

The Leacock Medal for Humour

Canada's Award for Literary Humour

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“A Regrettable Afternoon”, as told by Gordon R. Ibitt

by

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Winner of the 2021 Student Competition

My name is Gordon. I live under the bridge near the bakery in Nottingham. The good one, with the jelly-filled cakes. You know the place. I am a bullfrog. Being a bullfrog is a rather sublime endeavor, given the general lack of responsibility, however there are drawbacks. My kind have a habit of getting tangled up in all manner of strange happenings. If there is magic involved, a frog is certain to be in proximity.

Such as it happened that one morning, while tanning myself upon a lily pad, I was rudely and forcefully stuffed into a burlap sack.

Oh, I thought. There go my plans for the afternoon.

Contained with me in the bag were an assortment of odd items; a glowing mushroom, a lizard's eyeball, a rabbit's foot, and what appeared to be a Belgian waffle. I could only wonder what was to become of me, until the bag was turned inside-out and I was roughly dumped into a cauldron.

Bejabbers! I am going to be eaten. What kind of foul creature would eat a frog? Something dawned on me. God's Bones, I've been kidnapped by the French. This is not wizardry, this is international intrigue!

I was proven incorrect when the warty, yellowed face of an elderly woman peered over the lip of the cauldron, smiling with blackened, rotting teeth.

Oh, thank heavens! It's just a witch. I've not the stomach for politics.

The Witch began chanting in Latin as she poured water into the cauldron. “Lapidibus creaturae, exaudi

orationem meam. Educ virum dolor!”

Knowing some Latin (I studied at the finest of amphibian academies), I can translate. She said something along the lines of “Strangest creatures, hear my plea. Bring forth a man for company!”

I certainly hope whatever 'man' is brought forth has a thing for the colour yellow. For Pete's sake, woman, exfoliate your face!

Then something odd happened. The water in the cauldron started to glow, and a sort of stretching sensation came over me. My arms contorted and elongated, changing to a strange peachy colour. My legs did the same, sprouting a grotesque number of extra toes. I soon found the roomy cauldron quite cramped and was forced to stand up or be crushed.

The witch gasped. “It worked!”

“Brraaaap,” I said, noting the smoothening of my voice.

The witch raised an eyebrow. “I beg your pardon?”

“Brraaaap,” I repeated. My loose grasp of the spoken english language was becoming apparent to me.

The witch sighed. “Crud. This was not what I pictured. Uh... You can leave, if you'd like.”

Rather than ask her what she was talking about (speech had been shown to be futile) I looked around the room for a reflective object. I quickly laid eyes upon a mirror leaned against the wall adjacent to me.

I gasped as my reflection was not visible. Instead, the image in the mirror was that of a hairless ape. Upon closer inspection I found a much, much darker truth: I had become a conventionally attractive caucasian man. Not only that, but an unclothed one. This was the worst-case scenario.

The witch seemed to notice my discomfort. “Uh... I might have some pants you could use in the storage room. I-I'll be right back.”

She shuffled off into the depths of her lair, then came back a minute later with a pair of filthy overalls. I could smell them from across the room.

She tossed them to me, then waved me off. “You, uh, you should go. I don't know what I was thinking, really. It's just, ever since my gerbil died, I've been so lonely. Sorry about all this.”

I nodded to the best of my ability and attempted to clothe myself, which was not an easy process considering the fact that I had never used human hands before. Still, the want to leave the current,

wildly uncomfortable situation outweighed my lack of hand dexterity and I managed to get both legs into the proper holes.

This feels wildly restrictive.

“Fare thee well,” The Witch mumbled.

“Braaap,” I replied.

With that, I left out the front door, stumbling down the street like one of those inflatable tube-men that would become so popular in later days.

No, no, no. This can't be happening. Think, Gordy! How does one reverse this affliction? I could put the witch in an oven, though that seems a little rude... Are there any woodsmen about? Perhaps I could contact my godmother, but she's less 'fairy' and more 'goblin'. Plus, she always gives those weirdly sloppy kisses like a dog that you want to wipe off your mouth immediately but fear would be rude... Wait!

A kiss. A kiss! That always seemed to set things aright in these sorts of situations! I needed someone to kiss me. There were two issues with this: For one, I had no idea how to speak. Secondly, I had to kiss a bloody human.

At least finding one won't be difficult, I thought, watching the many people on the roadside who were in turn watching me.

This will all be over soon, Gordon. Just pick one and smooch.

I ran up to an elderly woman adjacent to me, lips puckered. My lack of knowledge regarding human customs proved detrimental however, as I would later learn that this action was considered 'frowned upon'. The old woman shrieked, and a young man behind us ran up and socked me in the face.

I spat out a tooth. Just as well, as I didn't enjoy having them. Too sharp.

Now with a sizable shiner on my face and the general disdain of all passers-by, I considered the very real possibility that I may never return to my original, superior form. As the sun dipped under the horizon, so too did my emotional state. I couldn't just wander the streets forever. I would have to find a place to sleep. And then what? Work at a (ye olde) Starbucks with some 20-something named Shantelle who believes in *bacteria*? Pay *taxes*?!

I need to find a solution, and fast.

As I walked, I happened upon an odd procession standing near the French Embassy. I could never stand to look at the place, so I nearly slunk right past it until I noticed something from the corner of my eye.

Oh, oh God. No... No.

The bloody French were having some kind of open party. People just came and went, picking up appetizers and conversing in that accursed fancy tongue.

Hippies.

That wasn't the only kind of tongue going about, though. Every new fool to join the fray recieved a kiss on each cheek from the party organizers.

I knew what I had to do, but it would be the hardest thing in the world for me. My cousin got eaten by the French, you know. Had his legs ripped off, and to add insult to injury, fried. Of all the cooking methods, they chose the one that is most commonly performed on chickens.

Despite their nearly demonic nature, the French were my only hope. I took a deep breath and stepped forward, gross ape limbs shaking with each step.

One of the beret-wearing freaks noticed me and approached with amiable curiosity “Bienvenue! Quel est ton nom?”

“Braap,” I said, for it was all I knew.

He gave me an odd look but didn't falter. “Bienvenue, Brap.”

He moved closer.

Surely, there must be another way.

It was too late to turn back. The creature leaned in and gave me two quick kisses, and they were, in my opinion, way worse than the ones my godmother gives. Sputtering, I staggered backwards.

That was the worst thing I've ever experienced, but at least it's all over now.

It was not over. To my horror, I did not become amphibious again.

What? No! Why didn't that work? Could it be that no information found in folk tales is true? No, that would be ridiculous. But how?... That's it!

The brute had kissed my cheeks! Everyone knows it only works if it's on the mouth. This revelation came a moment too late though, as the Frenchman was walking away.

Ohhh no you don't, you baguette-munching barbarian!

I grabbed the man by his silly ascot and yanked him back.

“Monsieur! ce que vous êtes-” he began.

I closed my eyes. *It's all for the mission, Gordon. God, I can't believe I'm doing this.*

With a moment's hesitation, I planted a peck on the man's disturbingly frog-scented mouth.

“Monsieur!” he protested, but my job was done.

A rather calming, tingling sensation fell over me. I shrank to a fraction of my human size, compacting into delightful, green perfection. Within moments, all was right with me again.

Shocked by the odd string of events, the Frenchman fainted.

Serves you right, you bloody animal.

I hopped home as fast as my legs could carry me, one eye on the lookout for pursuers. I didn't want to wind up in a frying pan. Once I was home, I threw myself upon my favourite lily pad, emotions a mix of relief and disgust.

I'm going to need therapy for a while after this.

THE END

