```
nd, at the very best, questions about the weather. "Do you think it's going to rain, Buttercup?" "No, I just don't think so; the sky is blue." "Well, it might." "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 rain, that's all." At night, more often than not, they would congregate in the dark beyond her winder.
w and laugh about her. She ignored them. Usually the laughter would give way to insult. She paid them no mind. If they grew too damaging, the farm boy handled things, emerging 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 he ever answered. When she was almost seventeen, a
   an in a carriage came to town and watched as she rode for provisions. He was still there on her return, peering out. She paid him no mind and, indeed, by himself he was not important. But he marked a turning 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 had. The importance here
                                   ing 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 decisions regarding Florin had a certain arbitrary quality that bothered many of the leading citizens. Prince Humperdinck actually ran things. If there had been a Europe
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kened by shadow. "My cows?" Buttercup's father said. "Yes. Y
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  . When he was a few paces behind Buttercup, he stopped, head properly bowed. He was ashamed of his attire, worn boots and torn blue jeans (blue jeans were invented considerably before most people suppo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        ' "When?" "Now will be soon enough," and she held out her arm to him. "Lead me, Westley." Westley had no choice b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 「hroughout all this, the Count kept watching Buttercup. "I'll help you," Buttercup called after Westley. "Perhaps I'd best see just how he doe
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              o was watching the Countess. Who was watching Westley. "I COULDN'T SEE what he did that was so special," Buttercup's father said. "He just fed the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               dumped the water firmly into the sink, turned, marched back to her room, shut the door tight, went back to bed,
nger. Buttercup sat up in bed. It must be his teeth. The farm boy did have good teeth, give credit where credit was due. White and perfect, particularly set against the sun-tanned face. Could it have been
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          or your lunch.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         g there is that I can do for you. I will do for you; anything there is that I cannot do. I will learn to do. I kno
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                                -Westley, Westley, Westley, Westley,—darling Westley, adored Westley, sweet
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      cv for that, "Sorry." he could have said. Would it have ruined him to sav "sorry"? "Too late."
said. Why couldn't he at least have said something? Buttercup thought very hard about that for a moment
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    answer: he didn't talk be
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    he sun came up
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  could lie to yourself.
    ged her clothes, combed her hair, smiled, and burst out again in a fit of weeping
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 Dh, she could pretend he was. She could laugh about his difficulties with the language. She could chide herseli
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    stlev wasn't stu
or her silly infatuation with a dullard. The truth was simply this: he had a head on his shoulders. With a brai
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  de every bit a s g
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g for him to say. He didn't love her back and that was that. The tears that kept Buttercup company the rema
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      se that had bl
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                        that she wasn't good enough. She was seven
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      it mattered, she wasn't good enough. All she knew really was riding, and how was that to interes
a man when that man had been looked at by the Countess? It was dusk when she heard footsteps outside h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     Another knock. "Whoever is that?" Buttercup yawned finally. "Westley." Buttercup lounged across
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ried her
the bed. "Westley?" she said. "Do I know any West—oh, Farm Boy, it's you, how droll!" She went to her doo
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                t, and
ayed on you this morning. Of course you knew I wasn't for a moment serious, or at least I thought you knew
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          up's heart bucked, but she still held to fancy. "You're going to sleep, you mean, and you've come to sa "Leaving?" The floor began to ripple. She held to the doorframe. "Now?" "Yes." "Because of what I said t
poor dear thing, you might have thought I meant what I said when of course we both know the total impossi
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y good night? How thoughtful of you, Farm Boy, showing me that you forgive me for my little morning's teas
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            "ĺ'm leaving.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         II, it's done; you've made your decis
his morning?" "Yes." "I frightened you away, didn't I? I could kill my tongue." She shook her head and shook
                                                                                                                                                                                            her head. "We
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              his: I won't take you
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 one with you, I don't care if you beg." He just looked at her. Buttercup hurried on. "Just because you're beauti
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       back when she's d
ul and perfect, it's made you conceited. You think people can't get tired of you, well you're wrong, they can, and she will, besides you're too poort." "I'm going to America. I'm going to take advantage of it. I've been training myself
. In my hovel. I've taught myself not to need sleep. A few hours only. I'll take a ten-hour-a-day job and then I'll take another ten-hour-a-day job and l'll save every penny from both except 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 big enough for two." "You're just crazy if you think she's going to be happy in so
me run-down farmhouse in America. Not with what she spends on clothes." "Stop talking about the Countess! As a special favor. Before you drive me maaaaaaaaaa." Buttercup looked at him. "Don't you understand anything that's going on?" Buttercup shook his too. "You 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, mine would be a universe of beaches. If your love were—" "I don't understand that first one yet," Buttercup interrupted. 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? Images just confuse
me so—is this universal business of yours bigger than my sand? Help me, Westley. I have the feeling we're on the verge of something just terribly important." "I have stayed these years in my hovel because of you. I have the feeling we're on the verge of something just terribly important." "I have stayed these years in my hovel because of you. I have the feeling we're on the verge of something just terribly important."
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 careening against my rib cage. I have not known a might when your visage did not send my heart careening against my rib cage. I have not known a might when your visage did not send my heart careening against my rib cage. I have not known a night when your visage did not send my heart careening against my rib cage. I have not known a might when your visage did not send my heart careening against my rib cage. I have not known a might when your visage did not send my heart careening against my rib cage. I have not known a might when your visage did not send my heart careening against my rib cage. I have not known a might when your visage did not send my heart careening against my rib cage. I have not known a might when your visage did not send my heart careening against my rib cage. I have not known a might when you want in your visage did not send my heart careening against my rib cage. I have not known a might when you want my heart careening against my rib cage. I have not known a might when you want in your visage did not send my heart careening against my rib cage. I have not known a might when you want in you want my heart careening against my rib cage. I have not known a might when you want in your want in your want are not send my heart careening against my rib cage. I have not known a might when you want in your want are not send my heart 
Want it backward? You love I." "You are teasing now; aren't you?" "A little maybe; I've been saying it so long to you, and I promise you that's only because you were hearing wrong. I love you was what it was, but you never heard, and 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 soon. Believe me." "Would my Westley ever lie?" He reached out with his right hand. Buttercup found it very hard to breathe. "Good-by." Soon and London is far." "I understand." He reached out with his right hand. Buttercup found it very hard to breathe. "Good-by." So I hate it but I must. 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." So I hate it but I must. 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." So I hate it but I must. 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." So I hate it but I must. 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." So I hate it but I must. The ship sails soon and London is far." "I had to ship sails soon and London is far." "I had to ship sails soon and London is far." "I had to ship sails soon and London is far." "I had to ship sails soon and London is far." "I had to ship sails soon and London is far." "I had to ship sails soon and London is far." "I had to ship sails soon and London is far." "I had to ship sails soon and London is far." "I had to ship sails soon and London is far." "I had to ship sails soon and London is far." "I had to ship sails soon and London is far." "I had to ship sails soon and London is far." "I had to ship sails soon and London is far." "I had to ship sails soon and London is fa
he managed to raise her right hand to his. They shook. "Good-by," he said again. She made a little nod. He took a third step, not 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 kisses since 1642 B.C., when Saul and Delilah Korn's inadvertent discovery swept acros
s 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 agrees with the formula of affection times purity times intensity t
t two seconds of that she realized that Westley was out in the world now, getting nearer and worked his jobs and built his farm and made their bed and sent for her and when she got there he would look at her and say, "I'm sen
ding 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 Indian girl who lives in a teepee nearby and is always in the peak of condition." Buttercup ran to her bedroom mirror. "Oh, Westley," she said, "I must never disappoint you," and she hurried downstairs to where her parents were squabbling. (Sixteen to thirteen, and not past breakfast yet.) "I need your advice," she interrupted. "What can I do to improve my personal appearance?" "Start by bathing," her father said. "And do something with your hair while you're at it," her mother said. "Unearth the territory behind your ears." "Neglect not your knees." "That will do nicely for starters," Buttercup said. She shoo
k her head. "Gracious, but it isn't easy being tidy." Undaunted, she set to work. Every morning she awoke, if possible by dawn, and got the farm chores finished immediately. There was much to be done now, with Westley gone, and more than that, ever since the Count had visited, everyone in the area had increased his milk order. So there was no time for self-improvement until well into the afternoon. But then she really set to work. First a good cold bath. Then, while her hair was drying, she would slave after fixing her figure faults (one of her elbows was just too bony, the opposite wrist not bony enough). And exercise what remained of her baby fat (little left now; she was nearly eighteen). And brush and brush her hair. Her hair was the color of autumn, and it had never been cut, so a thousand strokes took time, but wouldn't mind, because Westley had never seen it clean like this and wouldn't me be surprised when she stepped off the boat in America. Her skin was the color of wintry cream, and she scrubbed her every inch well past glistening, and that wasn't much fun really, but wouldn't Westley be pleased
with how clean she was as she stepped off the boat in America. And very quickly now, her potential began to be realized. From twentieth, she jumped within two weeks after that she was already ninth and moving. The competition was tremendous now, but the day after she was ninth a three-page letter arrive.
ed from Westley in London and just reading it over put her up to eighth. That was really what was doing it for her more than anything—her love for Westley would not stop growing, and people were dazzled when she delivered milk in the morning. Some people were only able to gape at her, but many talked and those that did found her warmer and gentler than she had ever
been before. Even the village girls would nod and smile now, and some of them would ask after Westley, which was a mistake unless you happened to have a lot of spare time, because when someone asked Buttercup how Westley was—well, she told them. He was supreme as usual; he was spectacular; he was singularly fabulous. Oh, she could go on for hours. Sometin
s it got a little tough for the listeners to maintain strict attention, but they did their best, since Buttercup loved him so completely. Which was why Westley's death hit her the way it did. He had written to her just before he sailed for America. The Queen's Pride was his ship, and he loved her. (That was the way it did. He had written to her just before he sailed for America. The Queen's Pride was his ship, and he loved her. (That was the way it did. He had written to her just before he sailed for America. The Queen's Pride was his ship, and he loved her. (That was the way it did. He had written to her just before he sailed for America. The Queen's Pride was his ship, and he loved her. (That was the way it did. He had written to her just before he sailed for America. The Queen's Pride was his ship, and he loved her. (That was the way it did. He had written to her just before he sailed for America. The Queen's Pride was his ship, and he loved her. (That was the way it did. He had written to her just before he sailed for America. The Queen's Pride was his ship, and he loved her. (That was the way it did. He had written to her just before he sailed for America. The Queen's Pride was his ship, and he loved her. (That was the way it did. He had written to her just before he sailed for America and he loved her.)
old is better and I love you. Say hello to Horse and I love you. Like that.) Then there were no letters, but that was natural; he was at sea. Then she heard. She came home from delivering the milk and her parents were wooden. "Off the Carolina coast," her father whispered. Her mother whispered. Her mother whispered. "Without warning. At night." "What?" from Buttercup. "What?" from Buttercup. "Pirates," said her father whispered. Her mother whispered. Her mother whispered. Her mother whispered. Her mother whispered. "Without warning. At night." "What?" from Buttercup. "What?" 
he drown? . . . Did they cut his throat asleep? . . . Did they wake him, do you suppose? . . . Perhaps they whipped him dead . . . . " She stood up then. "I'm getting silly, forgive me." She stayed there many days. At first her parents tried to lure her, but she would
not have it. They took to leaving food outside her room, and she took bits and shreds, enough to stay alive. There was never noise inside, no wailing, no bitter sounds. And when she at last came out, her eyes were dry. Her parents stared up from their silent breakfast at her. They both started to rise but she put a hand out, stopped them. "I can care for myself, please," and she took bits and shreds, and she took bits and shreds, and walling, no bitter sounds. And when she at last came out, her eyes were dry. Her parents stared up from their silent breakfast at her. They both started to rise but she put a hand out, stopped them. "I can care for myself, please," and she took bits and shreds, and she put a hand out, stopped them the parents stared up from their silent breakfast at her. They both started to rise but she put a hand out, stopped them. "I can care for myself, please," and she put a hand out, stopped them the parents stared up from their silent breakfast at her. They both started to rise but she put a hand out, stopped them the put a hand out a hand ou
he set about getting some food. They watched her closely. In point of fact, she had never looked as well. She had entered her room as just an impossibly lovely girl. The woman who emerged was a trifle thinner, a great deal wiser, and a sure knowledge of su
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