

THE KING FAMILY AND THE WICKED WITCH

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Stephen King and I went to college together. No, we were not the best of friends, but we did share a few brews together at University Motor Inn. We did work for the school newspaper at the same time. No, Steve and I are not best friends. But I sure am glad he made it. He worked hard and believed in himself. After eight million book sales, it's hard to remember him as a typically broke student. We all knew he'd make it through.

Last January, I wrote of a visit with Steve over the holiday vacation. We talked about his books -- Carrie, 'Salem's Lot, The Shining, and the soon to be released, The Stand. We talked about how Stanley Kubrick wants to do the film versions of his new books. We didn't talk about the past much though. We talked of the future - his kids, FLINT...

He gave me a copy of a story he had written for his children. We almost ran it then, but there was much concern on the staff as to how it would be received by our readers. We didn't run it.

Well, we've debated long enough. It's too cute for you not to read it. We made the final decision after spending in evening watching TV last week. There were at least 57 more offensive things said, not to mention all the murders, rapes, and wars... we decided to let you be the judge. If some of you parents might be offended by the word 'fart,' you'd better not read it - but don't stop your kids, they'll love it!

On the Secret Road in the town of Bridgton, there lived a wicked witch. Her name was Witch Hazel.

How wicked was Witch Hazel? Well, once she had changed a Prince from the Kingdom of New Hampshire into a woodchuck. She turned a little kid's favorite kitty into whipped cream.

And she liked to turn mommies' baby carriages into big piles of horse-turds while the mommies and their babies were shopping.

She was a mean old witch.

The King family lived by Long Lake In Bridgton, Maine. They were nice people.

There was a daddy who wrote books. There was a mommy who wrote poems and cooked food. There was a girl named Naomi who was six years old. She went to school. She was tall and straight and brown. There was a boy named Joe who was four years old. He went to school too, although he only went two days a week. He was short and blonde with hazel eyes.

And Witch Hazel hated the Kings more than anyone else. In Bridgton, Witch Hazel especially hated the Kings, because they were the happiest family in Bridgton. She would peer out at their bright red Cadillac when it passed her dirty, falling down haunted house with mean hateful eyes. Witch Hazel hated bright colors. She would see the mommy reading Joe a story on the bench outside the drug store and her bony fingers would itch to cast a spell. She would see the daddy talking to Naomi on their way home from school in the red Cadillac or the blue truck, and she would want to reach out her awful arms and catch them and pop into her witches cauldron.

And finally, she cast her spell.

One day, Witch Hazel put on a nice dress. She went to the Bridgton Beauty Parlor and had her hair permed. She put on a pair of Rockers from Fayva (an East Coast shoe store chain).

She looked almost pretty.

She bought some of daddy's books at the Bridgton Pharmacy. Then she drove out to the Kings' house and pretended she wanted daddy to sign his books. She drove in a car. She could have ridden her broom, but she didn't want the Kings to know she was a witch.

And in her handbag were four magic cookies. Four evil, magic cookies.

Four cookies! Four cookies full of black magic!

The banana cookie, the milk bottle cookie, and worst of all, two crying cookies. Don't let her in, Kings! Oh, please, don't let her in!

But she looked so nice... and she was smiling... and she had the daddy's books.

Soooo... they let her in. Daddy signed her book and mommy offered her tea. Naomi asked if she would like to see her room.

Joe asked if she would like to see him write his name. Witch Hazel smiled and smiled. It almost broke her face to smile.

"You have been so nice to me that I would like to be nice to you," said Witch Hazel. "I have baked four cookies. A cookie for each King."

"Cookies!" shouted Naomi. "Hooray!"

"Cookies!" shouted Joe. "Cookies!"

"That was awfully nice," said Mommy. "You shouldn't have."

"But we're glad you did," said the daddy.

They took the cookies. Witch Hazel smiled. And when she was in her car, she shrieked and cackled with laughter. She laughed so hard that her cat, Basta, hissed and shrank away from her. Witch Hazel was happy when her wicked plan succeeded.

"I will like this banana cookie," Daddy said. He ate it and what a terrible thing happened.

His nose turned into a banana and when he went down to his office to work on his book much later that terrible day, the only word he

could write was banana.

It was Witch Hazel's wicked magic Banana Cookie.

Poor Daddy!

"I will like this milk-bottle cookie," Mommy said. "What a funny name for a cookie. She ate it, and the evil cookie turned her hands into milk-bottles.

What an awful thing. Could she fix the food with milk-bottles for hands? Could she type? No!

She could not even pick her nose.

Poor Mommy!

"We will like these crying cookies," said Naomi, and Joe said, "What a funny name for a cookie."

They each ate one and they began to cry! They cried and cried and could not stop! The tears streamed out of their eyes. There were puddles on the rug. Their clothes got all wet.

They couldn't eat good meals, because they were crying. They even cried in their sleep.

It was all because of Witch Hazel's evil crying cookies.

The Kings were not the happiest family in Bridgton anymore. Now they were the saddest family in Bridgton. Mommy didn't want to go shopping, because everybody laughed at her milk-bottle hands. Daddy couldn't write books, because all the words came out banana and it was hard to see the typewriter, anyway, because his nose was a banana. And Joe and Naomi just cried and cried and cried.

Witch Hazel was as happy as wicked witch ever gets. It was her greatest spell.

One day, about a month after the horrible day of the four cookies, Mommy was walking in the woods. It was about the only thing she liked to do with her milk-bottle hands. And in the woods, she found a woodchuck caught in a trap.

Poor thing! It was almost dead from fright and pain. There was blood all over the trap.

“Poor old thing,” Mommy said. “I’ll get you out of that nasty trap.” But could she open the trap with milk bottles for hands? No.

So she ran for Daddy and Naomi and Joe. Fifteen minutes later, all four Kings were standing around the poor bloody woodchuck in the trap. The Kings were not bloody, but what a strange, sad sight they were! Daddy had a banana in the middle of his face. Mommy had milk-bottle hands. And the two children could not stop crying.

“I think we can get him out,” Daddy said. “Yes,” Mommy said. “I think we can get him out if we all work together. And I will start. I will give the poor thing a drink of milk from my hands.”

And she gave him a drink. She felt a little better. Naomi and Joe were trying to open the jaws of the cruel trap, while the woodchuck looked at them hopefully. But the trap would not open. It was an old trap, and its hinges and mean sharp teeth were clogged with rust.

“It will not open,” Naomi said and cried harder than ever. “No. it will not open at all!”

“I can’t open it,” Joe said and cried his eyes out. The tears streamed out of his eyes and down his cheeks. “I can’t open it either.”

And Daddy said, “I know what to do, I think.” Daddy bent over the hinge of the trap with his funny banana nose. He squeezed the end of it with both hands. Ouch! It hurt! But out came six drops of banana oil. They fell onto the rusty hinge of the trap, one drop at a time.

“Now, try,” said Daddy.

This time the trap opened easily.

“Hooray!” shouted Naomi.

“He’s out! He’s out!” shouted Joe.

“We have all worked together.” said Mommy. “I gave the woodchuck milk. Daddy oiled the trap with his banana nose. And Naomi and Joe opened the trap to let him out.”

And then they all felt a little better, for the first time since Witch Hazel cast her wicked spell.

And have you guessed yet? Oh, I bet you have. The woodchuck was really not a woodchuck at all. He was the Prince of the Kingdom of New Hampshire who had also fallen under the spell of Wicked Witch Hazel.

When the trap was opened, the spell was broken, and instead of a woodchuck, a radiant Prince in a Brooks Brothers suit stood before the King family.

“You have been kind to me, even in your own sadness.” said the Prince, “and that is the most difficult thing of all. And so through the power vested in me, the spell of the wicked witch is broken and you are free!”

Oh, happy day!

Daddy’s banana nose disappeared and was replaced with his own nose, which was not too handsome but certainly better than a slightly squeezed banana. Mommy’s milk-bottles were replaced with her own pink hands.

Best of all, Naomi and Joe stopped crying. They began to smile. Then they began to laugh!

Then the Prince of New Hampshire began to laugh. Then Daddy and Mommy began to laugh. The Prince danced with Mommy and Naomi

and carried Joe on his shoulders. He shook hands with Daddy and said he had admired Daddy's books before he had been turned into a woodchuck.

All five of them went back to the nice house by the lake, and Mommy made tea for everyone. They all sat at the table and drank their tea.

"We ought to do something about that witch," Mommy said. "So she can't do something wicked to someone else."

"I think that is true," said the Prince. "And it so happens that I know one spell myself. It will get rid of her."

He whispered to Daddy. He whispered to Mommy. He whispered to Naomi and Joe, and they nodded and giggled and laughed.

That very afternoon, they drove up to Witch Hazel's haunted house on the Secret Road.

Basta, the cat, looked at them with his big yellow eyes, hissed, and ran away.

They did not drive up in the Kings' pretty red Cadillac or in the Prince's Mist Grey Mercedes 390SL. They drove up in an old, old car that wheezed and blew oil.

They were wearing old clothes with fleas jumping out of them. They wanted to look poor to fool Witch Hazel.

They went up and the Prince knocked on the door.

Witch Hazel ripped the door open. She was wearing a tall, black hat. There was a wart on the end of her nose. She smelled of frog's blood and owls' hearts and ant's eyeballs, because she had been whipping up a horrible brew to make more black magic cookies.

"What do you want?" she rasped at them. She didn't recognize them in their old clothes.

“Get out. I’m busy!”

“We are a poor family on our way to California to pick oranges,” the Prince said. “What has that to do with me?” the witch shrieked. “I ought to turn you into oranges for disturbing me! Now, good day!”

She tried to close the door, but the Prince put his foot in it. Naomi and Joe shoved it back open.

“We have something to sell you,” Daddy said. “It is the wickedest cookie in the world. If you eat it, it will make you the wickedest witch in the world, even wickeder than Witch Indira in India. We will sell it to you for one thousand dollars.”

“I don’t buy what I can steal!” Witch Hazel shrieked. She snatched the cookie and gobbled it down. “Now I will be the wickedest witch in the whole world!” And she cackled so loudly that the shutters fell off her house.

But the Prince wasn’t sorry. He was glad. And Mommy wasn’t sorry, because she had baked the cookie. And Daddy wasn’t sorry, because he had gone to New Hampshire to get the 300 year-old baked beans that went into the cookie.

Naomi and Joe? They just laughed and laughed, because they knew that it wasn’t a Wicked Cookie that Witch Hazel had just eaten.

It was a Farting Cookie.

Witch Hazel felt something funny.

She felt it building in her tummy and her behind. It felt like a lot of gas. It felt like an explosion looking for a place to happen.

“What have you done to me!” she shrieked. “Who are you?”

“I am the Prince of New Hampshire,” the Prince cried, raising his face so she could see it clearly for the first time.

“And we are the Kings,” Daddy said. “Shame on you for turning my wife’s hands into milk bottles! Double shame on you for turning my nose into a banana. Triple shame on you for making my Naomi and my Joe cry all day and all night. But we’ve fixed you now, Wicked Witch Hazel!”

“You won’t be casting any more spells,” said Naomi. “Because you are going to the moon!”

“I’m not going to the moon!” Witch Hazel screeched so loudly that the chimney fell on the lawn. “I’m going to turn you all into cheap antiques that not even tourists will buy!”

“No, you’re not,” said Joe, “because you ate the magic cookie. You ate the magic farting cookie.”

The wicked witch foamed and frothed. She tried to cast her spell. But it was too late; the Farting Cookie had done its work. She felt a big fart coming on. She squeezed her butt to keep it in until she could cast her spell, but it was too late.

WHONK! went the fart. It blew all the fur off her cat, Basta. It blew in the windows. And Witch Hazel went up in the air like a rocket.

“Get me down!” Witch Hazel screamed. Witch Hazel came down all right. She came down on her fanny. And when she came down, she let another fart.

DRRRRRRAPPP! went the fart. It was so windy, it knocked down the witch’s home and the Bridgton Trading Post. You could see Dom Cardozl sitting on the toilet where he had been pooping. It was all that was left of the Trading Post except for one bureau that had been made in Grand Rapids.

The witch went flying up into the sky. She flew up and up until she was as small as a speck of coal dust.

“Get me down,” Witch Hazel called, sounding very small and far away.

“You’ll come down all right,” Naomi said.

Down came Witch Hazel.

“Yeeeeeahhhh,” she screamed falling out of the sky.

Just before she could hit the ground and be crushed (as maybe she deserved), she cut another fart, the biggest one of all, and the smell was like two million egg salad sandwiches. And the sound was KA-HIONK!!!

Up she went again.

“Goodbye, Witch Hazel,” yelled Mommy waving. “Enjoy the moon.”

“Hope you stay a long time,” called Joe.

Up and up went Witch Hazel until she was out of sight. During the news that night, the Kings and the Prince of New Hampshire heard Barbara Walters report that a UFW had been seen by a 747 airplane over Bridgton, Maine - an unidentified flying witch.

And that was the end of wicked Witch Hazel. She is on the moon now, and probably still farting.

And the Kings are the happiest family in Bridgton again. They often exchange visits with the Prince of New Hampshire, who is now the King. Daddy writes books and never uses the word banana. Mommy uses her hands more than ever. And Joe and Naomi King hardly ever cry.

As for Witch Hazel, she was never seen again, and considering those terrible farts she was letting when she left, that is probably a good thing!