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Opening Extract from...

Politically Correct Bedtime Stories

Written by James Finn Garner

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POLITICALLY CORRECT BEDTIME STORIES

Expanded edition
with a new story:
'The Duckling that was judged on
its personal merits and not its
physical appearance'

JAMES FINN GARNER

SOUVENIR PRESS

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To the Theater of the Bizarre,
including Pepe, Armando, Egon, Ted,
Matteo, Nick, and Julietta; James Ghelkins, Jr.,
and Willie, Smitty, and Jocko
of the Teamsters Children's Puppet Theater;
and Others too numerous to mention.
To Carol, for help and encouragement,
and to Lies, for everything.

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INTRODUCTION

When they were first written, the stories on which the following tales are based certainly served their purpose—to entrench the patriarchy, to estrange people from their own natural impulses, to demonize 'evil' and to 'reward' an 'objective' 'good'. However much we might like to, we cannot blame the Brothers Grimm for their insensitivity to womyn's issues, minority cultures, and the environment. Likewise, in the self-righteous Copenhagen of Hans Christian Andersen, the inalienable rights of mermaids were hardly given a second thought.

Today, we have the opportunity—and the obligation—to rethink these 'classic' stories so they reflect more enlightened times. To that effort I submit this humble book. While its original title, *Fairy Stories for a Modern World,* was abandoned for obvious reasons (kudos to my editor for pointing out my hetero-

sexualist bias), I think the collection stands on its own. This, however, is just a start. I expect I have volumes left in me, and I hope this book sparks the righteous imaginations of other writers and, of course, leaves an indelible mark on our children.

If, through omission or commission, I have inadvertently displayed any sexist, racist, culturalist, nationalist, regionalist, ageist, lookist, ableist, sizeist, speciesist, intellectualist, socioeconomicist, ethnocentrist, phallocentrist, heteropatriarchalist, or other type of bias as yet unnamed, I apologize and encourage your suggestions for rectification. In the quest to develop meaningful literature that it totally free from bias and purged from the influences of its flawed cultural past, I doubtless have made some mistakes.

POLITICALLY CORRECT BEDTIME STORIES

THE FROG PRINCE



nce there was a young princess who, when she grew tired of beating her head against the male power structure at her castle, would relax by walking into the woods and sitting beside a small pond. There she would amuse herself by tossing her favourite golden ball up and down and pondering the role of the eco-feminist warrior in her era.

One day, while she was dreaming of the utopia that her queendom could become if womyn were in the positions of power, she dropped the ball, which rolled into the pond. The pond was so deep and murky she couldn't see where it had gone. She didn't cry, of course, but she made a mental note to be more careful next time.

Suddenly she heard a voice say, 'I can get your ball for you, princess.'

She looked round, and saw the head of a frog popping above the surface of the pond. 'No, no,' she said, 'I would never enslave a member of another species to work for my selfish desires.'

The frog said, 'Well, what if we make a deal on a contingency basis? I'll get your ball for you if you do me a favour in return.'

The princess gladly agreed to this most equitable arrangement. The frog dived under the water and soon emerged with the golden ball in his mouth. He spat the ball on the bank and said, 'Now that I've done you a favour, I'd like to explore your views on physical attraction between the species.'

The princess couldn't imagine what the frog was talking about. The frog continued, 'You see, I am not really a frog at all. I'm really a man, but an evil sorcerer has cast a spell on me. While my frog form is no better or worse—only different—than my human form, I would so much like to be among people again. And the only thing that can break this spell is a kiss from a princess.'

The princess thought for a moment about whether sexual harassment could take place between species,

but her heart went out to the frog for his predicament. She bent down and kissed the frog on the forehead. Instantly the frog grew and changed. And there, standing in the water where the frog had been, was a man in a golf shirt and loud plaid trousers—middle-aged, vertically challenged, and losing a little bit of hair on top.

The princess was taken aback. 'I'm sorry if this sounds a little classist,' she stammered, 'but . . . what I mean to say is . . . don't sorcerers usually cast their spells on *princes*?'

'Ordinarily, yes,' he said, 'but this time the target was just an innocent businessman. You see, I'm a real estate developer, and the sorcerer thought I was cheating him in a property-line dispute. So he invited me out for a round of golf, and just as I was about to tee off, he transformed me. But my time as a frog wasn't wasted, you know. I've got to know every square inch of these woods, and I think it would be ideal for an office/property share/resort complex. The location's great and the numbers add up perfectly! The bank wouldn't lend any money to a frog, but now that I'm in human form again, they'll be eating out of my hand. Oh, will that be sweet! And let me tell you, this is going to be a big project! Just

drain the pond, cut down about 80 per cent of the trees, get easements for. . . . '

The frog developer was cut short when the princess shoved her golden ball back into his mouth. She then pushed him back underwater and held him there until he stopped thrashing. As she walked back to the castle, she marvelled at the number of good deeds that a person could do in just one morning. And while someone might have noticed that the frog was gone, no one ever missed the real estate developer.