

Princess Stew

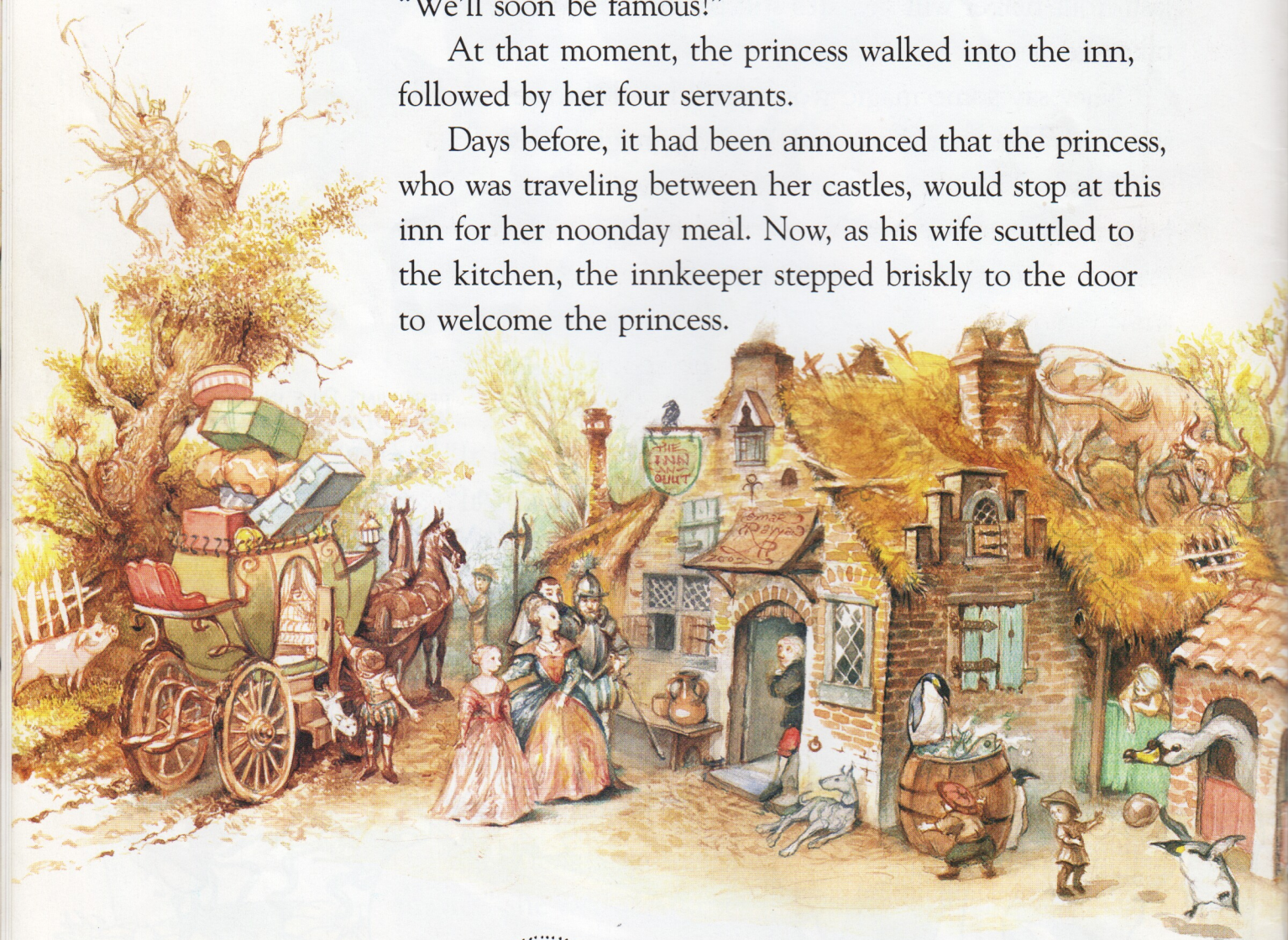
by Douglas Evans

“THE PRINCESS IS HERE!” cried the innkeeper.
“We’ll soon be rich!”

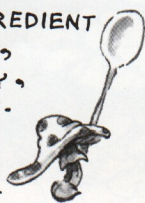
“The princess is here!” said the innkeeper’s wife.
“We’ll soon be famous!”

At that moment, the princess walked into the inn,
followed by her four servants.

Days before, it had been announced that the princess,
who was traveling between her castles, would stop at this
inn for her noonday meal. Now, as his wife scuttled to
the kitchen, the innkeeper stepped briskly to the door
to welcome the princess.



ZEE LAST INGREDIENT
SCUTTLED,
RAN QUICKLY,
INTO ZEE POT-
NO?



MIRO!
ARE YOU COOKING
PYGMY PENGUINS?



I THINK YOU
MISSED
A FEW.

“What an honor it is to have you at our humble inn, Your Highness,” he said. “Your meal is ready.”

The innkeeper seated the princess at the center table. He scowled, however, when her servants sat down with her.

The innkeeper’s wife bustled into the room, carrying a bowl of steaming stew. She placed it before the princess, saying, “A rich, thick, savory stew, Your Highness. We prepared it especially for you.”

The princess nodded, picked up her spoon, and dipped it into the bowl. The innkeeper and his wife watched anxiously. They knew what delicate and refined taste buds a princess has. One kind word from her about their stew, and people would come from far and wide to taste their famous fare.

The princess, however, raised the spoon to her lips and paused. “What about my servants?” she asked. “What are they to eat?”

The innkeeper and his wife exchanged glances. They hardly wanted to serve lowly servants.

“Please understand, Your Highness,” replied the innkeeper. “We are poor people. Our cupboards are almost empty. It would be a great hardship for us to feed everyone here.”

The princess made no reply. Instead, she tasted the stew. The innkeeper and his wife leaned forward to catch any complimentary word that she might utter.

I NEED MORE OF ZEE PAPRIKA!
ZEE STEW, EET MUST BE
STRONGER!



Slowly the princess licked her lips with the tip of her tongue. "This stew," she said at length, "needs salt."

"Salt?" said the innkeeper. "We'll add salt at once, Your Highness."

Retrieving the bowl, he and his wife hustled to the kitchen. A moment later they returned with the salted stew.

The princess took a small taste and puckered her lips. "Oh dear," she said. And then, "Oh my. I'm afraid that it's too salty now."

Too salty? Adding salt was easy. But removing salt was impossible. The innkeeper and his wife could do only one thing. After taking the stew back to the kitchen, they poured it into a large pot and quickly added carrots, onions, potatoes, and broth.



“But once we get the combination right, everyone will come to our inn to eat it,” replied his wife. “We’ll call it Princess Stew. That’s what we’ll do.”

Once more the princess tried the stew. Again she took a taste, then another. The innkeeper and his wife were overjoyed. Breathlessly, they waited for her to speak.

The princess set down her spoon. “Innkeeper,” she said, “I believe that now there’s enough stew in your pot to feed my servants. Would you bring bowls for them at once?”

The innkeeper and his wife exchanged looks. Those were not the words they had expected to hear. But how could they refuse the request?

As everyone ate, the innkeeper and his wife waited for a good word from the princess. But she ate in silence. She finished her bowl of stew without saying another word. ❀

