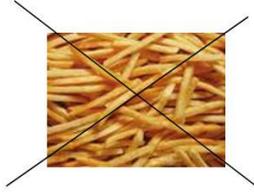
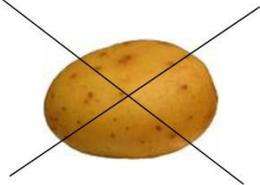


TATER TOT



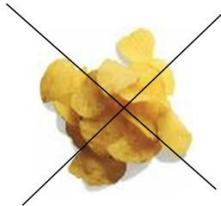
Fries....NO!



Potatoes....NO!



Tater Tot...YES!



Chips.....NO!



Hash brown.....NO!

stories

what to do if michael jackson
comes to live in your basement

the velveteen tree

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the trial

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love

What to do if Michael Jackson comes to live in your basement

If Michael Jackson comes to your door one day asking to live in your basement, say no. Wait! Maybe not, because if you do, then he might start singing some song that has “please” in the title. Instead, take his stuff and invite him in. Show him around the house and introduce him to your parents, even if they’re on a very important phone call. Take him to your room and then the guest room and then the kitchen, the bathrooms, and every other room you have in your house. Finally, take him to the basement, the room where he wants to live in. Show him where your bike is and where your parents’ winter clothes are and what corner the spiders live in. Then, take him to the spot he is going to sleep in. There, Michael will ask you for some blankets. As you hesitate and begin to go upstairs, he will tell you to bring a blue one and if you don’t have a blue one, to bring him a green one and if you don’t have a green one he wants a black one, and if you don’t have any of those colors, to bring him whatever you have, except a pink one because it’s not a very good color on him. When you find the blanket and give it to him, he will ask you for a nice, fluffy pillow. As you groan, he will say that he wants a nice, fluffy pillow that is purple. Upstairs, you find the pillow; you get a purple t-shirt, and put it over the pillow. When you go to the basement, he says thank you and you say you’re welcome. Finally, you think you are free from him, but you think wrong. All of a sudden, he shows up in your room and tells you he’s hungry. You offer him some pizza, but he doesn’t want any pizza. You offer him a hamburger, but he doesn’t want a hamburger. He tells you he wants a soft baked cookie. You go to the kitchen and get out the cookies. Michael takes them and then he asks you for some warm milk. You pour him a glass of milk and then heat it up. Once he’s done, he asks you for some Kentucky Fried Chicken. You calmly tell him that you don’t have any KFC chicken but he ignores you and he starts singing. You tell him you’ll be back and go to the nearest KFC. When you’re back at your house, you offer him the chicken and he eats it greedily, not offering you any. He finishes fifteen minutes later and he demands a movie. He demands an action packed movie. He demands an action packed movie that is sad. You take him to the nearest Blockbuster and let him pick out the movie he wants. He makes you pay for it with your allowance. After you’re done watching the movie, he takes you to his place in the basement. He tells you to say goodnight to him. When you

turn off the light and go to your room, you find that he is there. Michael says he wants to have a sleepover in your room. You agree and get his stuff from the basement. You ask him if he wants it beside your bed and he says no. In front of the bed? No. On the other side of the bed? No. After you move his stuff all over the room, you tell him to put it where he wants it to be. He ends up putting it where you first started. Unsure of what to do, you get in your bed and stare at the ceiling. Michael starts telling you a story to help you sleep and all of a sudden, you fall asleep. In the morning when you wake up, you start to think that he isn't a bad guy after all, that is, until he wakes up and asks you about breakfast....

The Velveteen Tree

There was once a tree tucked away in a corner of a rotunda in a school in the middle of nowhere. This tree was placed in fake straw, had leaves of fabric, and a trunk of plaster. Yes indeed, it was not a real tree.

This tree, we shall call him Velveteen, loved the school dearly. He loved the children, teachers, and roaches that roamed the hallways. Velveteen thought that this was a real tree's life, this was a forest. He knew nothing of leaves changing colour, falling off, growing back. He only thought he knew. Poor Velveteen.

One day tragedy struck; an outbreak of Swine Flu, brought on by a pig by the name of Pollo. Thankfully no one was hurt. Unthankfully everything that could not be cleaned had to be burned, this included Velveteen. No, he thought, I haven't had a chance to live.

The pile of stuff was taken into a forest. When it was dumped, Velveteen bounced off the ground and into a small ditch. All he could do was watch the army of flames rise to the sky.

He was not burned though, seeing as though the fire couldn't reach the ditch. So Velveteen sat there well into the night. Just then a fairy with blue hair sparkled over him.

"Hello Velveteen," she said.

Velveteen glared up.

"Oh, hello. Would you tell me what those strange tall things are?"

"Those are trees."

"What?!" Velveteen exclaimed. "I'm a tree and I don't look like them."

"That's because there are many types of trees," the blue fairy said.

"No, it's because you're fake!" The trees shouted.

"I'm real, I'm real!" Velveteen cried.

"Fake!" All the trees shouted.

"If only I were real, then I could be happy!"

"Your wish is granted," and the blue fairy waved her wand.

Roots dug into the ground, the leaves and trunk became real.

"Oh thank you!" Velveteen said.

"You'll love it as a real tree," the tree told him.

"I'm sure I will." Velveteen agreed.

But he didn't. At first he was okay. Then he lost his leaves. Then he got termites. Then a squirrel peed on him.

"I hate this!" Velveteen cried, and he died an empty shell.

One day a carpenter was walking in the woods with his son. They came upon a skeleton tree that had died long ago.

"This wood is perfect, Jeff get your ax ready," the carpenter said. They chopped and chopped until finally the tree came down. They dragged it out of the woods and loaded it into the back of a pick-up truck.

"Can we start as soon as we get home?"

"Sure son."

They chopped off the branches and carved the trunk. A foot formed, then a leg. Velveteen slowly came back.

A few weeks later the boy and his father placed the newly carved tree on a grave. The carpenter pulled out a knife and carved a heart on the figure's chest.

"It looks just like her," the carpenter whispered.

Jeff reached out and touched the wood. I hope you like it mom, he thought.

"Dad the wood feels alive."

As they started walking back to the car he looked back and said, "That's because it is."

He, She, We

I walked. I fell. He helped me. I smiled. He smiled. We walked. He fell. I helped him. He laughed. I frowned. I asked. He said. I cried. He laughed. I cried. He laughed. I walked. He stared. I yelled. He apologized. I ignored. He pleaded. I turned. He grinned. I grinned. We walked. We laughed. He shared. I shared. We sang. We said goodbye. I frowned. I thought. I smiled. I left.

The Trial

The Accusation: Some really fat guy in a red suit and a white beard broke into a house. Apparently he only ate cookies and drank milk, and he left presents.

Prosecutor: My client, Susan Baker, went downstairs at three A.M. After hearing a strange noise. She walked into the living room to find that lunatic! (He points at the defendant).

Lawyer: Objection! My client is not a lunatic.

Judge: Overruled. Please continue.

Prosecutor: Thank you. As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, that man broke into my client's house and stole cookies and milk!

Defendant: But the cookies and milk were set out for me! I'm San.....

Judge: Hey, you cannot speak at this moment.

Lawyer: Do you have any proof, besides Ms. Baker's account?

Prosecutor: Uh...No.

Lawyer: Then there is no proof that my client is guilty!

Prosecutor: But...

Judge: He's right, there is no sufficient proof. Verdict is not...

Defendant: I told you that you can't arrest Santa Clause!

Judge: You're Santa? You never brought me that Spiderman action figure! The verdict is guilty. He gets three thousand years.

Defendant: What about the reindeer!?

Lawyer: You know you still have to pay me.

Defendant: Bah humbug.

Dear diary,

Hi! I'm Mary! I'm 5! Today is my birthday and i got this book! Mommy has the same birthday as me and mommy got a motor scooter and she just loves zooming around in it! Mommy is soooooo happy! i decided to write in here because I got in trouble for asking why mommy and daddy look so old. They just told me it's nature and go to my room and never say it again! Uh-Oh! Daddy lost his teeth and i got to help find them. Buh Bye!

Dear diary,

Daddy's teeth were under the couch cushion. I guess he put them there while he ate mommy's very nasty apple pie. Right now it's 7 zero clock and mommy and daddy are asleep i think they're old farts! HEHE i wrote farts!! Well i think i should get to bed too so i don't get in trouble.

Dear diary,

I'm very worried about daddy! Every time I say something he says huh? huh? i can't hear you! I told him he needs a hearing aid but of course he didn't hear me! Then you will never guess what happened to mommy in the store?! Well there is this turbo button on her scooter and she pressed it. Well.... that wasn't the best idea! She ran into the freezer section but daddy didn't hear the big noise it made! Oh no! Mommy and daddy are fighting over who is the best country singer mommy says Brad Pitt and daddy says Dolly Parton!

Dear diary,

I tried fixing the fight but i had no clue who either of those people are so I gave up! Oh well! There is something i don't understand..... why mommy and daddy look so old! They have grey hair but other mommies and daddies have regular color hair. Then mommy and daddy use canes (and motor scooters) but other parents can walk just fine! Also mommy and daddy have wrinkles! On top of that they will toot really loud and act like nothing happened but other people don't toot! I WANT NORMAL PARENTS!

Dear diary,

As you could probably tell I was angry before, well I WAS!!!! It all goes back to daddy's stupid hearing problem! I tried telling him that he had a piece of toilet paper hanging out of pants but he didn't hear me! So i screamed it reaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaallllly loud!

Then mommy yelled at me for raising my voice at them and sent me to my room. Parents are soooooo annoying! I wish i could send mommy to her room!

Dear diary,

Well i tried sending mommy to her room but i got sent back to mine. i don't understand why she can raise her voice at me but i can't raise my voice at her! Plus i do it all the time to daddy! Urgh! I'm having a terrible day!

Dear diary,

I'm soooooo happy! Today Jeremy kissed my cheek! I think I'm in love!!!! Tomorrow I'm gonna wear my favorite dress and bring ring pops! Then we are going to get married under the tree in the school yard! AAAAAAHHHH LOVE IS AWESOME!

Dear diary,

I'm so angry!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! First of all Jeremy dumped me! Then i found out i have to go meet my older sister who lives 2 hours away do i look i want to meet her? nooooo! I'm very angry! WORST DAY OF MY LIFE!!!

Dear diary,

I'm on the way to meet my sister. i learned her name is Fran. i hate that name. i still haven't figured out why i haven't met her yet. URGH! We are finally here, i got to go.

Dear diary,

I haven't been here one hour and i'm already in trouble! well i met Fran. Guess what! SHE'S 60!! She even has a 40 year old daughter who has a 20 year daughter who has a 2 year old son! This isn't normal! So i said why are ya'll so old? Then mommy told me to go in the closet. i don't understand that but whatever!

Dear diary,

More bad news! We are staying here for 3 weeks!!!!

Dear diary,

MORE BAD NEWS!!! WE HAVE TO GO TO SOME STUPID BINGO GAME!

Dear diary,

The bingo game was weird! i really don't understand it! The people would scream b34 or i23, what are they doing asking for directions? So they call out a road name? Then someone will say bingo, i guess that's because they get the directions they need.

Dear diary,

Fran said she is going to take me to the mall tomorrow! She said i'm going to be allowed to pick out one dress that i like and get it! I'm so happy! I guess Fran doesn't stink as much as i thought, but her house does! Anyway i'm getting the dress for some kind of party called a funeral. Well mommy and daddy didn't say it was a party but why else would i wear a dress? Since the word fun is in it i think it will be awesome!

Homemade Pepper Spray (part one)

This has to work, or maybe it won't. I don't know. What evs.

That seems to be my mantra of late. That one word and pluralized half word manages to guide me through most of my mischievous schemes these days. It just sounds so soothing as it rolls off my tongue. I can almost see it leave my lips as it morphs into a subtle whisper and trickles its way to the edge of my ear assuring me that everything will be OK and that nothing bad will happen. And most of the time, nothing bad really does. The sun keeps rising and the world keeps spinning.

Then again there was that one incident. The one where "what evs" let me down big time. The one with the town bell and the ringing at midnight and the fire department and the phone call to my parents and the days spent in my room with nothing to do for an entire month. I mean come on, if the old firehouse is going to have a large antique bell in the middle of town square, then why can't your average, well-meaning citizen give it a hearty ring for time to time? And why can't this same average, well-meaning citizen let its ring resonate throughout our empty streets to serve as a reminder for the town's dreary residents that a new day has arrived and that it is theirs to seize or squander?

Unfortunately, the fine firemen of station #3, and my parents, did not agree. Even the local 4-page-newspaper was not appreciative and treated my *stunt* as the final piece of evidence of our town's rapid decline, lack of decent parenting skills, and indisputable proof of the impending apocalypse.

Well, if it is apocalypse they want, then apocalypse they will get.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The town of Penn Brook, NY is hardly a town at all. To describe it more accurately would be to label it a village.

In the center of town is a small square littered with antique shops and used book stores. While charming, it is evident that any boom in development occurred many years ago and that the town is holding on to a life from long ago. These days, an exciting afternoon in Penn Brook consists of grabbing a coffee and

combing through the piles of junk and stacks of books in hope of discovering a treasure. Sometimes you might find that gem but most hunters leave empty handed and smelling like dust and mothballs. If you venture beyond Penn Brook's center square you'll find yourself in Stanon. Here you can find the standard fair that most people come to expect when entering any town these days; a place to eat, a place to shop, a place to sleep, and a place to gas up the car.

With the emergence of Stanon over the last few decades one could document the steady and proportionate slowing down of Penn Brook. And the residents of Penn Brook would not have it any other way. Life here is just as they like, slow and simple.

Their town square has all of the charm of yesterday without any of the problems of today. Real estate brokers and city council members alike all echo the same charge that Penn Brook is a place for families and lazy afternoons. Families have lived here for years, the schools are great, and crime is low. To quote top local real estate agent Berry Beam, "Penn Brook is the place of daydreams and the Sunday drive of towns." And for the most part Berry Beam is right, Penn Brook's history is a tedious tale of charters and census reports with only a ting of death and despair.

If Berry, or anyone else for that matter, were going to sit down and chronicle the history of this place it would probably begin something like this:

Penn Brook was established in the winter of 1792 and gets its name from a group of expelled Pennsylvanian Amish settlers led by a man named Daniel Lapp. Lapp and his followers denounced their Amish ways and sought out the modern wonders and Bohemian lifestyle rumored to be found in Brooklyn, NY. However, travel in the late 1700s was not what it is today and reliable map access was a bit of challenge.

After leaving Pennsylvania, Lapp's group headed in the direction they believed that Brooklyn could be found. For months they wandered aimlessly. Travel was not easy, as they were met with many troubles along the way. At times there was little food or no water, other times there was the threat of the wildlife and rumors of cut-throat renege travelers or scalp-hungry Indians to keep them on edge. However, most of the time they were just lost. Perhaps, none of their troubles were as bad as the near drowning of their entire caravan on the night they traveled a third of the way across Lake Erie. In their defense it was late at night, they'd been traveling for a very long time, and Daniel Lapp had been told by a fairly trustworthy contact that it was a somewhat shallow

river that could be easily forged. Thankfully, only two members of their party drown and only one bag of oats was lost during this unfortunate misstep.

Spirits were at an all time low and shortly after the incident at Lake Erie the traveling troupe gave up their search and settled amongst a strip of lakes in central New York state now known as The Finger Lakes. The Finger Lakes, though not called that at the time, are a series of long narrow bodies of water spread out across a portion of the state that, from above, appear to be part of the hand that is Lake Ontario as it tries to claw its way inland.

Weary of large bodies of water and no hope of finding their destination, Lake Ontario's middle finger would have to do.

As self proclaimed Pennsylvanian Brooklynites their feelings were if we can't get to Brooklyn, then Brooklyn will have to come to us.

Initially, the settlement that would become Penn Brook was much larger but early on the group split while naming the new village. One group wanted to call it Penn Brook, thinking it important to reference their Pennsylvania roots while also maintaining their Brooklyn aspirations. The other group was more interested in shedding their Amish heritage and fought stubbornly for the name New Brooklyn. After much arguing and threats of irrational violence and sabotage, everyone decided not to decide. The two camps split and each group set up on either side of the finger lake. New Brooklyn settled on the western bank and Penn Brook on the eastern. In the end, the decision was for the best, at least for Penn Brook. Their first winter was a tough one and there proved to be very little food. There was not enough resources to support everyone so starvation and disease ran amok and by the time spring appeared, the residents of New Brooklyn were no more.

With the entire population of New Brooklyn dead-and-gone the people of Penn Brook inherited an over abundance of clothing and materials left behind by the deceased. Because of this, the villagers could take their time adjusting to their new surroundings and build their new town without having to worry about freezing or acquiring the necessary supplies needed to maintain their settlement.

As the winter snow was melting, the advantages of the split carried over into the earliest days of spring when residents of Penn Brook turned the annoyance of a neighboring village left with nothing but rotting corpses into a solution for the ever increasing wolf epidemic. With the arrival of newcomers and the chance of long term survival low, wolves began roaming in packs

and occupied the outer-southeastern portion of the village. However, after working out a system of transportation and storage for New Brooklyn's dead, the people of Penn Brook managed to keep the wolves well fed and at bay until a way to rid themselves of the wolves once and for all was devised.

Over the next few years, the people of Penn Brook learned to be very resourceful.

After the harsh winter of 1792 and the wolf scare of the spring, things in Penn Brook quieted down and slowly the village began to grow. As the world around them aged, Penn Brook found itself becoming more and more like a town. Things were quiet. Things were peaceful. Eventually everyone forgot about Daniel Lapp and his gang of expelled Amish settlers and the early struggles required to establish the way of life that everyone had come to know. Penn Brook never became the Brooklyn that its founders had hoped for; it had become something else instead. These days Penn Brook, NY is quaint, forgettable, and tragically average.

But to individuals like Sara Sleete, Pen Brook is a prison.

The Phone Call

"Brrring!!" Brrring!!" It was my phone bursting into my morning at 5:00am on a Saturday! I answer though I'm half asleep. "Hello?" I say into the receiver wearily, there was no answer. Then about a minute, and a lot of hellos, later there was a high pitched scream, the kind that makes you wince when you hear it. Thinking it was some kids pranking me I said, "You got me!" Then hung up and went back to sleep. I woke back up about nine, got dressed, ate breakfast, and went to my neighbor's to babysit her 1 year old daughter while she was at work. When I got there, on the couch was my neighbor with blood surrounding her and a bloody knife next to her and her child on the floor crying. I picked her up and started crying with her, half because my neighbor was dead and half because I was terrified. Then I called the police.

When the police got there they started questioning me. Asking questions like: When were you last here? Who was here last? Has she had any thoughts of suicide? Has she had any bad breakups lately? After about five more they finally asked: Has she had any weird phone calls that you know of? I paused then replied "No, not that I know of." Then not knowing if it was important, I said "But I did, this morning around 5:00. I heard a high pitched scream, but just figured it was some kids pranking me."

"What did you do?" He asked. "Hung up," I simply replied.

"As I said earlier I thought some kids were pranking me."

The police started looking around. They found her address book that had many people's phone numbers including her boyfriend that she was recently in a fight with, her parents, best friend, her doctor, and people she worked with. They started calling them to gather some information. Her father said that she had been depressed lately because her mother recently died of cancer. Then her doctor said she was on depression pills. The police went to her medicine cabinet to search for the pills. Once they found them, they also found out they were not yet opened. Next they called her boyfriend, who didn't seem to know much or care about her death. Last they called her work, which said she had taken the last week off to mourn her mother's death, and today was going to be her first day back.

After a few hours of investigating the police concluded that she must have committed suicide due to her mother's death. She may have called me to have someone to talk to but couldn't so she stab herself. They weren't sure about this conclusion though.

They would have to check the knife for fingerprints and interview more people.

TO BE CONTINUED!!

Obama Haunts My Dreams

It all started November eighth. I was going to bed like usual, and like most people I could not wait to see what I was going to dream about. My head hit the pillow, but I still did not fall asleep. So I got some warm milk. That did not help. *I guess I'll just think about stuff. I still haven't listened to the songs for the Christmas play yet. What if I never listen to them and I don't know them by the time the performance comes around? What if everyone notices I'm not singing and laughs?*

"Good grief Charlie Brown, you sure are a downer."

I looked straight ahead at a kid holding a blue blanket.

"Linus? What are you doing in my room?"

"You're dreaming Charlie Brown."

"I'm not Charlie Brown."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Oh well. If you see my grandmother don't tell her I still have my blanket"

I watched him walk away with a confused look on my face.

That was weird.

I continued standing there until I heard someone calling me.

"Hello American citizen who's opinion I value!"

I turned around. Now standing behind me was Barack Obama.

"What are you doing in my dreams?"

"Well, before I answer your question let me start out by saying that America is a great country filled with great opportunities. We are not just the land of the free and the home of the brave; we are the people of a nation that has overcome many obstacles. We are America, and to all my fellow Americans, yes we can!"

I stared at him then turned my head to watch a cherry singing on top of a pile of grapes. "Well that was lovely, but you didn't answer my question. Typical politician," I mumbled.

"Now Marlie I'm here to tell you... Actually I was just bored."

"That's messed up," I said.

"No it's not. Be proud that it's you. There are millions of people I could visit, but I visit you."

"I don't care it's creepy!" I screamed.

Obama fixed his collar. "But I'm the president!"

"I don't care if you're the Queen of England!"

He looked at me. "Why would you care if I were the Queen of England? You live in America."

"Wow," I sighed.

The cherry had now finished singing and was chopping on a bunch of screaming grapes, which turned into deer and ate it.

"Ma...." Then I woke up.

Whew, he'll probably never show up again. Well, so I thought.

The next night when I fell asleep...

"It's fun to stay at the Y.M.C.A.! Fun to stay at the Y.M.C.A.
A.!"

My mouth hung open for two reasons: A) he was back B) he was dancing around in shorts and a t-shirt. By he, I mean Obama.

"Hey Marlie, want to play some b-ball?" He twirled a ball on his finger

"No I want my dreams to myself!"

He frowned and set the ball down. "You seem very emotional about this."

"I am!"

"Oh, I'll go then," he picked up the ball and walked away.

"Yes!" I cried joyously. Then I woke up. I was so happy I made up a little song. It goes like this. "Obama used to haunt my dreams, and it annoyed me. But he said he would never come back and now I am happy! Obama haunted my dreams, Obama haunted my dreams. And now I can see-the sky is clearer! Obama haunted my dreams, yeah, the president haunted my dreams! But now he is finally gone, forever. Sweet dreams!"

I then went on to publish that song and made a very successful album. Word of this album reached the real President Obama's ear! (Take note that this only took about nine hours, I have not slept since then.)

I received an invitation (by invitation I mean a helicopter, and by received I mean was forced into the helicopter) and was whisked away to the White House. I was led into a conference room where Obama was sitting in a big official chair.

"Hey Mr. Obama, president who I have never met in person, what an honor this is!"

He was not smiling. "You are Marlie Simpson are you not?"

"Yes," I answered.

He sighed. "This really hurts Marlie. This song. I have never haunted anybody, but that's beside the point. What's really important is that you wrote you were happy to see me go. That hurts my soul Marlie, that scars my already wounded heart. How could you be so cruel?"

I looked down sheepishly. "I'm sorry, it wasn't for real. It was just a song based on a dream, and dreams are just fake right? I'm sorry, and I think you are a great president."

He shifted in his chair. "I forgive you, and because this was not a song based on true feelings there will be no punishment." With that he stood and said I could leave. I was almost out the door

LOVE

The Proposal

She walked. He walked. She slipped. She fell. He laughed. She blushed. He helped her. He offered. She nodded. They walked. They got in. He drove. He stopped. They got out. He talked. She answered. She talked. He answered. He kneeled. He offered. She gasped. He offered. She blushed. She accepted. She cried. She laughed. He laughed. They hugged. They went in. She called. Mom answered. She told. Mom screamed. Mom laughed. They hung up. She hugged. He hugged. They made-out. He called. She called. They prepared.

The Preparations

They prepared. They called. They setup. They canceled. She called. She invited. He called. He invited. They stopped. They kissed. They talked. They planned. They laughed. They ordered. They bought. They returned. They rented. They decorated. She partied. He partied. They drank. Friends toasted. The day came.

The Wedding

People talk. Guests arrive. Guests sit. Music plays. Someone sings. Bridesmaids walk. Groomsmen walk. He walks. He grins. She walks. She cries. They stand. Preacher talks. They kiss. People cheer and clap. They kiss. People walk. People stand. People talk. They cut. People cheer. They kiss. She throws. Bridesmaid catches. Bridesmaid screams. She sits. He kneels. She blushes. She giggles. He reaches. He pulls. People squeal. She laughs. He laughs. He throws. Groomsman catches. Cameras flash. They dance. People dance. Music plays. People sit. They sit. People eat. They eat. People talk. They talk. People ask. They answer. He carries. She laughs. People fasten. They run. People throw. They drive away.

They live happily ever after.

Thank you for reading!

To submit stories or share your opinions send an email to
bhltatertot@gmail.com!

There are more issues to come!