

Once Upon a Wedding

I am Amaryelis, and my sisters are, Axelle, Adelaide and Agrafina. We are Fairy Godmothers to the Court of King Harcourt and Queen Eleanor of Kingdom 23. Everyone thinks being a Fairy Godmother is a cushy job, but as you shall soon see, when you're saddled with three bumbling sisters, there is no such thing as a cushy job. . .

We stood atop the highest spire of Castle Harcourt and surveyed the crowds of elegantly dressed wedding guests as they paraded across the drawbridge.

What an day this was to be! Our own Princess Giselle of Kingdom 23 had captured the heart of Prince Oliver of Kingdom 4, and trust me – in the land of 122 Kingdoms it was a big deal for a princess to “marry up.” Little Giselle had snared herself a prince in the single digits and their wedding was to be the social event of the decade. As her fairy godmothers the burden of making it perfect had fallen heavily upon us – or more accurately – upon me.

My gaze went ruefully to my sisters. The guests might be elegantly dressed, but sadly I couldn't say the same for them. Adelaide's gown, her wings and even her hair were a vibrant shade of pink. As I watched, she twitched her wand and added a smattering of fuchsia hearts and roses to the hem of her dress – then narrowing her eyes in speculation, she raised her glowing wand in Axelle's direction.

Admittedly, Axelle did look rather like the angel of death – gown hair and wings were all unrelenting black, but I shook my head at Adelaide and she lowered her wand with an

unrepentant grin. As children they had been known to chase each other around, magically changing the color of one another's clothes, but today was certainly not the day for games.

"Our own royal wedding," Adelaide sighed, fluttering her delicate pink wings. "Could there be a more romantic, delightful affair?"

"Monotonous is more like it," Axelle grumbled. "We're in the land of 122 Kingdoms. There's a royal wedding every other weekend." She eyed her sister's outfit with obvious distaste. "And they're all *frilly* and *flowery* and *pink*."

Sniffing, Adelaide dabbed at her eyes with a lacy handkerchief. "But this one is extra special. This wedding is for our own little Princess Giselle."

"Oh, dry up," Axelle grumbled. "She's getting married. She's not dying."

"She *is* getting married and as her fairy godmothers, it is our duty to make certain everything is perfect." I reminded them both sternly.

"Yes, Amaryelis," they droned.

"Let's get down to business then. Have you seen to the cake, Adelaide?"

She fluttered excitedly from side to side. "Just wait until you see it! It's as big as a carriage! Forty tiers with cascades of pink roses and dancing pixies on every other tier."

Axelle rolled her eyes and made a sound of utter and complete disgust.

"Forty tiers?" I asked in alarm. "Isn't that a bit . . . er . . . large?" *And unstable*, I mused nervously.

Adelaide's wings drooped. "Don't you trust me?"

"Of course I do, dear," I lied, patting her on the shoulder.

"I wanted it to be special. Our Princess couldn't have any *ordinary* old wedding cake."

“Of course she couldn’t. Why don’t you just run along and check on the cake and the rest of the food?”

“Rest of the food?” Adelaide asked blankly.

“The rest of the banquet food on Princess Giselle’s list – you did arrange for more than just cake didn’t you?”

She smiled nervously. “Oh, that food! Of course I did . . . er . . . I’ll just go and see how that’s coming.” Adelaide buzzed over the balcony and spiraled quickly out of sight.

I stared worriedly after her for a moment before I turned my attention back to Axelle.

“And the decorations and flowers?”

“Oh, I’ve taken care of them,” Axelle replied with a sly little grin.

I narrowed my eyes at her. “Please tell me that all of the flowers are not black.”

“Not *all* of them,” she said evasively, her dark eyes the picture of innocence.

“Axelle,” I growled.

“A little bit of black isn’t going to hurt anything,” she said defensively. “It’s very fashionable.”

“The Princess *does not* want black flowers.”

She folded her arms stubbornly across her chest and glowered at me. “She might, if she’d bothered to look at my samples.”

“This is not *your* wedding.”

She continued to glower. “*I* wouldn’t be quite so worried about the flowers if *I* were you.”

“And just what would you be worried about?”

“Agrafina.”

I felt the blood drain from my wings.

“Why?” I asked in a strangled voice. “Where is she?”

Axelle smiled. “Where she is before every royal wedding – hitting the royal sauce.”

“And you didn’t stop her?”

She shrugged, with an elegant dip of her black wings. “Even a lowly fairy has a right to her comfort,” she said.

“Oh bother!” Flapping my wings furiously I hurried down the tower stairs to the accompaniment of Axelle’s laughter. “And you fix those flowers!” I shouted back at her.

How could Agrafina do this to me on this of all days? I should have known better than to trust her. In a realm fairly bursting with Princesses, Agrafina had never been happy with her lot as fairy. She had always dreamed of being swept off her feet by a handsome prince and having a royal wedding of her own, but what prince would choose to marry a poor fairy when he had a glutton of wealthy Princesses to choose from?

Of late, royal weddings depressed her so much, Agrafina had started to take to the bottle for comfort. I should have sent her away – far, far away – for there was nothing more dangerous and unpredictable than a drunken fairy, but she had promised me she would behave!

I buzzed out into the corridor toward the kitchen and the entrance to the wine cellar.

“Amaryelis,” a voice trilled from behind me.

“Oh bother!” I whispered, halting my panicked flight. Taking a deep calming breath, I pasted on a smile then turned to face the Queen.

She was wearing a regal gown of royal blue, her blonde hair piled high upon her head in

a massive beehive hairdo topped by her most opulent jeweled crown. She rather resembled a large bejeweled blueberry, I mused and then chastised myself for being unkind.

“Yes Queen Eleanor?”

“The guests are getting a bit restless. Would you be a dear, and tell the kitchen staff to start sending out some appetizers?”

“Yes, your Majesty. I’ll see to it right away.”

“You know our little Giselle, she’s not going to make her entrance until she looks ‘princess perfect,’ and silly me, I seem to have misplaced her gown.” She frowned. “I could have sworn it was in my sitting room.”

The direst of forebodings came over me. *She wouldn’t have! She couldn’t have! Oh yes she could.* A drunken fairy was not known for a sense of restraint.

“Would you like me to help you look for it?” I managed to squeak.

“No dear. You see to our guests. I’ll get one of the servants to help me.”

With a little fluttering curtsy, I headed back down the corridor at top speed. If Agrabina had touched that dress, she was going to be spending the next five years of her life as a canary.

The closer I got to the kitchen, the louder the sounds of frantic activity became, but nothing could have prepared me for the scene of utter chaos that met me as I came through the doors. Members of the kitchen staff were running in every direction with pans and trays and bits of suspiciously raw looking food, and at the center of it all was . . .

“Adelaide!”

She spun guiltily to face me.

“Is this your idea of taking care of things?”

“Don’t shout at me,” she sniffled. “I’m sorry! I’m doing the best I can. I got so wrapped up in making the cake perfect that I forgot about the rest of the banquet food.”

I covered my face with my hands and practiced deep breathing for a full count of ten before I was calm enough to even think of speaking. When I opened my eyes, Lucinda, the castle’s head cook was standing next to me, a long list clutched tightly in her plump little hand. Her usually pristine white uniform was smeared with various colored food substances and she had flour on her nose.

She looked from me to the list and back again, her brown eyes wide and panicked. “I can’t possibly get all of this ready in time Amaryelis! It would take ten cooks a week just to get started!”

I took one last deep breath and exhaled slowly before I patted her on the shoulder. “Concentrate on the appetizers first. The queen is asking for them now.”

Lucinda looked as if she were going to faint.

“Just lay the ingredients for each batch of appetizers into piles, and Adelaide will help you.”

The cook nodded and scurried off.

I turned my attention to Adelaide. “Use your wand and fix this mess,” I ordered. “Ask Lucinda what each batch of ingredients is supposed to make and then zap it up as fast as you can,” I hissed. “I have to find Agrafina.”

Not even bothering to wait for an answer, I buzzed down the stairs to the wine cellar.

What a fine day this was turning out to be. A gigantically dangerous cake, no food for the wedding banquet, and flowers fit for a witch’s funeral. What else could possibly go wrong?

And then I heard the sloshing . . . and the singing.

“Salad kazoo . . . *hic* . . . an’ mickey . . . *hic* . . . an’ mickey is blue . . . *hic* . . . an’ hippity . . . *hic* . . . hippity hoppity boo. Put em . . . *hic* . . . together an’ what’ll ya . . . *hic* . . . what’ll ya . . . *hic* . . . what’ll ya get? Hippity . . . *hic* . . . hippity . . . *hic* . . . hippity hoppity booooo!”

Every cask of wine in the cellar was bouncing merrily along with the song and sloshing its contents all over the room, and all over the hovering fairy in the long . . . white . . . gown . . .

“Agrafina!”

Giggling, she glided around to face me. Her long blonde hair was sticking up wildly in all directions and she had a nearly empty whisky bottle clutched in her hand.

Splattered with red wine – holes ripped into the back to accommodate Agrafina’s wings, the Princess’s beautiful, ridiculously expensive wedding gown looked as if it had been worn by the victim of a dragon attack. The pixie lace at sleeves, neck and hem – lace that had taken a hundred pixies a year to weave – was coming unraveled even as I watched. Tiny moon pearls, painstakingly collected at full moon from luna oysters, were raining from the bodice like hail stones.

“You stole the Princess’s wedding gown!” I shrieked. “Have you lost your mind!”

“It’s not . . . *hic* . . . stolen. It’s just . . . *hic* . . . borrowed,” she said defensively.

“Look at it! You’ve ruined it!”

Agrafina looked down at the front of the gown, and then started to bawl. All of the dancing casks hit the ground with a massive crash, sloshing even more wine into the air and onto the Princess’s gown. I fluttered a little higher and raised the hem of my yellow skirts as a deluge washed out of the room and down the corridor.

Her bottom lip was protruding. “I . . . I didn’t mean to. I . . . *hic* . . . I just wanted to see what it . . . *hic* . . . what it looked like. You can . . . *hic* . . . fix it can’t you?”

“I can’t fix *this* Agrafina! A thousand magical seamstresses couldn’t fix this!”

She started to bawl again and I clapped my hands over my ears so I could concentrate. This was a disaster – a complete and utter disaster! The King was going to put us all in a cage!

There had to be a way to fix this. *Think Amaryelis! Think!*

I could cast a spell on the guests to make them see what I wanted them to see. I looked down at my wand, which was glowing a bright, sunny yellow with full magical power, but I shook my head. There were far too many people involved – the energy it would take to bewitch them all would drain my magic in minutes. But I didn’t have to bewitch the guests! I could just bewitch the gown!

I pointed my wand at Agrafina and her eyes grew wide with alarm.

“Don’t zap me, Amaryelis,” she wailed. “I said I was . . . *hic* . . . I said I was sorry!”

“Oh, do be quiet!” I ordered crossly. “Take off that gown at once and hold it out in front of you.”

Still sniffing, she raised her wand to comply.

“Wait!” I shrieked. *What was I thinking?* In her present state, she might just as well cause the gown and herself to go up in a puff of smoke. “I’ll do it myself.”

With a neat flick of my wand, I had her out of the dress and back into one of her own clean blue gowns.

As she held it, I circled my wand in the air around the ruined gown.

Once Upon a Wedding

*“Gown of white carefully made
with pearls, lace and brocade.
Let all who gaze upon you see
your glowing former majesty.
Stains rents and disrepair
hide from sight I do declare!”*

The effects of my illusion spell worked their way up from the bottom of the dress like a magical, cleansing wave, knitting over the damage until you couldn't even tell the gown had ever been touched, let alone nearly destroyed.

“You did it Amaryelis! It's as good as . . . *hic* . . . it's as good as . . . *hic* . . . it's just like new.”

“It is not just like new, and when that spell wears off, it will be as ruined as ever.” I flicked my wand again and popped the dress upstairs and back into the Queen's sitting room where it was sure to be found. The glow of my wand was already diminished as maintaining the spell put a slow drain on my powers. If I could just hold out until the ceremony was over, perhaps I could talk the Princess into changing into one of her honeymoon outfits a bit early – *provided Agrafina hadn't been at them too.*

“Upstairs at once – and no more liquor,” I added, snatching the full bottle she had just picked up from her hand. “Go to your room and stay there until after the wedding.”

Her bottom lip was protruding again. “But I wanna . . . *hic* . . . I wanna see the wedding!”

I looked her up and down. “In your condition, that is out of the question. You had one job, and that was to behave yourself! You’ve broken your promise to me, Agraфина and I’m quite cross with you. Go to your room!”

“Yes, Amaryelis,” she sniffled. She turned and made her unsteady way back up the stairs, weaving from side to side like a butterfly in a high gale.

With another flick of my wand, I used some of my precious magical energy to pop her back into her rooms before someone saw her, and then started up the stairs myself.

Adelaide seemed to have things well in hand in the kitchen. I hovered and watched as she zapped up trays of appetizers which then made their way into the capable hands of the serving staff. Cheese puffs, sausage rolls and deviled eggs proceeded past me in a steady line.

Satisfied, I headed out of the kitchen and toward the ballroom to see if Axelle had fixed the flowers.

“Amaryelis dear,” came the Queen’s high trilling voice.

With a painful degree of difficulty I recovered my smile and turned to face her. “Yes, Your Majesty?”

“Giselle’s dress has been found and we’re ready to get started.”

“That’s wonderful news,” I said patting her arm.

“Silly me, it was in my sitting room the entire time,” the Queen replied, shaking her head. “Would you tell the staff to usher the guests into the ballroom? Giselle and the King will be along momentarily.”

My heart was pounding. There would be no time to fix the flowers if anything was wrong, but what choice did I have?

“Yes, Queen Eleanor.” I gave her a little curtsy and hurried off.

I passed her orders along to the household staff, and could hear them herding the guests toward the ballroom as I hastened to be the first through the doors.

Holding my breath, I flung the doors wide and was greeted by a vision of pastel flowers, ribbons and bows. Pink and white roses dripped from the chandeliers, and cascaded out of every nook and cranny of the room in soft waves of color and scent.

I breathed a sigh of relief – there was no black in sight. Adelaide’s gigantic cake was standing in the far corner of the room and looked to be stable enough for the moment. A dais in the opposite corner held the court musicians who were gathering their instruments.

The guests, mostly royalty from the neighboring kingdoms, started to file into the room and take their seats. Dressed in their finest, there was a great deal of glitz and glitter to be seen. I did a double take as the Queen of Kingdom 35 passed. She was munching on one of Adelaide’s cheese puffs and above her ears, she appeared to be growing horns.

My gaze switched to her husband. He was eating a sausage roll, and his nose was taking on distinctly porcine qualities.

A lady nibbling on a deviled egg had colorful feathers poking out of her neatly twisted coiffure that were growing longer as I watched. Everywhere I looked, there were feathers and horns and porcine noses. I felt myself start to hyperventilate. *What had that idiot Adelaide done now?* I pulled out my wand and whispered a quick masking spell under my breath.

Before you dined you were so pretty,

Mask it magic in a jiffy!

The sunshiny glow of my wand dimmed by half as the new spell drained even more power from my limited reserves.

The Court Musicians struck up a tune, and King Roland and Queen Mirabel of Kingdom 4 appeared in the doorway with Prince Oliver between them.

“Oh bother!” *The wedding was starting already!* I grabbed a passing member of the serving staff and ordered him to dispense with the appetizers at all costs, and to send Adelaide to me at once. With a nod, he scurried off.

The Prince and his parents were soon followed by Queen Eleanor, and then a bevy of Bridesmaid Princesses from the neighboring Kingdoms, all dressed in frilly pastel gowns.

My wand was growing dimmer by the second as more and more people became affected by the appetizers. Where was Adelaide? She was the only one who could fix this mess! I could only mask what she could undo.

Axelle popped into the room, looking particularly pleased with herself instead of sulky for a change.

The bridal march sounded, and Princess Giselle appeared in the doorway with King Harcourt. As she started her triumphant glide down the aisle, all of the flowers and decorations in her wake turned velvety black like an inky tide.

Glaring at a grinning Axelle, I whipped out my fading wand to disguise her handiwork.

“Decorations of night quickly recede.

Decorations of light are what I need.”

The black tide reversed itself, flowing slowly back toward the door in a cleansing pastel wave and I started toward Axelle, fully intending to throttle her, but her eyes grew wide and she started pointing urgently behind me.

Fearing some kind of trick, I turned reluctantly away from her only to behold Agrafina fluttering unsteadily through one of the upper windows, a defiant expression on her face.

With a squeak of alarm, I launched myself toward her, but she eluded me, and shot up to the ceiling among the rafters. Her rapid passage dislodged a rain of dust from the thick wooden beams, and then . . . the worst happened. *She sneezed*, sending a shower of rainbow colored magic raining down on the crowd below.

My gaze shot wildly around the room. For a fairy, mixing dust and alcohol was a disastrous combination, because every sneeze became an out of control spell. A drunken fairy sneeze had caused it to rain toads in Kingdom 14 for a full week! You can only imagine the resulting chaos. With a shiver of revulsion, I searched the room for any signs of warts or hopping.

A shriek from the guests below drew my attention to the front of the ballroom.

Queen Eleanor had hopped to her feet and was running around batting at her hair – or what used to be her hair. Now upon her head, topped by her crown, was a massive hive of angry bees. My wand went in her direction only to be pulled away by another shriek as Agrafina sneezed again.

In the place of King Roland, the Prince's father, sat a large green toad who hopped eagerly off after a passing bee. I shook my sputtering wand in desperation, but with a last flare

of golden sparks, it went dark.

Soon screams reverberated throughout the room as my masking spells all failed.

The guests had noticed their porky noses, ducky feathers and goat horns. Women were fainting and men were shouting, but the loudest scream of all came from Princess Giselle as her dress reverted to its ruinous state. The strain of her thrashing about was too much for the compromised fabric to handle and the dress literally came apart at the seams, leaving her practically naked as she ran shrieking up the aisle and out the doors.

Prince Oliver thrust his father the frog into the horrified hands of his mother the Queen, and chased after Giselle, gallantly holding out his jacket as he ran.

With a growl, I lunged after Agrafina, who went harrowing off toward the front of the room.

“Watch out!” I screamed, but she paid me no heed and crashed headlong into the massive wedding cake with a horrible squelch that started it teetering. Guests scattered in all directions as the cake came crashing down, spraying icing and pixies across the length of the room.

Wiping frosting from my eyes, I surveyed the damage with as much calm as I could muster – and then my gaze fell upon the King, covered head to toe in white goo and sprinkles, his crown teetering precariously upon a pair of large curly horns.

He spat an indignant pixie from his mouth and she reamed him out in her tinkling bell voice, shaking her little fist under his nose the whole time, before she buzzed off into the rafters among the bees.

King Harcourt, his complexion having turned an alarming shade of scarlet, pointed a trembling, frosting covered hand at me. “YOU’RE FIRED!” He screamed . . . and we were.

Once Upon a Wedding

That, my dears, is my sad little tale. If you happen to know anyone who is in the market for a Fairy Godmother with three sweet little canaries as pets – you know whom to call.