



A Little Frog & His Well

Srebrenka Peregrin

Animals

On the very verge of the Swamp there lived a family of frogs. They were all fine, fat, croaking frogs and enjoyed talking deep into the night. Grandma Frog would talk most of all, for she knew many stories, both of the Swamp and of the Outside. The Swamp was a good place, safe except for the Longnecks, peaceful, warm and full of food. The Outside was a horrible land where many dangers loomed; dry, inhospitable, and filled with strange noises, harsh plants and frog-eating monsters.

This is why the Little Frog, the very tiniest of the entire family, had to go and see for himself if it truly existed. One day he crept out of the Swamp, and into the Meadow. It was certainly drier, though not as dry as he had imagined, for it had recently rained. Hopping about, and helping himself to many new and wonderful foods, he came to a Wall on the brink of a Forest. The Little Frog had never before seen a Wall, and had no idea what it was, but it seemed like a good place to hop onto. He tried and tried, and finally made it.

And what a sight it was! He saw the Swamp, and the Meadow, and the Forest. Even, in the distance, he saw the Mountains, though he did not know them by name. He saw the entire sky stretching above his head, and jumped around with delight. And then, turning around, he also saw the Well. Oh, how wonderful it looked! Deep, dark, wet, and safe. It smelled sweetly to him, too – of home, peace, and a good hideout. The latter he needed particularly quick, for all of a sudden there was a screech above him. And though he did not know about the Owl, the Little Frog was certain it was something to hide from.

So he jumped into the Well. Down, and down he fell, breaking some bones and hurting his head, but finally landing in a pool of cool, calm water. He swam around a bit, then found a ledge, sat on it and began to sing. He sang to spite the Owl, and to praise the Sky he could still see high above. He sang about his own wit, and his

adventures. He was a happy, and a live frog. But when the night came, he was alone, wrapped in darkness, and afraid. Then he cried, and called to be gotten out, but nobody came.

After a day, or two, or perhaps three – since frogs can not count – the Mother Frog and the Father Frog came to search for the Little Frog. They barely heard his tiny voice in the well, but when they did, they made a long rope from the grass to pull him out. The Little Frog was warmly welcomed at the Swamp, and that evening it was him who told the story while others listened.

But the Little Frog was not particularly happy with the Swamp after that day. He remembered the Meadow, and how nicely the bugs tasted. He remembered the shade of the Forest. He remembered the wide sky, and the distant Mountains. But most of all, he remembered the Well. From time to time, he went to the Well again, and looked into the depths of the Well, remembering how deep, dark, wet and safe it was. Whenever he was sad, he returned and gazed into it, wishing to jump in just one more time. The family, however, began to shun him for such strange ways, and the Little Frog was not certain they would come for him a second time. So he only thought about jumping in, all the while sitting at the Well.

And if there had been no reckless Princess with her golden ball, the Little Frog might have never gone in again. But she was there once, and lost the ball, and when the Little Frog went in to retrieve it, he found he had grown and could jump out by himself. Then he was very proud, and quite fit to become the Prince. I have elsewhere read that they lived happily thenceforth, though I imagine the Prince still spending quite some time at the Well.

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