



# *The Frog Prince*

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Retold Fairy Tales

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A long time ago in a pond in the grounds of a palace one Spring there was a huge batch of frogspawn, a cluster of jelly balls each bearing its own wriggling black dot. The sun shone upon the spawn making the dots wriggle more and more furiously and grow until they had dark eyes and long black vigorous tails and most importantly mouths, with which they ate away at the delicious jelly surrounding them, which tasted like peaches and honey, becoming bigger and bigger whilst their gelatinous cells became thinner and thinner, until one day the tadpoles hatched and swam free into the cool waters of the pond.

None of the tadpoles were boys or girls, they just were. On the whole they darted about quite happily discovering which things were safe to eat and how to dive deep away from the monstrous dragonflies which patrolled the surface. This became all they expected from life and most were content.

However one little tadpole was sad. They did not know what their purpose was in life, but felt, from mouth to tail, that it was something different to this. The others tried to console them. "Look around you" they bubbled. "You have a fine pool to swim in and all the algae and pondweed one could hope to eat. The sun shines on our backs and as long as the dragonflies don't get us we are perfectly fine. Life couldn't get better". The sad little tadpole couldn't help but disagree.

One day the Queen came from the palace with the royal children, a prince and princess, who brought along little fishing nets and jam jars which they half filled with pond water. The children took great delight in casting out their nets and bringing out tadpoles to inspect in the jars.

The sad little tadpole was as usual skirting around the edge of the pond, nibbling listlessly at a frond of water moss, when a great wave startled them. They tried to swim away, but found themselves pulled away from the water with a smacking sound and up to the air before tumbling gently into a tiny version of the pond with transparent walls. Through one side the tadpole could see an enormous eye, which grew smaller as the miniature pond moved until the tadpole could see the little princess smiling kindly.

The tadpole heard the princess's voice, not bubbling like her friends from the big pool, but singing softly:

“Hello little tadpole

I can see

You're as pretty as can be!”

A deeper voice said “Now put them back, ever so gently, like a good little girl” and the tadpole felt themselves go lower and lower and tilt smoothly until they found they were able to swim back into the big pond.

All the other tadpoles were excited. “What was it like?” they bubbled.

The little tadpole sighed happily and little droplets fizzed from their mouth to the surface.

“It was wonderful. And now I know what I am going to be in life. I am going to be a girl!”

All the other tadpoles laughed at her and flicked their tails in her face contemptuously before swimming away.

Before long the sun rose higher in the sky so its beams reached right down into the pond and all the tadpoles started to change. First tiny stubs appeared near to where their tails joined their bodies, and then another set just below their heads. The stubs near their tails expanded quickly and soon became legs with webbed feet, which made it easier for all the tadpoles to quickly swim towards food or away from dragonflies. They were all quite delighted with these changes, even the hitherto sad little tadpole who thought “This is the first step towards becoming a girl!”

Next, the stubs near to their heads grew into a second, slightly smaller set of legs, and the tadpoles realised that they could use these to grab hold of things and climb up and down the pond weeds, which was very useful.

The little tadpole was delighted. “Now I have feet and hands!” she bubbled. “Soon I will be a girl!”

But all the other tadpoles laughed at her. “You are just a froglet now!” they gurgled. “Just like the rest of us!” and they would have flicked their tails in her face again, but they realised that their tails had become almost as delicious as the jelly they ate back when they were little black dots and now tasted of roast beef and potatoes, so they just swam away.

All the little froglets grew bigger and bigger having nibbled each others scrumptious tails down to little bumps. They were now able to hop onto the water lilies and croak their songs into the evening air.

Back at the palace the Princess and Prince had undergone changes too. The Prince had been told every day by the Queen what a fine king he would be. He was allowed to go riding and sword fighting and all manner of Princely activities. However the Princess was sad. She was told that if she behaved herself and learned embroidery and flower arranging that she might find herself a nice King to marry her and take care of her. Above all she was instructed that she had to be a good girl.

“But I don’t want to be a good girl” she wailed in exasperation. “I don’t want to get married and be looked after. I wish I was a boy!”

On her birthday the Princess was given a beautiful golden ball. The Queen had thrown a grand party at the palace, inviting all the finest young princes in the hope one would take an interest in her wayward child, and dressed the protesting Princess in a gown spun from silk and pearls.

All the Princes at the party bored the Princess and her dress felt tight and itchy. She snuck out of the palace and sat at the edge of the pond where she tossed her golden ball to herself disconsolately.

The frogs were in fine voice as the first light of the moon struck the pond. One voice seemed to the Princess to be sweeter than all the rest and she looked down in astonishment at the frog who stood on her hind legs on a nearby lily pad, serenading her.

“Hello little Princess  
I can see  
You’re as lovely as can be!”

The Princess realised that this must be the little tadpole she had once caught in her net, and in her surprise she failed to catch the golden ball and it tumbled into the depths of the pond.

“Oh no!” she gasped. “If only I could get back my golden ball. Nothing else in life pleases me!” and tears fell from her eyes onto the lily pad.

The frog felt the tickle of salty tears and looked up earnestly at the weeping Princess.

“I will bring you your ball back Princess, but first you must tell me, why are you so sad?”

“Oh little Frog. I wish I was not a Princess. I wish I had never been a girl. I want to be a boy for that suits me better.”

“But you must be what you truly feel you are” the frog replied. “I myself always knew I was a girl and now I am!”

She waited for the Princess to laugh and run away, but it didn’t happen, so she swam down to the bottom of the pond and retrieved the golden ball, which she nudged, with some difficulty, onto the bank, next to the Princess.

The Princess’s tears had dried and she looked thoughtfully at the frog. “Oh if only I could come and live with

you in your pond,” she said. “I could be a boy frog and nobody could stop me doing what I wished!”

Now, it just so happens, that a fairy was floating past the pond on a moonbeam, when he heard the Princess’s desperate plea, and so, using the magic from the moon, he cast a spell and for a split second the pond was bathed in a beautiful golden light, and when it faded, the Princess tried to speak, but all that came out was a rich, throaty croak, and when the Princess looked down they saw webbed feet and hands and the reflection in the water was that of a very handsome frog Prince.

With a grateful “ribbit”, the new Frog Prince hopped onto the lily pad to join the Frog Girl, who he decided was the most beautiful and wise frog girl he had ever encountered, and not only because she was the first.

And when the Queen came to the pond’s edge, dragging along a fine young suitor from the party, all she could find was a discarded dress of silk and pearls and a golden ball, and all she could hear was a chorus of frogs.

Sometimes, in the twilight, if you listen very carefully at the ponds edge, you might make out the voices of the Frog Prince and the frog girl (now a Frog Princess), sweeter than all the rest.

“We are little froggies

As you see

We’re as happy as can be!”

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