```
id not escape the Duke's notice that someone extraordinary was polishing the pewter. The Duchess either, who was not very beautiful and not very rich, but plenty smart. The Duchess set about studying Annette and shortly found her
dversary's tragic flaw. Chocolate. Armed now, the Duchess set to work. The Palace de Guiche turned into a candy castle. Everywhere you looked, bonbons. There were piles of chocolate-covered mints in the drawing rooms, baskets of chocolate-covered nougats in the parlors. Ann
ette never had a chance. Inside a season, she went from delicate to whopping, and the Duke never glanced in her direction without sad bewilderment clouding his eyes. (Annette, it might be noted, seemed only cheerier throughout her enlargement. She eventually married the pastr
chef and they both ate a lot until old age claimed them. Things, it might also be noted, did not fare so cheerily for the Duchess. The Duke, for reasons passing understanding, next became smitten with his very own mother-in-law, which caused the Duchess ulcers, only they didn't
ave ulcers yet. More precisely, ulcers existed, people had them, but they weren't called "ulcers." The medical profession at that time called them "stomach pains" and felt the best cure was coffee dolloped with brandy twice a day until the pains subsided. The Duchess took her mix
ure faithfully, watching through the years as her husband and her mother blew kisses at each other behind her back. Not surprisingly, the Duchess's grumpiness became legendary, as Voltaire has so ably chronicled. Except this was before Voltaire.) The year Buttercup turned ten,
he most beautiful woman lived in Bengal, the daughter of a successful tea merchant. This girl's name was Aluthra, and her skin was of a dusky perfection unseen in India for eighty years. (There have only been eleven perfect complexions in all of India since accurate accounting be
gan.) Aluthra was nineteen the year the pox plague hit Bengal. The girl survived, even if her skin did not. When Buttercup was fifteen, Adela Terrell, of Sussex on the Thames, was easily the most beautiful creature. Adela was twenty, and so far did she outdistance the world that it s
emed certain she would be the most beautiful for many, many years. But then one day, one of her suitors (she ha
                                                                                                                                            d 104 of them) exclaimed that without question Adela must be the most ideal item yet spawned. Adela, flattered, began to ponder on the truth of the
 statement. That night, alone in her room, she examined herself pore by pore in her mirror. (This was after
                                                                                                                                                mirrors.) It took her until close to dawn to finish her inspection, but by that time it was clear to her that the young man had been quite correct
                                                                                                                                                   watching the sun rise, she felt happier than she had ever been. "Not only am I perfect," she said to herself, "I am probably the first perfect d sought after and sensitive and young and . . ." Young? The mist was rising around her as Adela began to think.
n his assessment: she was, through no real faults of her own, perfect. As she strolled through the family
                                                                                                                           rose gardens
erson in the whole long history of the universe. Not a part of me could stand improving, how lucky I a
                                                                                                                 m to be perfect and rich an
                                                                                                                                                                                      be young. And when I'm not young, how am I going to stay perfect? And if I'm not perfect, well, what else
Well of course I'll always be sensitive, she thought, and I'll always be rich, but I don't quite see how
                                                                                                                I'm going to manage to always
                                                                                                                                                                                          la gasped when she realized what she had done, horrified that she had somehow damaged it, perhaps
                                                                                                            ife her brow had ever had to furrow.
s there? What indeed? Adela furrowed her brow in desperate thought. It was the first time in her I
                                                                                                                                                               and Ade
permanently. She rushed back to her mirror and spent the morning, and although she managed
                                                                                                           to convince herself that she was still quite as perfect as ever, there w
                                                                                                                                                                                             as no question that she was not quite as happy as she had been. She had begun to fret. The first wo
rry lines appeared within a fortnight; the first wrinkles within a month, and before the year wa
                                                                                                       s out, creases abounded. She married soon thereafter, the selfsame man wh
                                                                                                                                                                                               o accused her of sublimity, and gave him merry hell for many years. Buttercup, of course, at fiftee
                                                                                                                                                                                                  fference could it have made if you were only the third most beautiful. Or the sixth. (Buttercup a
n, knew none of this. And if she had, would have found it totally unfathomable. How could
                                                                                                      someone care if she were the most beautiful woman in the world or not. What di
this time was nowhere near that high, being barely in the top twenty, and that primarily
                                                                                                   on potential, certainly not on any particular care she took of herself. She hated to was
                                                                                                                                                                                                    h her face, she loathed the area behind her ears, she was sick of combing her hair and did so
as little as possible.) What she liked to do, preferred above all else really, was to ride h
                                                                                                er horse and taunt the farm boy. The horse's name was "Horse" (Buttercup was never lon
                                                                                                                                                                                                      g on imagination) and it came when she called it, went where she steered it, did what she
old it. The farm boy did what she told him too. Actually, he was more a young man no
                                                                                               w, but he had been a farm boy when, orphaned, he had come to work for her father, and Butter
                                                                                                                                                                                                         cup referred to him that way still. "Farm Boy, fetch me this"; "Get me that, Farm Boy-
uickly, lazy thing, trot now or I'll tell Father." "As you ẃish." That was all he ever an
                                                                                             swered. "As you wish." Fetch that, Farm Boy. "As you wish." Dry this, Farm Boy. "As you wish." H
                                                                                                                                                                                                           e lived in a hovel out near the animals and, according to Buttercup's mother, he kept
clean. He even read when he had candles. "I'll leave the lad an acre in my will,"
                                                                                           uttercup's fathér was fond of saying. (They had acreś then.) "You'll spoil him," Buttercup's mother alw
                                                                                                                                                                                                             ays answered. "He's slaved for many years; hard work should be rewarded." Then,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                her father continued. "You reek like a stallion." "I've been riding all day," Buttercu
ather than continue the argument (they had arguments then too), they would bot
                                                                                         h turn on their daughter. "You didn't bathe," her father said. "I did, I did" from Buttercup. "Not with water,
p explained. "You must bathe, Buttercup," her mother joined in. "The boys don
                                                                                         't like their girls to smell of stables." "Oh, the boys!" Buttercup fairly exploded. "I do not care about 'the boys
                                                                                                                                                                                                                   Horse loves me and that is quite sufficient, thank you." She said that speech lo
ud, and she said it often. But, like it or not, things were beginning to happen. S
                                                                                       hortly before her sixteenth birthday, Buttercup realized that it had now been more than a month since any girl in
                                                                                                                                                                                                                   the village had spoken to her. She had never much been close to girls, so the
                                                                                     ed when she rode through the village or along the cart tracks. But now, for no reason, there was nothing. A quick g
hange was nothing sharp, but at least before there were head nods exchang
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    lance away as she approached, that was all. Buttercup cornered Cornelia one
morning at the blacksmith's and asked about the silence. "I should think a
                                                                                    fter what you've done, you'd have the courtesy not to pretend to ask" came from Cornelia. "And what have I done?
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    What? What? . . . You've stolen them." With that, Cornelia fled, but Buttercup
understood; she knew who "them" was. The boys. The village boys. The
                                                                                   beef-witted featherbrained rattleskulled clodpated dim-domed noodle-noggined sapheaded lunk-knobbed boys. How co
                                                                                                                                                                                                                      uld anybody accuse her of stealing them? Why would anybody want them a
nyway? What good were they? All they did was pester and vex and a
                                                                                nnoy. "Can I brush your horse, Buttercup?" "Thank you, but the farm boy does that." "Can I go riding with you, Buttercup?
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         Thank you, but I really do enjoy myself alone." "You think you're too goo
d for anybody, don't you, Buttercup?"
                                                                              ng by myself, that's all." But throughout her sixteenth year, even this kind of talk gave way to stammering and flushing and, at t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        he very best, questions about the weather. "Do you think it's going to rain
                                       "No; no I don't. I just like ridi
Buttercup?" "I don't think so; the sky is blue." "Well, it might rai
                                                                              "Yes, I suppose it might." "You think you're too good for anybody, don't you, Buttercup?" "No, I just don't think it's going to rai
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         n, that's all." At night, more often than not, they would congregate in the
                                                                          Usually the laughter would give way to insult. She paid them no mind. If they grew too damaging, the farm boy handled things, emerge
dark beyond her window and laugh about her. She ignored them
                                                                                                                                                                                                                          ing silently from his hovel, thrashing a few of them, sending them flying
She never failed to thank him when he did this. "As you wish'
                                                                        was all hé ever answered. When she was almost seventeen, a man in a carriagé came to town and watched as she rode for provisions. H
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           e was still there on her return, peering out. She paid him no mind and,
                                                                        point. Other men had gone out of their way to catch sight of her; other men had even ridden twenty miles for the privilege, as this man h
ndeed, by himself he was not important. But he marked a turning
                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ad. The importance here is that this was the first rich man who had bo
                                                                        e is lost to antiquity, who mentioned Buttercup to the Count. THE LAND OF Florin was set between where Sweden and Germany would ev
thered to do so, the first noble. And it was this man, whose nam
                                                                                                                                                                                                                              entually settle. (This was before Europe.) In theory, it was ruled by K
ng Lotharon and his second wife, the Queen. But in fact, the Kin
                                                                        g was barely hanging on, could only rarely tell day from night, and basically spent his time in muttering. He was very old, every organ in his
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                body had long since betrayed him, and most of his important decis
                                                                        many of the leading citizens. Prince Humperdinck actually ran things. If there had been a Europe, he would have been the most powerful m
ions regarding Florin had a certain arbitrary quality that bothered
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                an in it. Even as it was, nobody within a thousand miles wanted to
mess with him. The Count was Prince Humperdinck's only confid
                                                                        ant. His last name was Rugen, but no one needed to use it—he was the only Count in the country, the title having been bestowed by the Princ
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 e as a birthday present some years before, the happening taking
                                                                       was considerably younger than her husband. All of her clothes came from Paris (this was after Paris) and she had superb taste. (This was after
place, naturally, at one of the Countess's parties. The Countess
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  taste too, but only just. And since it was such a new thing, and
                                                                        s it any wonder she was the leading hostess of the land?) Eventually, her passion of for fabric and face paint caused her to settle permanently in
since the Countess was the only lady in all Florin to possess it,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   Paris, where she ran the only salon of international consequen
e. For now, she busied herself with simply sleeping on silk, eati
                                                                       ng on gold and being the single most feared and admir ed woman in Florine
                                                                                                                                                                 se history. If she had figure faults, her clothes concealed t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   hem; if her face was less than divine, it was hard to tell once sh
e got done applying substances. (This was before glamour, but
                                                                        f it hadn't been for ladies like the Countess, there w
                                                                                                                                     ould never h
                                                                                                                                                                   ave been a need for its invention.) In sum, the Rugens w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   ere Couple of the Week in Florin, and had been for many years
  . ... This is me. All abridging remarks and other comments w
                                                                         ill be in this fancy italic type so you'll know.
                                                                                                                                                                      When I said at the start that I'd never read this book, th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    at's true. My father read it to me, and I just quick skimmed alor
g, crossing out whole sections when I did the abridging, le
                                                                        aving everything just as it was in the origin
                                                                                                                                                                       al Morgenstern. This chapter is totally intact. My intru
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    sion here is because of the way Morgenstern uses parenthese
                                                                                                                                                                          before Europe but after Paris?' And 'How is it possi
s. The copy editor at Harcourt kept filling the margins of
                                                                    the galley proofs with questions: 'How can it be
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     ble this happens before glamour when glamour is an ancien
concept? See "glamer" in the Oxford English Dictional
                                                                         d eventually: 'I am going crazy. What am I
                                                                                                                                                                            to make of these parentheses? When does this bo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       ok take place? I don't understand anything. HellIlppppp!!!
Denise, the copy editor, has done all my books since
                                                                                                                                                                             been as emotional in the margins with me before.
                                                                         oys and Girls Together and she had never
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           couldn't help her. Either Morgenstern meant them serio
usly or he didn't. Or maybe he meant some of them
                                                                         riously and some others he didn't. But he n
                                                                                                                                                                             ever said which were the seriously ones. Or maybe it
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            was just the author's way of telling the reader stylistica
lly that 'this isn't real; it never happened.' That's w
                                                                        I think, in spite of the fact that if you read b
                                                                                                                                                                              ack into Florinese history, it did happen. The facts, any
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             way; no one can say about the actual motivations. A
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               out the window. "Why?" This from the mother. She
I can suggest to you is, if the parentheses bug yo
                                                                                                                                                                                  Buttercup's father stood in his farmhouse, s taring
                                                                       ion't read them. ... "QUICK—QUICK—COME
gave away nothing when it came to obedience. Th
                                                                     father made a quick finger point. "Look—"
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                not have exactly what you might call a happy marr
                                                                                                                                                                                   u look; you know how." Buttercup's parent
age. All they ever dreamed of was leaving each o
                                                                                                                                                                                            the window. "Ahhhh," he said after
                                                                 er. Buttercup's father shrugged and went back to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 hile. And a little later, again, "Ahhhh." Buttercup's
mother glanced up briefly from her cooking. "S
                                                               h riches," Buttercup's father said. "Glorious." Butte
                                                                                                                                                                                            rcup's mother hesitated, then put h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  tew spoon down. (This was after stew, but so is
everything. When the first man first clambered f
                                                            m the slime and made his first home on land, what h
                                                                                                                                                                                            e had for supper that first night was
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     'The heart swells at the magnificence," Butter
                                                                                                                                                                                             ed to know. "You look; you know how"
cup's father muttered very loudly. "What exactly
                                                            s it, dumpling?" Buttercup's mother want
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    all he replied. (This was their thirty-third spat of
                                                           behind, thirteen to twenty, but he had ma
f the day—this was long after spats—and he was
                                                                                                                                                                                             istance since lunch, when it was sevente en to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    two against him.) "Donkey," the mother said, a
                                                         was going "Ahhhh" right along with him. They stood there,
nd came over to the window. A moment later she
                                                                                                                                                                        the two of
                                                                                                                                                                                             them, tiny and awed. From setting the dinner ta
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    ble, Buttercup watched them. "They must be g
oing to meet Prince Humperdinck someplace," Bu
                                                         ttercup's mother said. The father nodded.
                                                                                                                  unting.
                                                                                                                                                                  hat's what
                                                                                                                                                                                             the Prince does." "How lucky we are to have se
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     en them pass by," Buttercup's mother said, ar
                                                                                                                n't." Her tone w
                                                                                                                                                                                             ngly tender, and probably she sensed how imp
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      ortant he really was to her, because when he
d she took her husband's hand. The old man nodd
                                                        ed. "Now I can die." She glanced at him. "Do
                                                                                                                                                             as surprisi
                                                                                                              agreed it was the sud
did die, two years further on, she went right after,
                                                         and most of the people who knew her well
                                                                                                                                                         den lack of oppo
                                                                                                                                                                                             sition that undid her. Buttercup came close and st
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       ood behind them, staring over them, and so
                                                                                                                       servants and c
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        at the front of the farm. The three stood in
on she was gasping too, because the Count and C
                                                        ountess and all their pages and soldiers and
                                                                                                                                                         ourtiers and champ
                                                                                                                                                                                             ions and carriages were passing by the cart t rack
                                                        up's father was a tiny mutt of a man who had
silence as the procession moved forward. Butterc
                                                                                                                                                        ream ed of liv
                                                                                                                                                                                             ing like the Count. He had once been two m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        from where the Count and Prince had been
                                                                                                                                  ays d
hunting, and until this moment that had been the
                                                        high point of his life. He wa
                                                                                      s a terrible far
                                                                                                                                 mer, an
                                                                                                                                                                                             d not much of a husband either. There wa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         really much in this world he excelled at, a
nd he could never quite figure out how he happen
                                                         ed to sire his daughter, but
                                                                                        he knew, deep
                                                                                                                            down, that it
                                                                                                                                                                                            must have been some kind of wonderful mis
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        e, the nature of which he had no intention
                                                         shrimp of a woman, thorny
of investigating. Buttercup's mother was a gnarled
                                                                                         and worrving
                                                                                                                         who had always
                                                                                                                                                                                            dreamed of somehow just once being popular
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       e the Countess was said to be. She was a
rrible cook, an even more limited housekeeper. Ho
                                                         w Buttercup slid from her wo
                                                                                         mb was, of co
                                                                                                                                                                                           her. But she had been there when it happened;
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       t was enough for her. Buttercup herself, sta
                                                                                                                          urse, be
                                                                                                                                    vond
nding half a head over her parents, still holding the
                                                          dinner dishes, still smelling
                                                                                           of Horse, onl
                                                                                                                                                                                           ished that the great procession wasn't quite so far a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      way, so she could see if the Countess's clot
                                                                                                                                                                                          tering the farm. "Here?" Buttercup's father managed.
hes really were all that lovely. As if in answer to he
                                                         r request, the procession turn
                                                                                           ed and began
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        My God, why?" Buttercup's mother whirle
                                                                                           g is after taxes
                                                                                                                                                                                         axes were here even before stew.) "Even if I did, the ey
d on him. "Did you forget to pay your taxes?" (Thi
                                                        s was after taxes. But everythin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        wouldn't need all that to collect them." and
he gestured toward the front of his farm, where
                                                       now the Count and Countess an
                                                                                             d all their page
                                                                                                                                                                                        d soldiers and servants and courtiers and champion s
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       and carriages were coming closer and clos
                                                                                                                                     s an
   "What could they want to ask me about?" he
                                                       said. "Go see, go see," Buttercu
                                                                                             p's mother told
                                                                                                                                                                                        'You go. Please." "No. You. Please." "We'll both go.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       hey both went. Trembling . . . "Cows," the C
                                                      ge. "I would like to talk about your
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        ttercup's father said. "Yes. You see, I'm th
ount said, when they reached his golden carria
                                                                                              cows." He spok
                                                                                                                                                                                       side, his dark face darkened by shadow. "My cows?"
nking of starting a little dairy of my own, and s
                                                            your cows are known throug
                                                                                               hout the land a
                                                                                                                                                                                       in's finest, I thought I might pry your secrets from you
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          "My cows," Buttercup's father managed
                                                                                                                                s bein
                                                             the truth was, and he knew it
                                                                                                 well, he ha
                                                                                                                              d ter
                                                                                                                                                          rible
                                                                                                                                                                                      ows. For years, nothing but complaints from the peop
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       le in the village. If anyone else had had milk
o repeat, hoping he was not going mad. Beca
to sell, he would have been out of business in
                                                           inute. Now granted, things had
                                                                                                  improved
                                                                                                                             since
                                                                                                                                                           the far
                                                                                                                                                                                     m boy had come to slave for him-no questio
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           farm boy had certain skills, and the com
plaints were quite nonexistent now—but that
                                                           n't make his the finest cows in
                                                                                                  Florin, Still
                                                                                                                                                          idn 't ar
                                                                                                                                                                                     gue with the Count. Buttercup's father turned t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             wife. "What would you say my secret
                                                                                                                           , you d
                                                               she said—she was no dum
s, my dear?" he asked. "Oh, there are so many
                                                                                                  my, not wh
                                                                                                                                                                                     e quality of their livestock. "You two are childless, ar
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           ou?" the Count asked then. "No, sir," the
                                                                                                                               t ca
e mother answered. "Then let me see her," the C
                                                                                                   e will be q
                                                                                                                                                                                     her answers than her parents." "Buttercup," the fat her call
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          ed, turning. "Come out, please." "How d
                                                                ount went on—"perhaps sh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         d talking then. Because Buttercup moved
                                                                                                                                                                                   or the other. Some days I'm luckier than—" He simply stoppe
d you know we had a daughter?" Buttercup's moth
                                                            er wondered. "A guess. I assum
                                                                                                    ed it had t
into view, hurrying from the house to her parents.
                                                         The Count left the carriage. Gracefu
                                                                                                     lly, he mo
                                                                                                                                                                                    to the ground and stood very still. He was a big man, with b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        lack hair and black eyes and great shoulde
rs and a black cape and gloves. "Curtsy, dear," Bu
                                                                   ttercup's mother whispere
                                                                                                        . Butterc
                                                                                                                             up did her be
                                                                                                                                                     st. And the C
                                                                                                                                                                                  unt could not stop looking at her. Understand now, she was
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        barely rated in the top twenty; her hair was
                                                                                                                          he remains of baby fat. Nothing had bee
uncombed, unclean; her age was just seventeen, so
                                                                    there was still, in occasion
                                                                                                       al places, t
                                                                                                                                                                                 n done to the child. Nothing was really there but potential. B
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     ut the Count still could not rip his eyes away
The Count would like to know the secrets behind our cow
                                                                  s' greatness, is that not corr
                                                                                                        ect, sir?" B
                                                                                                                         uttercup's father said. The Count only nodd
                                                                                                                                                                                ed, staring. Even Buttercup's mother noted a certain tensio
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   n in the air. "Ask the farm boy; he tends them,
Buttercup said. "And is that the farm boy?" came a new voi
                                                                  ce from inside the carriage.
                                                                                                         Then the C
                                                                                                                                        ss's face was frame
                                                                                                                                                                              n the carriage doorway. Her lips were painted a perfect red
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   her green eyes lined in black. All the colors of
he world were muted in her gown. Buttercup wanted to sh
                                                                  ield her eyes from the brillian
                                                                                                         ce. Buttercu
                                                                                                                                         p's father gla
                                                                                                                                                                             nced back toward the lone figure peering around the corne
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 r of the house. "It is." "Bring him to me.'
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               ointed at the farm boy. "Come here." Her fingers sn
t dressed properly for such an occasion," Buttercup's m
                                                                 other said. "I have seen bare ch
                                                                                                          ests before,
                                                                                                                                                                              the Coun
                                                                                                                                                                                         tess replied. Then she called out: "You!" and p
                                                                                                                                         iage. When he
                                                                when he was close, the Countess
apped on "here." The farm boy did as he was told. And
                                                                                                            left the carr
                                                                                                                                                                          was a few
                                                                                                                                                                                              paces behind Buttercup, he stopped, hea
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              d properly bowed. He was ashamed of his attire, wor
n boots and torn blue jeans (blue jeans were invented co
                                                                     nsiderably before most peo
                                                                                                                                        and his hands
                                                                                                                                                                                             t together in almost a gesture of supplic
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              ation. "Have you a name, farm boy?" "Westley, Coun
                                                                                                            ple suppose)
                                                                                                                                                                         were tigh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              passionately interested in the subject of cows. We a
                                                                    oblem." She crossed to him. T
                                                                                                                                                                                             grazed his skin, "We are all of us here
tess." "Well, Westley, perhaps you can help us with our pi
                                                                                                             he fabric of h
                                                                                                                                                                       er gown
                                                                                                             Westley, that t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           st in all Florin? What do you do to them?"
e practically reaching the point of frenzy, such is our curiosit
                                                                         Wh y, do you suppose,
                                                                                                                                                                      he cows
                                                                                                                                                                                               of this particular farm are the fine
                                                                                                                                                                                                  s in Westley's feeding. Show m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        e how you do it, would you, Westley?" "Feed the cows for
em, Countess." "Well then, there it is, the mystery is solved, t
                                                                               secret; we can all re
                                                                                                              st. Clearly, the
                                                                                                                                                                    magic i
                                                                                                               r arm to him. "Le
you, Countess?" "Bright lad." "When?" "Now will be soon enou
                                                                             h," and she held out he
                                                                                                                                                                                                 Westley." Westley had no choic
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       e but to take her arm. Gently. "It's behind the house, mada
                                                                                                                                                                   ad me,
                                                                                                                                                                                               action." So off they went to the c
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       owshed. Throughout all this, the Count kept watching Butt
m; it's terrible muddy back there. Your gown will be ruined." "I wear
                                                                             them only once, Westley
                                                                                                                , and I burn to see
                                                                                                                                                                 you in
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      cup's parents said, and off they went too, bringing up the re
ercup. "I'll help you," Buttercup called after Westley. "Perhaps I'd b
                                                                           est see just how he does i
                                                                                                                 t," t he Count decid
                                                                                                                                                               ed. "Stra
                                                                                                                                                                                              nge things are happening," Butter
                                                                          their daughter,
ar of the cow-feeding trip, watching the Count, who was watching
                                                                                                                                                                                             Who was watching Westley. "I C
                                                                                                                                                            the Countess
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      OULDN'T SEE what he did that was so special," Buttercup's
ather said. "He just fed them." This was after dinner now, and the
                                                                                                                                  as alone again.
                                                                          family w
                                                                                                                                                        "They must like him
                                                                                                                                                                                                    personally. I had a cat onc
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      e that only bloomed when I fed him. Maybe it's the same kin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       or; take him his dinner." Buttercup carried the bowl, opene
d of thing." Buttercup's mother scraped the stew leavings into a
                                                                                                                                       Here," she said to her daughter. "Wes
                                                                         bowl.
                                                                                                                                                                                                    tley's waiting by the back do
d the back door. "Take it," she said. He nodded, accepted, sta
                                                                       rted of
                                                                                                                                           o his tree stump to eat. "I didn't exc
                                                                                                                                                                                                                  use you, Farm
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       Boy," Buttercup began. He stopped, turned back to her. "
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        night. I want his hoofs varnished. Tonight. I want his tail p
don't like what you're doing with Horse. What you're not doi
                                                                                                                                               rse is more to the point. I want h
                                                                     na with
                                                                                                                                                   Now. I want him glistening, and
laited and his ears massaged. This very evening. I want hi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                       if it takes yo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         u all night, it takes you all night." "As you wish." She sla
                                                                  s stable
                                                                                                    s spo
                                                                                                                       tless.
                                                                                                                                                       II, actually," her father said. B
                                                                                                                       ooking ve
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          nothing. "You yourself said so yesterday," her mother
mmed the door and let him eat in darkness. "I thought H
                                                                 orse had
                                                                                                   been I
                                                                                                                                          ry we
                                                                                                                                                                                                                       uttercup said
                                                                                                                       ent and all.
                                                                                                                                           Řest, t
                                                                                                                                                         hen," her mother cautioned.
eminded her. "I must be overtired," Buttercup managed
                                                                "The ex
                                                                                               citem
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         'Terrible thi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          ngs can happen when you're overtired. I was overtired t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           closed her eyes. And the Countess was staring at Westl
he night your father proposed." Thirty-four to twenty-t
                                                             wo and pu
                                                                                                                        ng away. Butter
                                                                                                                                                           ent to her room. She lay on
                                                                                                                                                                                                                       her bed. She
                                                                                                                                            cup w
                                                                                                                          a little. She got i
ey. Buttercup got up from bed. She took off her cloth
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           eets, snuggled down, closed her eyes. The Countess w
                                                            es. She wa
                                                                                                                                             nto he
                                                                                                                                                             r nightgown. She slipped b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                       etween the sh
                                                                                                      shed
as still staring at Westley! Buttercup threw back the
                                                                                                                          door. She went to
                                                                                                                                                               nk by the stove and poured
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            of water. She drank it down. She poured another cup a
                                                           sheets, op
                                                                                                    ened he
                                                                                                                                               the si
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        herself a cup
                                                                                                                                               h? Sh
nd rolled its coolness across her forehead. The feve
                                                           rish feelin
                                                                                                  g was still
                                                                                                                          here. How feveris
                                                                                                                                                                  e felt fine. She was sevent
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        een, and not e
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ven a cavity. She dumped the water firmly into the sin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         top staring at
k, turned, marched back to her room, shut the door
                                                           tight, we
                                                                                               nt back to be
                                                                                                                           . She closed her
                                                                                                                                                                    The Countess would not s
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             Westley! Why? Why in the world would the woman in
                                                                                                                                                 eyes
all the history of Florin who was in all ways perfec
                                                         t be inte
                                                                                             rested in the far
                                                                                                                             boy? Buttercup
                                                                                                                                                  rolle
                                                                                                                                                                    d around in bed. And there
                                                                                                                                                                                                                          simply was n
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             o other way of explaining that look—she was interest
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              facts. But what? The farm boy had eyes like the sea
ed. Buttercup shut her eyes tight and studied the
                                                        memor
                                                                                          y of the Countess.
                                                                                                                             learly, somethin
                                                                                                                                                 g abo
                                                                                                                                                                     ut the farm boy interested he
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           r. Facts were
                                                                                                                                                                      And he was broad enough in
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               s, but not all that much broader than the Count. An
before a storm, but who cared about eyes? And
                                                       he had
                                                                                        pale blond hair, if yo
                                                                                                                              iked that sort of
                                                                                                                                                   thing.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                             the shoulder
d certainly he was muscular, but anybody woul
                                                      d be m
                                                                                        cular who slaved all
                                                                                                                              y. And his skin
                                                                                                                                                  was per
                                                                                                                                                                       fect and tan, but that came ag
                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ain from slavi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                ng; in the sun all day, who wouldn't be tan? And h
e wasn't that much taller than the Count either,
                                                                                            his stomach was fl
                                                                                                                                                                        the farm boy was younger. Bu
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 p in bed. It must be his teeth. The farm boy did ha
                                                      altho
                                                                                                                    att
                                                                                                                               er, but that was
                                                                                                                                                  because
                                                                                                                                                                                                                              ttercup sat u
                                                                          ugh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               ng else? Butt
ve good teeth, give credit where credit was du
                                                    e. Whit
                                                                           e and
                                                                                             perfect, particular
                                                                                                                     ly s
                                                                                                                                et against the s un-tanned
                                                                                                                                                                         face. Could it have been anythi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ercup concentrated. The girls in the village follo
wed the farm boy around a lot, whenever he w
                                                                                              iveries, but they
                                                                                                                                  idiots, they followed anyth
                                                                                                                                                                         ing. And he always ignored them
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   e'd ever opened his mouth, they would have rea
                                                    as maki
                                                                           ng del
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                because if h
                                                                                                                     were
lized that was all he had, just good teeth; he
                                                                                               exceptionally st
                                                                                                                                                                          t a woman as beautiful and slend
                                                   was, aft
                                                                             er all,
                                                                                                                     upid. It
                                                                                                                                    was really very strange tha
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                er and willow
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    y and graceful, a creature as perfectly package
                                                                                                                                     Buttercup shrugged. Peo
                                                                                                ung up on teeth
d, as supremely dressed as th
                                   e Countes
                                                   s shoul
                                                                              d be h
                                                                                                                      that way
                                                                                                                                                                          ple were surprisingly complicated.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 But now she
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     had it all diagnosed, deduced, clear. She close
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     e farm boy because of their teeth. "Oh," Butte
d her eyes and snuggled do
                                                                                                  all nice and co
                                                                                                                     mfortable, a
                                                                                                                                                                          at other people the way the Counte
                                                                                                                                                eople don't look
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ss looked at th
                                                                                got
                                                                                                                                       nd p
rcup gásped. "Oh, ŏh dear
                                                                                                      Now the
                                                                                                                       farm boy w
                                                                                                                                                  as staring bac
                                                                                                                                                                        k at the Countess. He was feeding the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 cows and his
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      muscles were rippling the way they always di
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      st time, deep into the Countess's eyes. Butt
d under his tanned skin an
                                                                                                                                                                       anding there watching as the farm boy lo
                                                                                                                                                  tercup was st
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 oked, for the fir
                                                                                                                                                                      ce her room. How could he? Oh, it was all r
ercup jumped out of bed an
                                                                                                                                                  d began to pa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ight if he looked
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       at her, but he wasn't looking at her, he was
ooking at her. "She's so old,"
                                                                                                                                                    The Countes
                                                                                                                                                                      s would never see thirty again and that was f
                                 Buttercup muttered, starting to storm a bit now.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                act. And her dres
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       s looked ridiculous out in the cowshed and
that was fact too. Buttercup fell onto her b
                                                                      d clutched her pillow ac
                                                                                                   ross her brea
                                                                                                                                                   sts. The dres
                                                                                                                                                                        s was ridiculous before it ever got to the co
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               wsh ed. The Counte
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        ss looked rotten the minute she left the car
                                                ed an
riage, with her too big painted mouth and
                                                her I
                                                                                ittle piggy pa
                                                                                                       inted eyes an
                                                                                                                                                                                          d her powdered skin and
                                                                                                                                                                                                                              and ...and...Flai
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ling and thrashing, Buttercup wept and to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ince David of Galilee was first affl
                                                                                e have been
ssed and paced and wept some more, an
                                              d ther
                                                                                                        three great cases of
                                                                                                                                   jealousy s
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         icted with the emotion when he could no
                                                                                actus outsho
                                                                                                     ne his own. (Originally, jealousy pertaine
onger stand the fact that his neighbor S
                                              aul's c
                                                                                                                                                                                                                  d sole
                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ly to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    plants, other p
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         eople's cactus or ginkgoes, or, later, whe
n there was grass, grass, which is why,
                                             even to
                                                                                 this day, we
                                                                                                      say that someone is green with jealousy
                                                                                                                                                                          .) Butterc
                                                                                                                                                                                                                 up's ca
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    ated a close fou
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          rth on the all-time list. It was a very long
                                                                                                     wn. Inside, she could hear him already a
                                                                                                                                                                         wake. She knocked. He appeared, stood in the do
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    orway. Behind h
and very green night. She was outside
                                             his hove
                                                                                  I before da
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           im she could see a tiny candle, open bo
oks. He waited. She looked at him. The
                                            n she loo
                                                                                   ked away
                                                                                                      . He was too beautiful. "I love you," Bu
                                                                                                                                                       ttercup
                                                                                                                                                                          said. "I know this must come as something of a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    surprise, since a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           Il I've ever done is scorn you and degra
de you and taunt you, but I have loved
                                            you for s
                                                                                                        hours now, and every second, more
                                                                                                                                                      . I thou
                                                                                                                                                                         ght an hour ago that I loved you more than any wo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    man has ever lov
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           ed a man, but a half hour after that I kne
                                                                                      everal
                                                                                                                   t I felt then. But ten min
w that what I felt before was nothing c
                                            ompared to
                                                                                                                                                     utes af
                                                                                                                                                                         ter that, I understood that my previous love was a p
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 uddle compared to th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            e high seas before a storm. Your eyes
                                                                                                                                                      I? Tw
                                                                                                                                                                         enty? Had I brought my feelings up to then? It doesn't
are like that, did you know? Well they
                                           are. How ma
                                                                                                                    ny minutes ago was
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     t matter." Butterc
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            up still could not look at him. The sun
                                                                                                                     on her back, a
                                                                                                                                                                          gave her courage. "Hove you so much more now th
was rising behind her now; she could
                                            feel the heat
                                                                                                                                                    nd it
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ago that there cannot be comparison
I love you so much more now than wh
                                                                                                                      d your
                                                                                                                                                hovel d
                                                                                                                                                                           oor, there cannot be comparison. There is no room i
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    n my body for anyt
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             hing but you. My arms love you, my ea
                                            en you opene
rs adore you, my knees shake with bli
                                            nd affection. M
                                                                                                                                            y mind be
                                                                                                                                                                           gs you to ask it something so it can obey. Do you wan it me to follow you
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             for the rest of your days? I will do that
. Do you want me to crawl? I will crawl
                                             . I will be quiet
                                                                                                                                         for you or si
                                                                                                                                                                            ng for you, or if you are hungry, let me bring you food, or if you have thir
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             st and nothing will quench it but Arabi
                                                                                                                                    world, and bring
                                                                                                                                                                             bottle back for your lunch. Anything there is that I can do for you, I will d
an wine, I will go to Araby, even thoug
                                            h it is across the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             o for you; anything there is that I can
not do, Í will learn to do. Í know I canno
                                                                                                                                                                          kills or wisdom or appeal, and I saw the way she looked at you. And I saw t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              he way you looked at her. But remem
                                            t compete with t
                                                                                                                                  he Countess in s
ber, please, that she is old and has oth
                                             er interests, whi
                                                                                                                                  I am seventeen
                                                                                                                                                                          and for me there is only you. Dearest Westley-I've never called you that be
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              fore, have I?-Westley, Westley, Wes
                                               , adored Westle
                                                                                                                                                                        estley, whisper that I have a chance to win your love." And with that, she dar
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              ed the bravest thing she'd ever done:
tley, Westley, Westley,—darling Westley
                                                                                                                                 sweet perfect W
                                                                                                                        ٧,
she looked right into his eyes. He closed
                                                                                                                                                                        rd. Without a word. Buttercup ran. She whirled and burst away and the tears c
                                                 the door in her
                                                                                                                       ac
                                                                                                                               e. Without a wo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ame bitterly; she could not see, she st
                                                                                                                              lder throbbed f
                                                                                                                                                                       rom where the tree trunk hit her, and the pain was strong, but not enough to ea
umbled, she slammed into a tree trunk, fe
                                                 II, rose, ran on;
                                                                                                      her s
                                                                                                                      hou
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             se her shattered heart. Back to her ro
om she fled, back to her pillow. Safe behin
                                                                                                                                                                     h tears. Not even one word. He hadn't had the decency for that. "Sorry," he coul
                                                 d the locked do
                                                                                                 or. she
                                                                                                                     dren
                                                                                                                           ched the world
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             d have said. Would it have ruined him
to say "sorry"? "Too late," he could have s
                                                  aid. Why could
                                                                                           n't he at le
                                                                                                                   t hav e said someth
                                                                                                                                                                    ttercup thought very hard about that for a moment. And suddenly she had the an
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             swer: he didn't talk because the minut
e he opened his mouth, that was it. Sure he
                                                                                                                                                sed his ton
                                                                                                                                                                  gue, it would have all been over. "Duhhhhhhh." That's what he would have said. Th
                                                   was handsome.
                                                                                   but dumb? The
                                                                                                          mi
                                                                                                                 nute he had exerci
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             at was the kind of thing Westley came
out with when he was feeling really sharp. "D
                                                                                                                                       d began to smile.
                                                                                                      tterc up dried her tears an
                                                                                                                                                                She took a deep breath, heaved a sigh. It was all part of growing up. You got these li
                                                     uhhhhhhh, tank
                                                                             s, Buttercup." Bu
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ttle quick passions, you blinked, and
                                                                              then the nex
                                                                                                  t day the sun came up and it was over. Chalk it up t
                                                                                                                                                              o experience, old girl, and get on with the morning. Buttercup stood, made her bed, ch
hey were gone. You forgave faults, found perfe
                                                       ction, fell madly
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             anged her clothes, combed her hair, s
                                                                            limit to ju
miled, and burst out again in a fit of weeping. Be
                                                                                              st how m uch you could lie to yourself. Westley wasn't
                                                                                                                                                              stupid. Oh, she could pretend he was. She could laugh about his difficulties with the la
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             nguage. She could chide herself for he
                                                         cause there was a
r silly infatuation with a dullard. The truth was sim
                                                          ply this: he had a head o
                                                                                       n his shoulders. With a brain inside évery bit as good as hi
                                                                                                                                                           s teeth. There was a reason he hadn't spoken and it had nothing to do with gray cells wo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             rking. He hadn't spoken because, reall
y, there was nothing for him to say. He didn't love he
                                                             r back and that was that. The tears that kept Buttercup company the remainder of t
                                                                                                                                                         he day were not at all like those that had blinded her into the tree trunk. Those were noisy
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             and hot; they pulsed. These were silen
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ough. All she knew really was riding, a ttercup yawned finally. "Westley." Butt
t and steady and all they did was remind her that she
                                                                                                                                                       had crumbled at her feet and it meant nothing. The one time it mattered, she wasn't good en
                                                                  wasn't good enough. She was seventeen, and every male she'd ever known
                                                                                                                                                     tside her door. Then a knock. Buttercup dried her eyes. Another knock. "Whoever is that?" Bu
nd how was that to interest a man when that man had be
                                                                    en looked at by the Countess? It was dusk when she heard footsteps ou
                                                                                                                                                or, unlocked it, and said, in her fanciest tone, "I'm ever so glad you stopped by, I've been feeling t when you started closing the door I thought for one dreary instant that perhaps I'd done my little
ercup lounged across the bed. "Westley?" she said. "Do I kn
                                                                     ow any West-oh, Farm Boy, it's you, how droll!" She went to her do
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             just ever so slummy about the little jo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             jest a bit too convincingly and, poor d
ke I played on you this morning. Of course you knew I wasn't f
                                                                      or a moment serious, or at least I thought you knew, but then, jus
ear thing, you might have thought I meant what I said when of c
                                                                        ourse we both know the total impossibility of that ever happen
                                                                                                                                              ing." "I'vé come to say good-by." Buttercup's heart bucked, but she still held to fancy. "You'ré goin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           g to sleep, you mean, and you've come
to say good night? How thoughtful of you, Farm Boy, showing m
                                                                                                                                            nly appreciate your thoughtfulness and—" He cut her off. "I'm leaving." "Leaving?" The floor began t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           o ripple. She held to the doorframe. "No
                                                                         e that you forgive me for my little morning's tease; I certai
                                                                          ened you away, didn't I? I could kill my tongue." She sh
                                                                                                                                        ook her head and shook her head. "Well, it's done; you've made your decision. Just remember this: I wo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          n't take you back when she's done with y
     Yes." "Because of what I said this morning?"
ou, I don't care if you beg." He just looked at her. Buttercup hurried
                                                                           on. "Just because you're beautiful and perfect, it's ma de you conceited. You think people can't get tired of you, well you're wrong, they can, and she will, beside
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          s you're too poor." "I'm going to America
. To seek my fortune." (This was just after America but long after for
                                                                           tunes.) "A ship sails soon from London. There is gr 🛾 eat opportunity in America. I'm going to take advantage of it. I've been training myself. In my hovel. I've taug
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ht myself not to need sleep. A few hours
                                                                          -a-day job and I'll save every penny from both exce pt what I need to eat to keep strong, and when I have enough I'll buy a farm and build a house and make a bed America. Not with what she spends on clothes." "Stop talking about the Countess! As a special favor. Before you drive me maaaaaaaaad." Buttercup looked at him never have been the brightest, I guess." "Do you love me, Westley? Is that it?" He couldn't believe it. "Do I love you? My God, if your love were a grain of sand, min
only. I'll také a ten-hour-a-day job and then I'll take another ten-hour
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          big enough for two." "You're just crazy if
you think she's going to be happy in some run-down farmhouse in
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           "Ďon't you understand anything that's g
oing on?" Buttercup shook her head. Westley shook his too. "You
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         e would be a universe of beaches. If your
ove were—" "I don't understand that first one yet," Buttercup inter
                                                                         rupted. She was starting to get very excited now. "Let me get this straight. Are you saying my love is the size of a grain of sand and yours is this other thing? Image
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         s just confuse me so—is this universal bu
                                                                         e feeling we're on the verge of something just terribly important." "I have stayed these years in my hovel because of you. I have taught myself languages because of
siness of yours bigger than my sand? Help me, Westley. I have th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          you. I have made my body strong becaus
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          careening against my rib cage. I have not r a while?" "Never stop." "There has not
e I thought you might be pleased by a strong body. I have lived m
                                                                         / life with only the prayer that some sudden dawn you might glance in my direction. I have not known a moment in years when the sight of you did not send my heart
                                                                        . There has not been a morning when you did not flutter behind my waking eyelids. . . . Is any of this getting through to you, Buttercup, or do you want me to go on fo " "How can you even dream I might be teasing?" "Well, you haven't once said you loved me." "That's all you need? Easy. I love you. Okay? Want it louder? I love you. ren't you?" "A little maybe; I've been saying it so long to you, you just wouldn't listen. Every time you said 'Farm Boy do this' you thought I was answering 'As you wi
known a night when your visage did not accompany me to sleep
been—" "If you're teasing me, Westley, I'm just going to kill you.
-oh-you. Want it backward? You love I." "You are teasing now; a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           Spell it out, should I? I ell-oh-vee-ee why
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         sh' but that's only because you were hear
on. Believe me." "Would my Westley ever
                                                                         you never heard." "I hear you now, and I promise you this: I will never love anyone else. Only Westley. Until I die." He nodded, took a step away. "I'll send for you so . The ship sails soon and London is far." "I understand." He reached out with his right hand. Buttercup found it very hard to breathe. "Good-by." She managed to ra
ing wrong. 'I love you' was what it was, but you never heard, and
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ise her right hand to his. They shook. "Go
lie?" He took another step. "I'm late. I must go. I hate it but I must
od-by," he said again. She made a little nod. He took a third step, n
                                                                          ot turning. She watched him. He turned. And the words ripped out of her: "Without one kiss?" They fell into each other's arms. ... THERE HAVE BEEN five great kis
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ses since 1642 B.C., when Saul and Delila
h Korn's inadvertent discovery swept across Western civilization. (
                                                                            Before then couples hooked thumbs.) And the precise rating of kisses is a terribly difficult thing, often leading to great controversy, because although everyone a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         grees with the formula of affection times p
urity times intensity times duration, no one has ever been completel
                                                                                 satisfied with how much weight each element should receive. But on any system, there are five that everyone agrees deserve full marks. Well, this one left t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          hem all behind. THE FIRST MORNING afte
r Westley's departure, Buttercup thought she was entitled to do nothin
                                                                                 g more than sit around moping and feeling sorry for herself. After all, the love of her life had fled, life had no meaning, how could you face the future, et cete
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ra, et cetera. But after about two seconds
of that she realized that Westley was out in the world now, getting nearer a
                                                                                  nd nearer to London, and what if a beautiful city girl caught his fancy while she was just back here moldering? Or, worse, what if he got to America and wo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         rked his jobs and built his farm and made
                                                                                   say, "I'm sending you back, the moping has destroyed your eyes, the self-pity has taken your skin; you're a slobby-looking creature, I'm marrying an India Oh, Westley," she said, "I must never disappoint you," and she hurried downstairs to where her parents were squabbling. (Sixteen to thirteen, and not pas
their bed and sent for her and when she got there he would look at her and
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         n girl who lives in a teepee nearby and is
always in the peak of condition." Buttercup ran to her bedroom mirror.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         t breakfast yet.) "I need your advice," she
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THE PRINCESS BRIDE by William Goldman. © The Princess Bride Ltd. All Rights Reserved. THE YEAR that Buttercup was born, the most beautiful woman in the world was a French scullery maid named Annette. Annette worked in Paris for the Duke and Duchess de Guiche, and it of