A Cloak and a Crown
Felicity Henrie

There once was a boy who lived in a small house by a river. The boy's name was Jack Overfield. He lived with his sister Charlotte who was one year younger than he, his mother and father, and their family cat Martin. Jack was a handsome youth of seventeen. His day consisted of doing the family's morning chores, working on the king's farms during the day, and fishing at the river by his house in the afternoon. Charlotte also worked for the king on some days. She would do any chores that needed to be done in the palace and often helped the cook with the meal for the servants in the palace and on the farm. Although his family was rather poor, Jack never complained and always did his work carefully and faithfully.

One day a very exciting letter arrived at the Overfield's house. The letter read as follows:

> *Dear Mr. and Mrs. Overfield,*
>
> *My beloved daughter Princess Anne has asked me to write and ask you if you will spare your daughter to spend some hours daily with her to keep her company. She is wanting in friendship and admires your daughter who she sees come with her brother occasionally to help in the palace. Please send a response as soon as possible with your son who may come and bring the response directly to my daughter.*
>
> *Sincerely,*
> *King Peter*

You may imagine Charlotte's excitement when she was told the news. Jack, on the other hand, having never met a princess wondered how he should act in her presence. He was instructed to bring the reply immediately the next morning. Before leaving the next morning, Jack was reminded by his mother for the third time that morning to be sure to bow as soon as he entered the princess's room and not to burp or say anything unpleasant or rude.

Jack set off and soon arrived at the palace gates. He was admitted and directed to where the princess was having breakfast. As he entered, he remembered his mother's words and immediately bowed before the beautiful young princess. She had warm, pink cheeks, a pleasant little smile, and golden-brown hair that fell down her back in lovely curls. Bewildered by her radiant beauty, Jack almost forgot what he had come for. He presently remembered his mission and related his sister's response. The princess thanked him gratefully and dismissed him, although loth to see the handsome youth go.

The following day Jack brought his sister to the princess and then silently slipped away to his work in the fields.

Charlotte enjoyed that day very much. She and the princess went out and picked the most delicious strawberries and then came inside and read a most delightful book. When it was time to leave, she was very sorry indeed but promised to come back the very next day.

Charlotte came every day for three weeks and every time she and the princess grew closer together. One day Charlotte could see that her friend the princess had no heart in any activities they did together. She asked her what the matter was and the princess told her,

"I must confess, dearest Charlotte, that I am in love with your brother! From the moment I saw him come in to bring your reply I have thought of naught else but him. It is indeed a sad plight I am in."

"Why I see nothing sad in this situation at all," replied Charlotte, "I shall go home tonight and tell him of this good news."

"You do not understand Charlotte. From all of my many suitors I have found none that suit me. My father, insistent that I should be married, has sent out a decree that whoever shall complete the task that he shall decide will be my husband. You see now, Charlotte, why I am in such a sad plight."

"Oh dear," Charlotte sighed, "I never thought this could happen. But by chance would you know what test you father has decided your future husband should complete?"

"Alas, my father, counseled by his most trusted advisor, has decided that the one who can bring him the most beautiful coat in the kingdom shall be my husband. I know of no one, besides my father, of course, with a more beautiful coat than the advisor himself who I am sure will give it to his most distasteful son."

"Why," pondered Charlotte, "Could you not bring your father's cloak, which in truth is the most beautiful in the kingdom, and let Jack bring that one to the competition?"

The next day was appointed in which the king would decide who brought the most beautiful cloak. Charlotte told Jack of their plan to have him bring the kings cloak to the competition.

The next day, many gentlemen stood in line waiting for the king to look upon the cloak they had brought. The king looked at each cloak one by one, but when he came to Jack's cloak, he stopped, shocked at the magnificence of the cloak. Noticing he was familiar with the cloak ,the king asked Jack where he had got the cloak.

"From you," Jack replied without hesitation. "Is it not the most beautiful cloak in the kingdom?"

The king was rejoicing that his daughter would marry such a handsome youth when his advisor, noticing he did not continue through the line of suitors, came to see what occupied him. When he saw the youth with the king's cloak, he was furious and devised a plan to persuade the king into not keeping his word.

"My king," he said, "You would not have your daughter marry a servant, would you? I suggest you have another test to see the true worthiness of your daughters' suitors."

"Ah, indeed," the king replied, "I believe you are right. But how would I test the worthiness of all these suitors."

"A very good question my king. I advise you send out a decree that whoever can find the most beautiful golden crown shall be you daughter's groom."

The king issued the decree the following day that whoever could find the most beautiful golden crown would be his daughter's husband.

As the day before, the suitors lined up and the king went by one by one. When he came to the advisor's son, he saw a most beautiful crown and thought how any could find a more gorgeous one. He proceeded steadily until he came once more upon Jack. Seeing no crown on Jack's head he asked what crown Jack had found.

Jack immediately replied, "My king, the crown I have found lies upon your head. Is it not the most beautiful crown in the kingdom?"

The king joyfully announced that that day Jack would be married to his daughter the princess Anne and that he would receive as a wedding gift both the cloak and the crown through which he had won the princesses' hand.

That day there was much rejoicing throughout the land and Jack and the princess were married without delay.