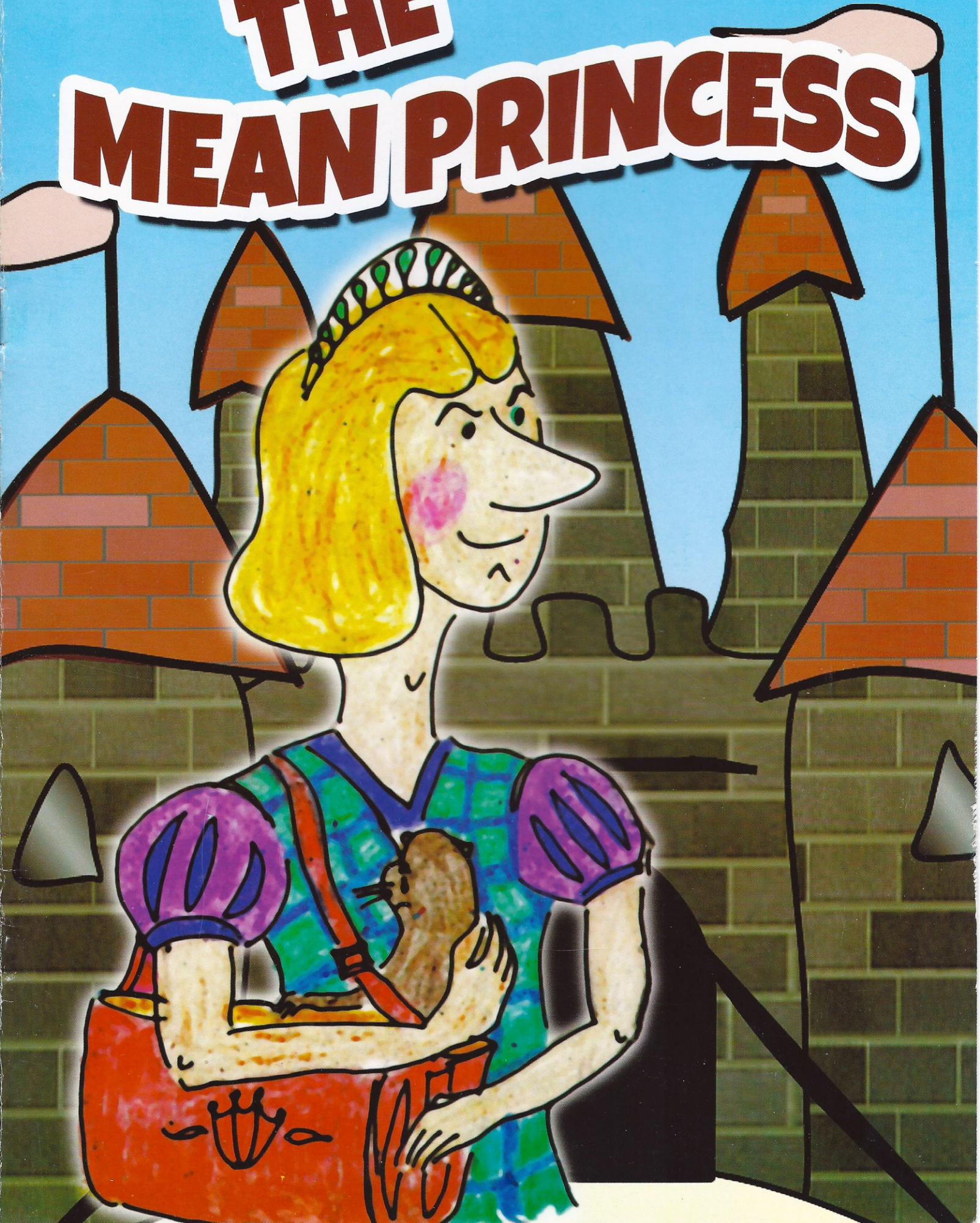


THE MEAN PRINCESS



THE MEAN PRINCESS

The story written in this book is about a princess who liked to own things, especially animals. However, the princess didn't look after the animals with care. As time passed she even managed to get an otter too for her collection. The otter was very unhappy to live with the princess in the castle as the princess didn't love the otter. The princess's parents, the King and the Queen, didn't like this behaviour of the princess at all.

One day while the princess, her maid and the otter were walking outside the castle the princess fell into the river nearby. The maid shouted for help but there was no one to help her. At the end, the otter very cleverly saved the princess's life. The King and the Queen, after hearing about the accident rushed to see the princess and realised that the otter had saved the life of the princess. They advised the princess to be kind and gentle to the animals. However, they decided to release the otter back to the river. Also, the other wild animals that the princess collected were released to the wild at the end.

Otters are playful, lovable animals. The objective of this story is to show especially to the children that the otters should be cared for along with other wild life.

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THE MEAN PRINCESS

Once upon a time in a land far away, a king and queen lived in a big castle. They had a small daughter, a princess called Kelly. Princess Kelly was very pretty. But she had a very bad temper and was mean to everyone she met. She loved to collect things. If she saw something she liked, Princess Kelly wanted it immediately. If she didn't get it, she would shriek and scream and stamp her foot and cry until she got it.

Princess Kelly had a big collection of wild animals. Not stuffed animals or soft toys. She liked to collect live animals. She wanted to have the largest number of animals in the world. Every animal or bird she saw, she got the guards and anyone around to catch it for her to add to her collection. She had lions and tigers, giraffes and zebras, elephants and dolphins and lots and lots of other animals in cages.

The princess didn't look after her animals. She just wanted to own the animals. She had servants to look after the animals. The servants kept complaining that the princess was collecting too many animals. But the princess took no notice and kept on collecting more animals.

One day Princess Kelly and her father the king were walking along a river bank with their attendants. She saw something swim towards her. It was an animal! The animal did rolls and spins and somersaults in the water. It also dived in the water and disappeared for a few minutes, then appeared from somewhere else.

The princess was very excited. "What's that animal?" She asked her maid.

“That’s an otter, princess”, the maid replied.

“What’s an otter?” Princess Kelly asked. “I’ve never seen otters before”.



“It’s an animal that lives near the water. It swims a lot and eats fish and shellfish. It usually comes out at night, that’s why you haven’t seen it”, the maid explained.

“I want the otter!” Princess Kelly said.

“But princess, that’s not possible. You have so many animals; there is no space to keep the otter”.

“I want the otter.... I want!...I want!...I want!” stamp, stamp, stamp went the foot. “I WANT THE OTTER RIGHT NOW!!” the princess stamped her foot and screamed.

“Bu...But princess....how can I catch an otter?” the maid asked.

“I don’t care...I just want that otter...wah wah WAHHHHH”, Princess Kelly cried and shrieked.

The maid asked the guards who were following them to catch the otter for the princess. The guards set a trap in the river bank. They put a fishing net right across the river.

The otter, whose name was Retto, was chasing a fish and didn't see the net. Suddenly he couldn't swim anymore. He had swum right into the net! Retto was stuck! He wriggled and twisted. He kicked his feet and tried to bite the net. He tried everything he could to get out. But he got more and more tangled in the net.



The guards pulled the net to the bank. Princess Kelly was very happy.

“You caught it! You caught it!” Princess Kelly clapped her hands and danced around. “Hold it up....let me see it”, she demanded.

The guards held up the otter still in the net. Retto had dark brown shiny fur which was wet and stuck to his body. He had a long fat tail and a long body. His claws were webbed. He had small ears and long whiskers.

“I’m going to name the otter ‘Honey’. It will be my best friend!”

“Princess, that’s a girl’s name. But this otter is a boy otter!” the maid said.

“I don’t care”, Princess Kelly stamped her foot. “I’m going to call it ‘Honey’. Now take ‘Honey’ to the castle.”

So the guards took Retto to the castle. Princess Kelly put a pink collar with shiny rhinestones and a pink leash on Retto. She took him to show her parents, the king and queen and everyone in the castle. They had never seen an otter before, just like the princess. They all liked his dark brown fur coat.

“He can swim and dive and roll and do somersaults in the water!” the princess told her parents.

They went to the swimming pool and Princess Kelly put Retto into the water. He immediately started swimming and diving trying to find a way out. But there was no way out of the pool. The king and queen and everyone watching thought that he was showing them

what he could do and started clapping and cheering the clever otter.



Princess Kelly asked the maid to put Retto’s cage in her room. After that, Retto stayed with Princess Kelly. He was taken for swimming and fed by the maid. Princess Kelly played with him sometimes, when she remembered that she had the otter.

Princess Kelly told her maid, "Bring the 'Honey' wherever I go. I want to show 'Honey' to everyone I meet."

So the princess took Retto with her whenever she went somewhere.

Retto was very unhappy. His whiskers drooped and his coat got dull. He got thinner because he wasn't eating properly. But the princess didn't care.

One day, Princess Kelly went for a walk and took Retto with her on a leash. The princess liked to walk near the river.

There was a small bridge over the river. This bridge had a short, brick wall. Children in the area liked to play on the bridge. Their favourite game was walking on the wall. They had competitions to see who was best at balancing on the wall. The children could swim, so even if they fell into the river, they swam to the shore and walked on the wall again!

The king did not allow Princess Kelly to walk on



the wall, because she could not swim. The princess didn't like that. She wanted to play on the bridge and walk on the wall.

Princess Kelly ran on to the bridge dragging Retto with her. She tried to climb on to the wall.

"Princess Kelly, don't climb on to the wall. Your father told you not to!" her maid said.

"I don't care! I want to climb on to the wall! I want to play on the wall!" Princess Kelly said.

"Princess, please! Don't climb the wall", the maid begged.

"I'm going to climb the wall! I want to climb the wall! Wahhhhhh... Wahhhhh...WAHHHHH!!" the princess stamped her foot and screamed.

She climbed on to the wall and tried to walk on it with her shiny pink shoes.

She stretched out her arms to balance herself. Suddenly, her foot slipped! She waved her arms trying to get her balance. But, she couldn't get her balance and started falling.

"EHHHHHHHH
HHHHHH....."
Princess Kelly screamed as she fell into the river.



“Princess! Princess!!” The maid shouted and ran to the edge of the bridge.

She saw the princess in the river. The princess was unconscious and floating down the river.

“Help! Help! Somebody please help!!” the maid screamed.

The guards ran up panting! “What happened? What happened?”

“The princess....the princess fell into the river....She can’t swim.... look” the maid said anxiously.

The guards ran to the wall to look at the river.

“Please save her...please!” the maid pleaded. “I can’t swim...please jump in the river and save her”.

“I can’t swim”, said one guard. “I can’t swim either”, the other guard also said.

“Oh dear! Somebody please save the princess!” the maid and the guards shouted.

But nobody came to save the princess. Retto saw that no one was saving the princess. He ran to the wall and somehow climbed on to it. Then he jumped to the river.

“Look...look....Honey jumped into the river”, the maid said excitedly.

Retto swam quickly towards the princess and caught hold of her

dress. Then he bit the collar of her dress and pulled her head above the water. The princess was unconscious. So Retto had to keep pulling on the collar to keep her head above the water.

Then Retto started pulling the princess towards the shore. She was much bigger than Retto and her clothes were soaking wet. So she was very heavy. Retto was a small otter. But he somehow started to drag her towards the riverbank.

“The otter is saving the princess!”

“He’s pulling her to the bank”

“He’s swimming towards the river bank”

“What a brave otter!”

The guards and the maid and the people who had gathered on the bridge and riverbank started shouting.

When Retto was close to the bank, some people waded into the water and caught hold of the princess. They picked her up and took her to the riverbank and laid her on the dry, soft grass.

The maid and the guard came running up. The maid knelt beside the princess



and tried to wake her up.

“Please princess, wake up...wake up”, she said crying and gently patting the princess’s cheek.

The princess suddenly started coughing. She spat out some water and coughed some more. Then she slowly sat up.

“Oh, Princess Kelly! I’m so happy you woke up!” the maid said.

Everyone was relieved that the princess was alright. They started clapping. The king and queen came running up to the princess. “Kelly, are you alright?”

“We came as soon as we got the news” the king and queen said. They were happy to see that the princess was sitting up and talking. The king picked up Princess Kelly. The queen gave her a kiss.

“What happened here?” the King asked sternly, looking around at the people.

“The princess tried to walk on the wall and fell into the river. The otter saved her”, the maid explained the whole story.

“Where is the brave otter?” the king asked looking around.

Retto was standing on one side with the leash still hanging from his neck. His whiskers were drooping. He looked very tired.

The king walked up to Retto. He was very grateful that Retto had saved his daughter.

“You are a very brave otter”, he said.

“I’m setting you free. You will never be caught or kept in captivity”, the king decreed.

“But Daddy....I want the otter”, Princess Kelly said.

“No!” the king said angrily. “I have realised that you are a selfish little girl. You have so many animals in cages. You don’t look after any of them. You didn’t look after the otter. It was the maid who looked after him. But still the otter saved your life.”

Princess Kelly looked ashamed.

“You will not have a pet until you know how to look after it. When you can do that, you can have a dog or a cat. But wild animals should not be pets”, the king told the princess.

“Yes, Daddy. You’re right. I have been a selfish girl. I will try to be better from now on.” Princess Kelly said. “I’ll take the leash and collar off the otter.”

So the princess knelt down and took off the leash and the collar from around Retto’s neck.

“Thank you little otter. Thank you very much for saving my life. I hope you have a long, free and happy life!” Princess Kelly said.

Retto happily jumped back in the river. He did a few somersaults and flips in the water. With a final flick of his tail he swam away.

The crowd cheered the otter and the king. They even cheered the

princess because they could see that she had changed.

The king ordered the guards to release all the wild animals where they would normally live. The princess became a much better person after that.



Retto lived a long life and he told all his pups and their pups about his adventures with the princess.



What is an otter?

Otters are small mammals. They are very shy animals and live in any clean body of fresh water, including lakes, streams, rivers, ponds and marshes. Some otters such as the European otter may also live along the seashore, in salt water, but they need regular access to fresh water to clean their fur. The sea otter is exclusively a marine animal.

The picture on the back cover shows two otters. They have long, slim bodies and relatively short limbs with webbed paws. Most have sharp claws on their paws, and all except the sea otter have long, muscular tails. They are very fast swimmers.

Otters mostly eat fish. They also eat shellfish and frogs. Some otters are expert at opening shellfish and others will feed on available small mammals, amphibians or birds. Otters are very active and playful animals, chasing prey in the water or searching the river beds, lakes or seas. They appear to engage in various behaviour patterns for sheer enjoyment. Different species vary in their social structure. Some live as solitary animals, while others live in groups.

There are 13 species of otter living in the world. In Asia, there are five species, namely European/common otter, small-clawed otter, hairy-nosed otter, smooth-coated otter and the sea otter. The small-clawed otter is the smallest and the sea otter is the largest.

It is very important to protect the otter as it is at the top of aquatic food chain. The otter is highly sensitive to any form of disturbance, pollution and habitat destruction. Because they are so sensitive they act as a warning signal for the health of the environment and this is obviously important for the well-being of humans as well.



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