

Princess Pinkalot and the Prince's trial

Princess Pinkalot loved pink. In fact she loved pink so much that everything in her father's castle was pink. The walls were painted pink, the castle cat was pink even the food the castle cook made was pink. She felt there was nothing better than redecorating to make something look better by changing it to look pink.

Pink was the Princess' life. When she went out riding in the castle grounds she rode a pink horse and made sure all the fences that she had to jump were pink as well. Her favourite flowers were pink roses, and all the clothes in her wardrobe were all the shades of pink you could ever imagine.

The Princess' father on the other hand didn't like pink. The King did not like it in the slightest. Pink was not his life and when it came to dinnertime he had to close his eyes and imagine the food that he was eating wasn't pink. The King was more of a blue man and that is why he spent most of his time deep, deep down in the dank dark dungeons under the castle where he had had one of the servants decorate the room completely in blue. This was the King's sanctuary.

'Humph' the King said as he flopped down into his chair after having sit through yet another dinnertime with pink food and pink talk.

'This has to stop', he muttered to himself. 'I don't think I can stand it any longer. Pink everywhere I go about MY castle. Something needs to be done to stop this.'

He thought about each time he had asked the Queen to talk to the Princess about all the pinkness about the castle, but she would always answer the same.

'My dear Reginald', only the Queen was allowed to call the King by his real name, 'you really must stop worrying there is absolutely nothing wrong with pink' she would say.

'B..But I don't like it' the King would hastily reply.

'Stop moaning' the Queen would then snap, 'when the Princess gets married and moves away then we can worry about redecorating.'

'That's it' the King thought jumping up from his blue chair. 'The Princess must get married. She must get married and move into her own castle so I can get rid of all this pink and start painting everything blue!' he exclaimed as he ran out the dungeons.

After much searching the King found the Queen and the Princess talking over some new curtains. 'How about this pair' the Queen said holding up a pair of pink curtains with pink spots on, 'Hmm, not pink enough' the princess replied crinkling up her nose, 'I want something that really shows how much I love pink!'

The King completely flabbergasted by what he was hearing suddenly got back his bearings, 'I have an announcement to make,' he called out in his most authoritative voice.

'The Princess is now old enough to be married and in two weeks time we will hold an event for all the Princes in the country for the Princess to choose from.'

'Oh,' said the Princess.

Her mind was thinking, thinking of what she could do with a whole new castle. All things pink ran through her head.

'Yes, Yes' she exclaimed to the King. 'That's a wonderful idea, just think of all the decorating I could do in my very own castle.'

'I know, it's a brilliant idea isn't it?' the King said, thinking of all the things he could do with his castle, 'I will immediately get the herald to send out invitations to all the princes in the country.'

The Queen, who didn't want her princess to leave and get married, had been silently sitting listening to the King's idea suddenly stood up. 'My dear Reginald,' she started 'how ever are you going to choose which prince will marry our beautiful daughter. You know her tastes are somewhat...' she paused thinking of the best way to say it, 'refined' she finished with a winning smile on her face.

The King stood his ground.

'Well, well' he stuttered, thinking of something to say.

'I know what we can do,' the princess interrupted, 'we can have a competition to see which prince likes pink the best. I mean if I am to live with them for the rest of my life they have to like pink as much as I do.'

The King smiled, and the Queen's shoulders sagged. 'An excellent idea,' the King boomed 'I will get the herald to write up a poster straight away!' And he bustled out of the room excitedly.

On the day of the trials the front field was full of princes from all over the country. There must have been around 100 in all. Each of them held a different banner with their families crest on it. Some had horses, others had different animals like foxes and eagles and one even had the crest of a dragon. One thing that the princes all had in common though was that they were all extremely handsome and looked like they would all be able to fight a dragon, and win.

As the Princess looked out of her bedroom window at all the princes arriving she noticed how handsome they all were.

'Oh', she said to her mother, 'I hope that I will be able to find my perfect prince.'

'Well,' her mother answered, somewhat uninterested in all the things happening around her. 'You have certainly come up with some very interesting tasks for the princes to compete in. Do you think there will be any of them left come the end of the day?'

'I certainly hope so,' said the princess. 'I'm looking forward to having my own castle to decorate how I like, I've already bought a new pink banqueting table and matching chairs' she exclaimed.

In the castle ground all the princes had arrived and were milling around wondering what tasks they would be set. They had heard of the beauty of the princess and would do anything to take her hand in marriage. They had all come prepared for what lay ahead and some were already starting to unpack their jousting sticks and swords. Some were doing very strange looking stretches but all were confident that at the end of the day the princess would be theirs. All that is except for one prince.

Bertie had positioned himself off to one the side of the grounds, sitting beneath a particularly nice pinked blossom tree. As he sat he looked around at all the other princes preparing for the tasks that they thought lay ahead. Bertie was unlike all the other princes that had turned up. Although he was a prince he didn't have a particularly big castle, and he wasn't regarded as exactly hansom, in fact he was rather strange looking. His eyes were slightly too big for his head as were his ears that seemed to flap around with a mind of their own. His hair was also quite unruly and no matter how much toad paste he put on it, it would stick up in different directions.

He was also unlike most of the other princes in that instead of looking like he could fight, and beat a dragon he looked more like a dragon would find him as a good appetiser before his main course. In spite of all this Bertie had turned up hoping against hope that by some strange stroke of luck; he might have a tiny slither of a chance of winning, he just hoped jousting and sword fighting weren't part of the tasks.

As Bertie was getting to his feet the sound of princes discussing the size of their swords was cut short by a fan fair announcing the arrival of the King his wife and their daughter onto the field. Behind them Bertie noticed several servants carrying what look like enormous bed sheets. Before he could get a closer look the King started to make an announcement.

'Princes from all around the country, welcome,' he began in a deep voice that sounded around the grounds.

'Welcome, welcome to my castle. I'm sure you all know why you are here, but just in case there is anyone who does not know I will briefly explain the reason for today.'

There were some groans from the princes around Bertie, obviously hoping that the King would get on with it and they could get on and show the princess how mightily strong they were. The King however seemed undeterred, and as he explained about the day Bertie looked off to the side where the servants who had been carrying the bed sheets had moved.

Slowly he started to make his way around to the other side of the field to get a closer look. As he moved along the lines of princes he noticed that the servants

had placed all the bed sheets, which he now noticed were of every colour imaginable, onto large tables. They were also putting on the table's rolls of something that Bertie couldn't quite make out. Again, these rolls were lots of different colours. Bertie wasn't quite sure but a feeling of hope gathered in him, it looked as though he maybe wouldn't have to partake in jousting and sword fighting to win the princess hand in marriage.

The King finished his speech, much to pleasure of all the princes and even the Queen who had been quietly dosing off behind him and beamed over the herald. The herald made his way to the front and in a loud high pitched voice that made him sound more like a girl he started to speak.

'Princes, know you all know why you are here so it is my duty to explain exactly how you will compete against each other. The Princess,' at this point Princess Pinkalot took a small step forward and gently bowed her, before moving back next to her mother, 'has decided,' the herald continued, 'that there will be three trials on which she will decide who will claim her hand in marriage. Each task has been set so we can see which prince is suited best to the princess.'

All the princes started to look around at each other, boastfully pointing to themselves, showing how much they thought they were the ones that make the best match. Bertie on the other hand was still trying to work out what they were going to have to do with the bed covers and rolls of whatever it was he could see the servants setting up.

Just as one of the servants started to unravel what was on one of the rolls, it looked like string of some sort, the herald began to speak again.

'The first task will require a delicate hand,' he said mystically as many of the princes believed this meant sword fighting, 'and,' he continued 'a sense of style.'

At this point many of the princes were starting to look somewhat confused. Many believed this still meant sword fighting but others were starting to get a little nervous.

'Of course I'm sure you all aware that I am indeed talking about clothes making,' the herald finished with a smile. In fact no one was aware that this is what the herald had been talking about. Even though the princes that filled the field had wealth and were blessed with extraordinary fighting abilities they were not complimented with much in the brain departments.

'Clothes making,' one the princes, with rather a large sword in the air shouted incredulously, 'how are we going to be able to make clothes? We are princes. We spend our time going around making girls swoon at our sword play and our hansom looks. We do not make clothes,' he sneered.

A couple of the other princes started to nod their heads in unison with this. Bertie on the other hand was quite looking forward to it. Having realised what the first task would entail when the herald had mentioned something about a sense of style, Bertie had thought that he could probably do quite well. Though he had

never made clothes from scratch before, Bertie wasn't exactly the richest prince in the country. Not being able to afford a servant to do it for him he had to mend the holes in his own clothes, especially his socks.

Bertie looked around at the other princes with a small smile creeping across his face. He was sure that all the other princes would find it extremely hard and many of them in fact seemed like they were going to give up and walk away now.

The herald though, somewhat taken aback by this response started to speak again, his voice seeming even higher than before.

'My princes,' he screeched. 'If you wish to take the princesses hand in marriage then you will compete in these tasks!'

At this point most of the princes quietened down waiting for their next instructions. A couple of the other princes though decided that this was too much for them and that even though the princess were extremely beautiful they were not that desperate, and led by the prince with the large sword, still in the air, they walked out of the castle grounds.

After the herald had composed himself he explained that on the tables to the side of the field there were large pieces of cloth and sewing instruments that the princes would use to make their clothes from. They could either choose a jacket or a shirt that they would have to wear once it had been made.

Even though Bertie had managed to get quite near to the tables with all the equipment on, after the herald had told them they only had one hour he had been pushed to one side as all the larger stronger princes had pushed past him. When he did finally get to the table he found that most of the thread had been taken along with the best needles and all that was left of the material were the colours no one else had wanted. The only colour that there seemed to be a lot of was pink. All the other princes had decided that pink was too much of a feminine colour and thought that colours such as gold, silver and black would show the princess how rich and powerful and strong they were. Bertie on the other hand felt that as long as he did his best and went home knowing that he had if the princess did not choose him he would not be too upset.

After the hour was up the herald called to all the remaining princes to stop making their garments. A lot of the princes were fuming at this, as they had not made anything that even resembled a jacket or shirt. Bertie though was reasonably pleased with his effort. He had taken off the jacket that he was wearing and trying the best he could to copy it had made a reasonable attempt. Granted one sleeve was longer than the other and there were some frayed edges where he had had to rip the material because the scissors he had been using had broken, but all in all Bertie was very pleased with his new pink jacket.

'Now princes,' the herald shouted, calling everyone to attention. 'I want you all to put on your jackets and stand in a line. The princess will then come around and place a pink ribbon around the necks of the princes that she thinks have made the best effort. There are only 10 ribbons though,' he continued to call out, 'so only ten princes will be going through to the next task.'

Bertie looked around at the other princes in the line. He had to agree that his jacket was probably the best of the lot, although a couple of the princes had managed to make something that resembled a jacket. There was even a prince who had long blonde hair and a rather pointed nose that had made a black jacket that from where Bertie was standing looked quite good. On the other hand though there were princes that had just ended up rapping themselves in material in an attempt to make it look like they were wearing jackets. A couple of the princes had also had to be taken away because they had managed to sew various parts of their own clothing to pieces of material. There was one prince that Bertie had seen being taken away who had somehow managed to sew a piece of material onto his trousers and the sleeve of his shirt meaning he was walking in a rather difficult position, bent over with his head between his legs.

The princess had started to walk along the line with her mother next to her.

‘Mother please stop sniggering,’ the princess snapped under her breath.

‘I can’t help it dear,’ the Queen replied trying her best to keep a straight face. ‘It’s just they all look so stupid. How could you ever think that princes would be able to sew?’

‘I didn’t,’ the princess replied coolly.

‘Then why did you set the task then,’ her mother said with a confused look on her face.

‘All in good time mother,’ she answered with a smile. ‘All in good time.’

The princess and the Queen then walked up the line of princes adding a ribbon around each of the princes’ necks that would go through to the next task. Bertie noticed that the prince who had made the black jacket was the first to have a ribbon put around his neck.

Bertie was standing at the far end of the line and just hoped that there would be some ribbons left by the time the princess made it down to him. Bertie’s hopes seemed to be fading though as by the time the princess had made it half way down the line she only had 2 ribbons left. Bertie shut his eyes and prayed as hard as he could that he would have a ribbon put round him. When he opened his eyes the princess was only a few steps away from him, and much to Bertie’s relief she had one ribbon left.

All along the line the princess’s face hadn’t changed. She smiled at each prince even the ones who didn’t get a ribbon put around their necks, but as she stood in front of Bertie, he was sure that as their eyes met there was a little glistening in the princess’s eyes and if he wasn’t mistaken the princess seemed to be smiling a little bit more as she placed the ribbon around Bertie’s neck. When he looked at her face again though it seemed to have turned back to just her warm ordinary smile and there didn’t seem to be any glistening in her eyes. Bertie wondered if he had imagined it, but before he could think any more on he was being ushered by

servants forward towards the castle with the rest of the princes that had had a ribbon around their necks.

In the background Bertie could hear the herald congratulating all the other princes on their attempts but warning them that if they stayed any longer the dogs would be unleashed on them. The last bit seemed to have come from the King as Bertie saw him standing next to the herald laughing extremely hard.

Bertie and the other 9 princes were shepherded round to the side of the castle where Bertie noticed a pink horse was standing nibbling away at the grass. Bertie assumed that this was the princess's horse as she was standing next to it patting its head as it ate.

The princes were all told to gather around near the horse and wait for their next instructions from the herald who was quickly making his way around from the front of the castle.

'Princes, princes,' he spluttered looking extremely red faced from the run round from the front. 'The next task as you can see involves the princess's horse. What you will need to do is approach the horse and then mount it.' Bertie looked at the other princes thinking that this would actually be quite easy. The prince with the black jacket seemed to agree with this and began to laugh.

'Is that it,' he shouted between laughs. 'All we have to do is get on the horses back! That's not a task, I've had hundred of horses, this will be a doddle!'

Even though Bertie quite disliked the prince he felt that he had a point.

The herald cleared his throat to quieten everyone down. 'The horse,' he said in his high pitch manner, 'will only let a certain type of person on his back.' Bertie could see the princess nodding at this and as he looked at her face she turned to look towards him. Bertie quickly took his eyes away afraid the princess would think that he was staring, but he couldn't help himself looking up at her again before he looked back at the herald. He was sure she turned her eyes away just as he looked up at her but couldn't be certain.

The prince in the black jacket made his way forward to the horse. The princess and herald had moved to the side to watch all the princes in their attempts. He had just got to the horse and was about to put his foot in the stirrups when the horse moved forward. The prince was left with his foot in the air and an angry look on his face. He tried once again but this time the horse wouldn't even let him get near and each time the prince took a step towards the horse the horse took a step away. The other princes started to snicker, including Bertie. At the sound of laughter the prince in the black jacket got very agitated and deciding that he had had enough of playing around lunged at the horse's reins. The horse though just took a couple of steps backwards and the prince ended up flat on his nose in the grass.

After the herald had helped some servants carry the black-jacketed prince out the way the rest of the princes attempted to get onto the horses back. The next five

princes preceded in the same way as the first with the horse leading them a merry dance around the field until they gave up through exhaustion or ended up face down on the ground.

The next prince Bertie noticed looked about as worried as he felt. After watching 6 princes try and fail it seemed that the likely result would be a very sore nose. Bertie watched as the prince made his way forward. He was quite short for a prince and had black hair that sat on top of his shoulders. His face was long and he had green eyes and a button nose. He was quite handsome in a strange way, nothing like most of the other princes who had boyish good looks and golden hair down their backs.

Bertie looked at the jacket that the prince had made. He had managed to make the body part of the jacket OK with some green material but had obviously ran out of the same material as round his arms were wrapped strips of pink. They weren't attached to the main part of the jacket and were starting to unravel as the prince moved forward to the horse.

Bertie got ready to watch the horse move away and the ensuing chase, but as the prince got closer and closer the horse seemed to stay put. In fact the horse actually dropped his head and started to nibble on the grass as if the prince weren't there. Spurred on by this the prince gained a bit of confidence and reached out his hand toward the horse's reins. Still no movement from the horse. The prince then put his foot in the stirrup and waited holding his breath for the horse to bolt. But it didn't, it stayed perfectly still. The prince obviously decided that now was the time to just go for it as he hopped up onto the horse's back.

Bertie hadn't realised it but he had been holding his breath. Now as he breathed out he noticed most of the other princes had been holding their breaths as well. Bertie looked at the prince on top of the horse; he was smiling and waving his arms in the air in delight. In fact he was waving his arms so much the pink material around his arms completely came off and fell to the ground.

After the prince had finally got down from the horse the other two princes before Bertie tried to get on the horse's back. They were both confident that they would be able to do having watched someone, who had looked unlikely of succeeding do it successfully but it seemed the horse was back to its usual trick of backing away each time they got close. Both princes gave up pretty quickly leaving just Bertie to have a go.

The princess had watched each prince attempt to get onto her horse from the side. She wasn't at all surprised that her horse, Pink Rose, had not let any of the first six princes get onto the horse. They had not been wearing an inch of pink in their clothes. Princess Pinkalot knew that Pink Rose was so used to having the princess in her pink dresses ride her that she would not accept anyone that was not wearing pink up onto her back. When it was the seventh prince's turn the princess knew that he would have a good chance if he was able to stop the pink material from falling off his arms. He had managed to do it and was rewarded with being able to get onto the horse's back. He was one of only two princes that had

any pink in their clothes the other was the last up and the one the princess had been looking forward to seeing the most.

The princess felt that Bertie had made the best jacket. She wasn't worried about how well it fitted and if the sewing had been done correctly all she cared about was that Bertie had chosen just pink material to make it. Now as she watched him make his way towards the horse she knew that the worried look on his face was not needed. She knew that Pink Rose would let him up on her back and that she would have her two finalists, and the princess knew who she wanted to choose.

Once Bertie had made up onto the horses back he looked around. He was shocked, shocked that he had been able to get on the horses back and shocked that he had been so worried about it. It had been dead simple. All he had done was make his way to the horse, put his foot in the stirrup and swing his leg over. As he looked down he saw the nine other princes eight of whom were holding various parts of their bodies and wincing at the pain. As Bertie got down from the horse he made his way over to the other prince who had successfully got onto the horses back.

'That was a lot easier than I thought,' he said to the other prince.

'You're telling me,' the other prince answered. 'After watching all those others fall off I thought I was definitely going to be leaving today with something broken. My names Reg by the way,' he said sticking a hand out for Bertie to shake.

'Bertie,' Bertie answered taking Reg's hand.

'To be honest,' Reg said 'I really wasn't expecting to get this far at all. The only reason I came was because of my mum. She told me it was about time I went out looking for a princess to marry and when she heard about the contest she told me I had to go.'

'Oh,' said Bertie slightly surprised. 'Do you not really want to win then?' He asked.

'To tell the truth, not really,' answered Reg, 'I mean the princess is extremely pretty and everything and obviously loves pink but I'd rather spend most of my time gardening.'

Just as Bertie was about to question Reg more on gardening the herald, who had been commiserating the losing princes, made his way over to Bertie and Reg with the princess and the Queen. Bertie stole a quick glance at the princess and noticed that she was smiling at him. He smiled back and felt himself starting to blush under the princess's gaze. She certainly was extremely pretty Bertie thought to himself.

'I have on more task for you both to compete in' the princess said in the sweetest voice Bertie had ever heard. 'If you would like to follow me into the castle you will find out what it is.'

Bertie and Reg followed as the princess, Queen and herald all walked into the castle. As they got inside Bertie looked around. He was astonished; he had never seen so many pink things in all his life. The castle walls were all painted pink and on a majority of them there were pink tapestries attached to them. Bertie looked up and noticed that even the chandelier was pink matching perfectly with the curtain over the windows, the tables and chairs and in fact everything that was in the castle.

Bertie was so taken in by how pink everything was he nearly lost where the others had gone. He quickly glanced to his left and saw them turning into another pink room. Bertie quickly followed. Once he got there he wasn't at all surprised to see that the room had been filled with pink furniture as well and was surrounded with more pink walls and tapestries.

Everyone had stopped and was looking on top of one of the tables where two sets of curtains lay. One set was of course pink and the other was a deep meadow green. The green curtain stood out an absolute mile amidst all the pink in the room.

'Now,' the princess said, 'all I want you to do is tell me which set of curtains you would like to see in this room. If you choose the same set that I would then you are the perfect match. If not I am afraid you will have to go home' she finished.

First of all she looked at Reg. 'You first prince, which set of curtains would you put up in this room?'

'That's easy,' Reg answered quickly. 'The green set, they remind me of being outside in the garden, plus' he said looking around at the room, 'it needs a bit of colour in here with all this pink.'

The princess's face didn't change, giving nothing away. Bertie though didn't need any clues as to which colour he should choose. After what Reg had said about the princess liking pink and seeing how the castle had been decorated he knew which set of curtains he should choose.

'The pink ones,' Bertie suggested.

'Why do you choose the pink ones,' the princess asked with a small smile on her face.

'The pink ones,' Bertie answered slowly, 'because I think pink suits you the best,' he said looking into the princess's eyes.

There was no mistaking it this time the princess's eyes lit up and Bertie gazed into them.

‘Well,’ the herald said interrupting their gazes. ‘I think we have a winner. He walked over to Bertie and shook his hand. Congratulations young prince. May we have your name?’ he asked.

‘Bertie, my name is Prince Bertie of Pinkaton.’ Bertie replied looking at the herald.

‘Oh my,’ the princess exclaimed knowing that she had made the right choice. ‘What a wonderful name you have Prince Bertie.’

Shortly afterwards the prince and princess were married in a grand, pink ceremony. The King, who had spent most of the trials talking to an interior designer about the colour blue, had given the princess away and even the Queen was pleased to see how happy her daughter was as she watched her smiling with the prince as some pink doves went flying overhead.

The King decided that he would travel with the prince and princess to Pinkaton to introduce himself to the prince’s family and spent a week enjoying the company of his daughter before he left her in her new castle with her new husband.

The princess was in her element choosing furniture for her new castle and the prince was just pleased that he had someone to share it with not minding what colour everything was turned into.

When it was time for the King to leave he left knowing that now he could finally decorate his castle in the way he wanted it to look. He would be able to eat whatever colour food he wanted to eat, and most of all he wouldn’t have to spend most his time deep down in the dank dark dungeon.

When he got back to the castle his wife was waiting outside for him. ‘Reginald,’ she said planting a big kiss on his cheek, ‘come inside I’ve got a big treat for you. Whilst you were away I’ve done some decorating for you. I know how much you hated all the pink so I’ve got rid of it all and changed it completely.’

The King smiled back at his wife, ‘wonderful,’ he said jovially and bounded into the castle. As soon he reached the front door and looked inside though he stopped dead.

The Queen stood next him. ‘It’s wonderful, isn’t it,’ she said. ‘I was talking to the interior designer that you got in and she said how much you liked blue, but I thought you would like this even better, I mean who doesn’t like yellow?’