

Mr. Frog Loses His Marbles

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ISBN: 9789465128825
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For those beset by wanderlust.

1 Return

Once upon a time, there was a frog on a lily pad amid the swamp he liked to call home. Mr. Frog had no frog friends and very few other animal friends. He got to know most of them during his extended travels across the lands surrounding his homestead. He had ventured hither and thither, from blooming poppy fields to winding roottowns, to the far stretches of the large mountain range and the Grand Trees. You might think, “What business had a simple frog doing all this travel?” and that would be a right thought to have. You see, Mr. Frog had a slight problem, which was one of wanderlust and copious indulgences.

While many animals can suffer from wanderlust, few ever get to act upon it. And when Mr. Frog’s work at the factory had halted because of strikes caused by wage cuts, which were the result of the degrading socio-economic state of the swamps, he had some time upon his hands. So, that is when he bare-bones planned his travels and left. Since then, he had seen many things, made some friends, and many more memories. But now he had returned from his travels all around the lands.

Mr. Frog sat on his lily pad, unpacking his satchel and knapsack. He neatly put all his belongings in order, to see what he must purchase to settle down once more. He had a small woven cloth he received from Ms. Spider, which was now stained with sweat and mud and leftover grass blades. He had a glass jar, containing flies for snacks, which was stoppered with cork. He got that jar from his father before he passed. Then there was a small pouch containing dice, which he had used often. These items were all that was within his satchel, for his knapsack held the rest.

He also had a sharp sword; one he got from Mr. Eagle who did not need it for he had talons. Mr. Eagle got it from Ms. Squirrel, but she had found no use for it. She had got it from Sir Dog, who it was not a sword for, but more of a toothpick. But

since he had lost his front legs in the war a few years prior, he had no use for it anymore. It was passed around for a while and was now part of Mr. Frog's equipment.

While unpacking, Mr. Frog took some time to think fondly of his travels. He thought about what little trinkets he gathered, where he got them from, and how he treated his friends. However, after unpacking all that, and turning his knapsack inside out to ensure he had gotten it all, which caused many things to expel forth, he simply could not believe what he saw, or rather, did not see. He looked around once more to be certain, and finally accepted the reality of the situation he found himself in. Mr. Frog was in utter disarray; he had lost his marbles.

"How did this happen?" Mr. Frog asked himself. He thought hard, but nothing came to mind. No place he could have left them, nobody could take them from him, no holes in his satchel, nor in his knapsack. He must have lost them somewhere himself. "Gods be damned," he said aloud, and with an audible sigh, he followed up with, "Fuck it."

So, Mr. Frog undid all of his work, and started to pack his bags once more. His journey to the forests and roottowns would be simpler this time around, for he knew exactly which paths to follow.

2 Grasp

Fucking shit, thought Mr. Frog in a frustrated tone. *Where are the damn lily pads? Is it already time for low stage or something?*

As he stood at the place which used to be the most travelled way out of the swamp. It was the only guidance Mr. Frog had to get out. Instead, he was now forced to swim across the still and murky waters. This is not a problem per se, not for a frog, but the occurrence of an unexpected change so early in the journey only put foreboding thoughts within Mr. Frog's head. He began to doubt whether this trip would be the same after all.

As he jumped far and high with all his might into the sludgy waters, Mr. Frog used his webbed hands and feet to paddle himself forward. With mighty and fast extensions of his legs, he darted forward in quick bursts through the waters. Mr. Frog was accustomed to the sludge of the swamp and knew the signs to look out for when taking a jolly swim. He was careful, moving slowly to not be spotted by pike lurking below the obscured surface. He made sure to use all the green algae and duckweed he could find to camouflage himself, using the environment to his advantage.

An hour and a half later, Mr. Frog needed some rest. Not even his superb condition was enough to get him out of the swamp in a single go. And while he was reaching the edges, shown by the increase of hardy shrubs and small peaks of land sticking out of the waters, he was not quite there yet. So, as he kept swimming just below the surface of the water, he eventually reached a small patch of wetland sticking out of the surface. It was perfectly surrounded by reeds of cattail and will make for a great spot to absorb some sunlight and rest.

As Mr. Frog headed towards the site, he maneuvered himself through the reeds, slightly pushing some aside to clear a path for himself. There was a small moment of realization when he pushed against a dull orange reed.

Oh n— is all he thought before Mr. Frog was quickly pulled up by a long orange beak almost four times the size of him. In one fast swooping motion, he was lifted up out of the water and almost thrown into the air. All he could see was a flash of white and black, but he knew he had met his fate. For this was the grandest enemy of all frogs, a Stork.

Mr. Frog knew there was only one way to get out of this. “Wait!” he yelled as he flailed around in the air with all four limbs, and attempted to reach for his sword, which he did not manage to get into a good grip. “You shouldn’t eat me!”

The stork caught Mr. Frog with the tip of his beak, held him in a strong hold and blinked twice. “And why should I not?” Mr. Stork replied.

Mr. Frog had a quick think and recollected everything he had learned from his past travels.

“You should not eat me, for I would kill you,” was Mr. Frog’s grand plan.

Mr. Stork would have none of it. “I’ve eaten plenty of your kind before, and here I stand, grand and tall.”

Mr. Frog expected this and was forced to double down on his statement. “Unfortunately, I have found that I am not like other frogs of my kind, for they are sweet and soft, and I am stiff and toxic.”

Mr. Stork had to think for a while as he held Mr. Frog within his beak.

Mr. Frog sat still, hoping that his foe would let him get away. He secretly hoped that he would be rewarded with his honesty. Not only to Mr. Stork, but to himself as well.

Mr. Frog decided to prove his point. “I once stole a lot of nuts from Mr. Chipmunk’s winter stash. When he asked me what had happened, I told him it was a mouse. He chewed right through the neighbour’s door and kneecapped him. Granted, Mr. Mouse was also pushing catnip, so he wasn’t innocent by any means.”

And for his assuring honesty, Mr. Frog was rewarded. For Mr. Stork had found empathy within himself and put Mr. Frog down on the ground.

Mr. Frog was elated. "Thank you, Mr. Stork. What may I call you?" he asked. "So I can spread the word of the good stork."

"My name is Cicon Stork. Nice to meet you. What may I call you? To tell my family not to eat you?"

"I am Esculent Frog, and I am on a journey for the second time, for I have lost my marbles."

"I can see that you're on a better path. May the Eagle grant you his eyes then. I wish you well." And Mr. Stork took his leave, fanning out his large wings and flying off to another raised patch of land, lying in wait for another frog or fish to come his way.

Mr. Frog took some time to calm down, almost unable to believe his plan had worked. Though he was thankful for not being eaten, he was slightly hurt as well. He decided to lie down on a small patch of soft string moss and grabbed a few flies out of his jar to soothe his hunger and himself. He spent some time taking in the sunlight, warming up nicely, and mentally prepared himself for another plunge. He realized he sensed a slight internal drive to get out of the swamp; he could not wait to get out of it.

Although this was his home, he no longer felt *at home*. For a moment, he closed his eyes and took a few deep breaths. He focused on his bodily needs. While his legs were slightly aching, he was fine, nonetheless.

Mr. Frog leapt to his feet, secured his satchel and his sword, grabbed his knapsack, and fell into the waters. It was colder than before, uninviting. Mr. Frog did not wait a moment to start moving, noticing the need to get out as fast as possible. With all his might, he pushed and pushed through the flexible foliage and occasional lily pad. Eventually reaching the edges of the swamp, where he could tread upon the soggy grounds. Being able to stand upright, and experiencing the different grasses underneath his feet, he felt invigorated.