

MEECHEE THE FROG

by

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“Croak, croak, croak,” Susan Frog sang out proudly from her lily pad. Susan had just given birth to tadpoles and she wanted the whole world to know. The melody of her voice flowed out across the millpond and it instilled warmth in the chilly winter air. Neighbors smiled as they heard the beautiful singing, but one frog, her husband John, wasn’t exactly pleased with some of the new tadpoles.

“Why are some of them so small?” he asked, shaking his head in dismay. John puffed out his body to almost twice his normal size. Even his bulging eyes seemed to bulge out more. “They embarrass me,” he croaked loudly. “I’ll be laughed at by everyone here in Frogsville.”

“They’re just tiny now,” Susan cried, “but you just wait until they grow up.”

A week later, all the new tadpoles except one were getting much bigger. Susan couldn’t understand why the one wasn’t growing. She became very concerned and made an appointment with Dr. Norris Frog.

“Please hop right in,” Dr. Norris said to Susan. “I haven’t seen you for quite a while. How’s the family?”

“John’s doing fine. He’s healthy as a horse.”

“How’re the new tadpoles doing?” he asked, looking down at the small tadpole that hung by her side. “Is this one of them?”

“Yes,” she answered proudly.

“What’s his name?”

“Meechee.”

“Hi Meechee,” Dr. Norris said, “Welcome to the world.”

“What can I do for you, Susan?”

“It’s Meechee,” she said, patting her son on the head, “I’m worried about him.”

“Why? He looks healthy to me.”

“It’s his size. He should be much larger by now.

“When was he born?”

“Last Monday,” she replied.

“Now, Susan,” Dr. Norris said soothingly, “I wouldn’t be too concerned yet. After all, it’s only been a week. Give him another week or two.”

“Okay, but I’m really worried about him. The other tadpoles are much larger and,” she said crying, “John won’t have anything to do with him.”

Dr. Norris patted Susan on the arm. “I’m sure he will be okay, but why don’t you bring him back in next Monday so I can check him again. By then he will probably be just fine.”

“I hope so,” she said sniffing. The two of them, Susan and Meechee, left Dr. Norris’ office and hopped back to their pond. When they got back, John Bullfrog was waiting for them.

“Is he okay?” John croaked in his deep voice.

“Dr. Norris said he thinks so, but we have to go back in a week.”

“He’s probably just going to be a small frog and not a big bullfrog like me,” John said and puffed up his chest.

“You will still be proud of him. Won’t you?”

“I don’t know,” he answered.



Another week went by and Susan and Meechee again made the long trek to see Dr. Norris.

"Hi Susan," Dr. Norris said as they hopped into his office. Then, he looked down at Meechee and shook his head. "I just knew you'd be bigger by now, Meechee, but you haven't grown an inch."

"Is there anything that can be done?" Susan asked.

"He seems normal in everything except size. I'll run a couple blood tests to make certain that he doesn't have anything that would stunt his growth."



A week later, Dr. Norris called Susan on the pond phone and gave her the results of the blood test."

"Susan," Dr. Norris said, "I hate to say this, but there's really nothing wrong with Meechee, he's just going to be a small frog."

After Susan hung up the phone, she hopped over to a lily pad in the far corner of the pond. She sat on it for a long time and cried and cried. Meechee was swimming at the far end of the pond with some of his friends and heard his mother crying. He went over to see what was wrong.

"Why are you crying, mommy?"

"Oh, it's nothing."

"Let me know if I can do anything to help," Meechee said.

"I will."

During the next six months, all of the young tadpoles grew to be big frogs, but not Meechee. Oh, he grew a little, but not enough to notice. John Bullfrog spent very little time with his small son and it bothered Susan.

"I really don't care much for him," he told Susan one warm summer day, "after all, he will never amount to anything anyway. He's so small that he won't ever be able to croak deeply. He will just have a little squeaky sounding croak and everyone will make fun of him."

Susan felt that John was being unfair, but she didn't dare criticize him. He would just yell and croak loudly at her and then he would go off with some of his buddies to the local pond tavern.

When Meechee would hear his father yelling at him, it hurt his feelings and he felt awful. He tried his best to please his dad, but John would just brush him off and pay no attention to him. Meechee liked to watch the pond television station, especially on Saturday mornings because they showed cartoons.

"Why do you keep watching that junk?" John asked Meechee one Saturday. "All it does is clutter your mind. You should be outdoors practicing your croaking and playing with your friends."

"But, daddy," he protested, "all the kids watch cartoons."

"It's a total waste of time. None of you will turn out to be anything, but losers."

Susan happened to be sitting on a pad nearby and she heard John talking to Meechee. It really bothered her, but she didn't know what to do about it. Later, after John left to hop around with some of his buddies, she took Meechee aside and tried to make him feel better.

"Meechee," she said, "I think you're going to grow up to make your dad and me very proud of you."

"Why mommy?" he asked.

"I'm not sure son, it's just that you seem very intelligent. You're doing much better in school than most of the other frogs your age."

"I like school. It's fun and I learn so many new things."

"You're a very good little frog."

"I love you, mommy," he said.

Tears formed in Susan's eyes and for a moment she couldn't speak. She finally managed to mutter that she loved him also and then she hopped off. Meechee went back to watching his favorite "Super Frogman" show.

As summer gave way to fall and the cool autumn winds chilled the air, Meechee and his father grew further and further apart. John spent more and more time down at the tavern. When he'd finally stagger home, hopping and falling most of the way, he'd be downright abusive to Susan and he wouldn't speak to Meechee. Susan was becoming very depressed.

The holiday season was rapidly approaching and so was her tadpole's first birthday. Susan wanted to have a big birthday party for all of them, but John was dead set against it.

"I don't want to have a party where Meechee will be there," John said sarcastically. "He's such a little runt and no one would come."

"Yes they would," Susan said defensively. "All the tadpoles, including Meechee, have friends."

"Ha, you call those losers he hangs out with, friends," John croaked. "They only pretend to be his friend because you give them cookies and because he helps them with their schoolwork."

"He is smart. Can't you see that John?"

"He's a runt. That's what he is. How many times do I have to tell you? He will never turn out to be worth a speck of millpond dust."

"He is smarter than you," Susan said angrily.

"I don't want to listen to any more of this garbage. I'm going over to Fred's place."

John hopped off and Susan went into the bedroom and cried and cried. Meechee heard his mother crying and knocked on the bedroom door.

"Are you okay, mommy?" he asked.

"Yes, honey" she stammered. "I'm okay. You go on to school now."

Meechee was worried about his mom. She seemed to be crying a lot lately and he was sure it had something to do with him. All the things his dad was saying about him made him feel lower than a tree frog on a lily pad.

"I love you, mommy," he said as he hopped out the door.

The next month went by quickly. Susan, against John's wishes, announced that the birthday party would be on December 14th. John was not happy about the coming party, but he agreed to attend. Meechee wanted to surprise his mom and dad by being able to give a deep throaty croak at the birthday party. Then, Meechee thought, dad will really be proud of me. Every chance he got he practiced his croaking, but no matter how hard he tried, the croaks still came out sounding squeaky. He even got one of his friends to practice with him. The two of them snuck off to a secluded area of the pond and croaked and croaked. His friend, Tad, made some cool sounding croaks, but all of Meechee's croaks came out sounding more like creaks than croaks. Tad laughed at the funny sounds coming out of his friend. That angered Meechee and the two of them got in a scuffle. It finally ended when another frog hopped onto a nearby lily pad. Tad looked a little sheepish and apologized to Meechee.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I couldn't help it."

Meechee puffed up his small body and glared at his friend. "You just wait," he said. "I'll keep practicing till I can croak better than you."

Tad almost laughed, but he was able to control himself. The two of them said icily goodbyes and then hopped off in different directions.

Two days before the birthday party, Meechee was only a short hop from home when he heard someone crying out for help. The sound was coming from some reeds over by the Frogsville post office and he hopped as fast as he could in that direction. When he got close, he could see it was Pete, one of his dad's friends caught in a cage trap. Several large bullfrogs were near him and they were frantically hopping up and down.

"Please help me," Pete croaked pleadingly to them.

"We don't know what to do," the largest bullfrog said. "The trapdoor is too strong for us to raise."

Meechee looked at poor Pete caught in the trap and knew he had to do something. His mind raced at lightning speed as he hopped up to the group. "Let me help," Meechee squeaked.

“Ha, ha, ha,” one of the bullfrogs said loudly. “What can a little frog like you do?”

“I think I know how we can get him out.”

“But, we’ve tried everything,” the bullfrog said.

Meechee looked the big frog right in his bulging eyes and said, “Have you tried using leverage?”

“Leverage? What in the world is that?”

“It’s a technique using a rigid bar as a lever to generate more force by pivoting it on a fixed point.”

All the bullfrogs gathered around Meechee and started asking questions about how they could use leverage to get Pete out of the trap.

“What we need to do is get a strong stick and a rock,” he told them. All the bullfrogs shook their heads in disbelief, but they hopped off to search for the items.

“Don’t leave me,” Pete wailed.

“I won’t leave you,” Meechee said. “I’ll stay right here with you.”

“I hope so,” Pete cried. “I’m scared.”

“Everything will be okay.”

A few minutes later, the group of bullfrogs returned with a flat stick and a rock.

“Will this stick work?” they asked.

Meechee went over to the stick and checked it over. It was a very strong looking stick. “I think it’ll work fine,” he said.

“What do we do with them?” one of the bullfrogs asked.

“We have to put the rock a few inches in front of the door and then we put the stick on top of the rock. Next, we put the end of the stick under the trapdoor and by pushing down on the other end of the stick, we raise the trapdoor.”

“I think it’s ridiculous, but we might as well give it a try,” the largest bullfrog said.

They did as instructed and were amazed that the trapdoor lifted up just enough for Pete to squeeze out.

“Meechee, I can’t thank you enough,” Pete said, still shaking. “I’ll forever be indebted to you.”

“Hey, it was nothing.”

All the other bullfrogs thanked Meechee and then they took Pete and hopped off towards the local tavern. Meechee hopped and skipped happily home.

On December 14th, Meechee and all his brothers and sisters gathered in the north end of the pond for the big birthday party. Almost every frog in Frogsville, both young and old, came to help celebrate. John could hardly contain himself he was so happy. Meechee tried to croak very deeply for his dad, but the sound, as usual, came out squeaky.

“Son,” John said taking him aside, “It’s okay if you’re small and can’t croak deeply. You’re one of the smartest frogs I’ve ever seen and you make me really proud of you. To me, you will always be the biggest bullfrog in Frogsville.”

“Thanks, dad,” Meechee said, puffing up his small body. Susan, who overheard the conversation, cried happily as she hopped over to sit beside John. All the frogs sang happy birthday and then the tadpoles blew out the candles.

Meechee lived happily for many years and although he never got very large and never was able to croak loudly, he was the most liked frog in Frogsville.

Author's Notes

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