. As  
and away the prettiest princess in a matter of fact, this had been con-

firmed again only an hour or so earlier.

"Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?" She had asked, idly, in passing. It had replied with some idiotic rhyme, completely lacking in metre, to the effect that *she* was, in fact, the fairest one of all.

"That's nice," she had mused, "but after all, life ought to hold more for a girl than first prize in a cornucopian beauty contest." In fact, she had brought up the subject at her Wednesday afternoon with the girls.

"The daily Mirror says I'm the fairest one of all again . . ." Petunia began, conversationally, pouring a nectar cocktail.

"Congratulations!" said Princess Charming (formerly a commoner called Cinderella). She was the very nicest person in the whole land. Everybody, of course, hated her.

"Well, I'm not a bit surprised," Princess Rapunzel said, grudgingly. "You've not got a darn, blam thing to do all day but lay back at the Slenderella salon or Silhouette. Me, I'm forever mucking about with this horrid hair—just think, thirty three feet long and my prince still hasn't come. And now . . . dandruff," she moaned.

"Have you tried Max Factor's Wing of Bat and Eye of Toad Lotion? They say it's spider-web sifted for extra purity," said Prin-

cess Aurora, munching a buttercup cake. "But Rapunzel's right," she told Petunia. "Look at me. A bundle of nerves. I can't get my mind off Old Mother Mellificent's curse. Even my analyst dreams about spinning wheels. You. You haven't a care in the world."

"What about me, though," signed Princess Beauty. "Saddled with an absolute Beast of a husband. I spend all my time wondering how I'm going to pay the veterinary surgeon's bills.

"Well, it's not my fault, girls," said Petunia, petulantly. "Blame muddle-headed Aunt Prue, the Good Witch of the West. She gave me LEISURE as a christening present, and I've been bored to death ever since."

"Oh, we're back on that again, are we," snapped Aurora. "We're going to waste another Wednesday reliving precious Princess Petunia's christening! It's all you ever talk about. Well, I have it on very good authority that some of the most questionable fairies in town got together at *that* shindig!"

"At least it didn't end up a Tchaikowskian orgy," Petunia retorted, heatedly.

"Please don't quarrel," said Cinderella Charming.

"Who asked you?" Aurora snarled, purple-faced. "You . . . you upstart, you! Don't worry, we've all got *your* fairy prince taped."

Princess Charming burst into tears, pushed her toadstool away from the table, said "thank you for having me" and fled, weeping, down the ivory steps of Petunia's palace.

Petunia, Aurora, Beauty and Rapunzel helped themselves to an Ambrosia and tonic and sighed. "There she goes again," said Petunia, ringing a bluebell for the butler.

"Clean up that mess on the palace steps," she ordered. "It's about time the Good Housekeeping committee did something about glass slippers."

But Petunia felt sad as the girls drove away in their crystal coaches. Rapunzel's dandruff, Beauty's beast, Aurora's spinning wheel complex. She sighed. At least, they have something to fill their lives.

Petunia was finding life in Hans Christian Andersonville pretty grim.

"I'm so lonely," she thought, poignantly.

That evening she decided to take a stroll into the enchanted wood at the foot of her magic garden.

When she came to Wishing Tree Glen, she took off her golden slippers and paddled her feet in the pixie pool.

Suddenly, magically, the water broke into myriad moonlit ripples and something wet, and unpleasant, landed in her lap.

"It's a frog!" she said.

And, indeed, it was.

The frog looked up at her, pop-eyed with fright. "Croak," it said.

Petunia looked down at the little green creature and said, "You are trying to tell me something."

"Croak," repeated the frog.

"I know!" Petunia cried, excitedly. "I know! You're really a handsome prince."

"Croak?"

"And Zelda, the Wicked Witch of the East has put a spell on you."

"Croak!" said the panic-stricken frog, trying to leap back into his lily pond.

But Petunia clutched the poor, damp thing the tighter and went on, ecstatically. "And you're looking for someone to love you, and when you find that someone, then the spell will be broken and you'll be a handsome prince once more."

"Croak, croak, croak!" said the frog, in a high-pitched croak, but Petunia would hear none of it, and kissed him happily on the snout. Then she slipped him into her beaded evening bag, and started back to the palace.

The King was in his counting house, counting all his money.

"Daddy, I want you to meet my fiance," said Petunia, happily, producing the frog.

"Very good, very good, my dear," said the king. "Go and talk to your mother about it."

The Queen was in the parlour eating bread and honey. "Get that monster out of here," she screamed, standing on the table and holding up her skirts. "Get it out, do you hear! The family wedding ring is in the cookie jar—if the knave of hearts hasn't stolen it again—and the Grand Vizier will marry you, but GET THAT TOAD OUT OF HERE!"

"Take no notice," cooed Petunia to the frog. "She nearly got eaten once by a dragon—when she was a virgin—and she's had this mental bloc ever since."

"Do you, Petunia Pureheart, take this frog to be your awfully, lawfully wedded husband?"

"You bet! I mean, I do," she replied.

Then: "Oh, you doll!" she said to the frog after the ceremony, waltzing around and around in the ballroom to the strains of the Theme from Snowwhite and the Seven Dwarfs.

"We'll have the party tomorrow," Petunia said, gaily, "you know . . . when you're . . . well, after . . . oh, YOU know," and she giggled. "But I'd better give Leda a ring, all the same."

Petunia's chief lady in waiting laid out the most beautiful gossamer nightgown of all, and the chambermaid made sure there wasn't a single pea under any of

the sixteen mattresses.

At last Petunia entered the bedroom looking lovelier than any person should be allowed to look.

She slipped between the silk-soft sheets, then murmured, almost whispered to her lady in waiting. "My husband?"

"He's in the washbasin, my lady," she curtsied. "I'll fetch him."

Silver moonlight filtered through the turret window. Petunia threw off her golden gossamer gown and clutched the frog to her pearl-white breast. "I love you, frog-husband," she sang, and then she unbound her hair, to let the long braids fall free and flowing over her languid, lovely shoulders. "I love you, frog-husband," she sang, again.

Next morning, a happy smile suffused Petunia's face as the first rays of the summer sun heralded a bright, new day. She yawned sleepily, then blushed, remembering that she was a bride.

"Husband," she called, gently, as she opened her eyes . . . to see beside her . . . a frog.

She hid herself beneath the silken sheet. "Oh!" she screamed. "YOU LIED!"

"Croak," said the frog, with a smile. "Croak." ◀