

The Human and the Frog

Once upon a time, in a rainforest far, far away, there lived a small colony of purple tree frogs. These frogs were small and limber, with very thin skin. In this colony, it went without saying that above all, a love and respect for the world around you came first. The second rule, which while listed second, is of equal importance to the first, love those around you as you love the Earth they walk upon. These purple tree frogs worked day-in and day-out to maintain the cleanliness and proper functioning of the environment around them. They all had individual roles to uphold and if one frog did not work, the land would begin to wither away. Therefore, it was of the utmost importance that each frog did not stray from their responsibilities.

Within this colony lived a family of frogs known as the Webbers. Their son, Fabio, had just turned 5 months, or 17 as the average reader might understand, and was beginning to rebel against his parents, Francisco and Frida. He liked to stay up late playing Frogger, had stopped going to the growing ceremonies held each morning to give thanks for the rain and Earth, and had started to date a young frog by the name of Susan, despite his parents' advisements against it. Fabio and Susan would stay up into the wee hours of the morning, when the jaguars roamed the rainforest floor and the moon beamed down just bright enough to light only the top layers of the trees. Because they were up so late, they often slept past the time they were supposed to report for their daily duties and the land was beginning to show its sadness. Susan knew their habits had grown to be too much, but Fabio insisted that their love for each other was just too much for the colony to understand and until they were able to leave, they would just continue their routines.

The colony's medicine man began to notice these patterns in Fabio's behavior and pleaded him to step up and soothe the sadness in the soil he had started to sew. Fabio refused and left the medicine man standing with no choice but to take matters into his own hands. The medicine man began to sift through his spells until he stumbled upon one in particular that caught his eye – the shape-shifting spell. With the aid of this spell and a droplet of Susan's slime, he would be able to transform her into any being his heart desired. He knew it to be risky, but if he didn't intervene in this toxic chain of events, his fellow frogs and the Earth he cherished so dearly would begin to wither away; they simply could not survive without the help of Susan and Fabio. Knowing the only thing that could reverse the spell was the revival of the soil- he began to mix the ingredients.

Fabio awoke that day like he did any other day, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. The sun risen long ago and already reached its peak which Fabio could tell by its descent back below the tree line. He sauntered down to the pond where he was to collect water for the trees, knowing full-well he was in for another stern talking to from his frolleagues. On his way there, he stopped at the big rock on the left of the path to the pond, waiting for Susan. He waited and waited until he heard something rustling in the leaves above him. He listened and watched as a small girl began to climb down the trunk of the tree. This girl was not just any ordinary girl, no, she was a human. This was the first time Fabio had ever encountered a human. He had always heard stories about them from his friends growing up, but never thought he'd live to see the day when one would wander into his colony.

The little girl stepped closer to him, with what appeared to be a very concerned look upon her face. Fabio watched as this giant stumbled towards him, shaking the ground beneath her feet. He looked higher and higher until his eyes met hers and instantly he felt it, that human was no

ordinary human. He knew her. This girl was Susan. Her voice boomed as she attempted to explain to Fabio what happened.

It started out like most nights. Susan had just finished her day's work at the bug-recruitment site. It was a long day interviewing bugs to find ones suitable for fertilizing the land and she just wanted to go home. Susan hopped lazily back to her branch to turn in for the night. She fell asleep far faster than she normally did but couldn't recall the events from the time she got home to the time she fell asleep. When she woke up, she felt... different. There was no familiar wetness to her skin and her breathing was harsh, unlike the subtle croaks her kind normally emits. When she looked down she was terrified to realize that she was not Susan the purple tree frog, but Susan the naked human. She looked down at her hands to find a lack of webbing between her digits and squeezed her eyes shut tightly, hoping when she opened them that this would all turn out to be a horrible dream. When she opened her eyes however, her form was the same. Unsure of what to do, she began to make her decent down the tree which is when she saw Fabio waiting at their rock.

Fabio sat with his mouth agape, his long tongue beginning to dry out from how long he'd been sitting like that. He racked his mind trying to figure out what could have possibly happened between now and yesterday that would have caused such a shift to occur. He pondered and he wondered and he thought until he remembered his meeting with the medicine man earlier in the afternoon and how he turned his back on the medicine man's pleas. He realized immediately what had happened and knew he needed to pay another visit to the medicine man as soon as possible.

When Fabio arrived to the medicine man's hut, he was mixing concoctions and muttering to himself as usual. When the medicine man turned around, he was not surprised to see Fabio, in

fact, he had been expecting him. The medicine man smiled and welcomed Fabio in, offering him some herbal sap tea which Fabio aggressively refused.

“What did you do to Susan?! She’s a human! How is she supposed to help the colony if she is too big to fit anywhere we go? How am I supposed to love her if I am only as big as her toe?” Fabio questioned angrily.

“Ah, yes, Fabio. Do you remember what I asked you yesterday about contributing more to this colony? How right now, with the absence of not only yourself but the absence of Susan our shrubs are beginning to die. The roots of our tree are beginning to curl up and I was left no choice but to help you see the way...” The medicine man replied calmly.

“The way?! What do you mean the way?! I just want my Susan back and once she’s mine again we’re leaving this community and moving to the city, where there are no trees to take care of I can live my own life!”

“Fabio, don’t you see? It is not I who can fix this problem, only you can do this. The only thing that can return Susan back to her original form is the soothing of the soil, a job that will require hard work, dedication, and most of all, an open heart.” The medicine man began. “As the soil begins to heal from the presence of ordinary hatred, Susan will begin to return to the frog you know and love. But be prepared, Fabio. This will require the tending of not only your duties but Susan’s as well. You have much love to feel yet, young Fabio.”

A dejected, frantic Fabio returned to the rock to report to Susan what would be required of him. He spoke about the anger he felt, the things he must do, the hatred for the world around him, but most of all he spoke of his desire to fix Susan no matter what it took. Susan expressed her feelings of fear for the future but knew that as long as Fabio did as he was asked, everything would turn out alright.

Fabio awoke the next day with a determination he had not felt in weeks. He was ready to take on the day as the sun began to rise and transformed his anger to progress. He worked at the bug-recruiting site and delivered water, day after day, waiting for the soil to show its green. He worked and he sweat but nothing was bringing the life back to the ground. Susan wept as she watched this all from a bird's eye view, after all, she is 700 times larger than Fabio right now.

Fabio, after working for the eighth day straight, or 272 days in Susan's time, was exhausted as he watched the other frogs continue about their duties around him. "What do I do?" He thought to himself. He watched his frolleagues grin ear to ear as they spread sap or carried water and wondered how they could possibly be smiling when everything was dying around them. And then it hit him. "They're smiling because they feel love. They know their efforts are reviving a symbiotic relationship between themselves and the Earth and no matter what the situation is, they love where they are and can't wait to continue nurturing their mother."

As he came to this epiphany, the soil began to dampen and the grass began to show its first shades of green in days. As he witnessed the growth around him, he heard a shriek of excitement from above him, as if the clouds were thundering with glee. The shriek came from Susan who was shrinking down to Fabio's size before their eyes. Once Susan was finished shrinking, the two frogs embraced and licked each other's eyes, elated to be back to normal.

But that's just it, this wasn't normal. This was better than normal, they felt full. They not only looked into each other's eyes with love now, but felt it and felt it truly for the first time in their short frog lives for the earth their four little feet stood upon. The soil felt it back and the grasses grew at rates unseen by even the eldest of the frog generations. The medicine man looked upon the two young frogs, remembering back to his own youth and mistakes along the way, smiling as he witnessed the powers of love and nature return to harmony again.