

## The Frogs Who Wanted A King

ONCE upon a time, a community of frogs lived together in a pond. They swam and played together in the water, and were as happy as the day was long. But one day, some of the frogs began to wish for a king. "We can never be great and glorious", said they, "unless we have a king." So they went to a wise old frog and said to her: "We want a king." The old frog sighed, for she knew that they were asking for trouble. "Why do you want a king?" she asked, "Is not the sun warm for you, the water cool and the grass green? What can a king give you that you have not already got?"

But the other frogs would not listen to her. "No, we must have a king", they cried, "to rule over us, to protect us and to make us great and glorious." The wise old frog saw that they were too obstinate to heed her advice. So she pointed to a large rock on the shore of the pond. "Very well", said she, "Here is your king."

The other frogs were very happy. Every morning, they went and bowed to their king. Then they spent the day swimming and playing as usual. Gradually, the young frogs began to grow bolder. They hopped and leaped on the rock, and sat on it to sun themselves.

One day, a wily stork came to the pond in search of food. But the old frog warned all the others to dive into the pond, so the stork could not catch any of them. The stork noticed that every morning, all the frogs came up and bowed to the rock. "Why do you bow to this rock, O friends?" he asked. "This is our great and mighty king", the frogs replied.

The stork burst out laughing.

"What kind of a king is this?" said he, "You jump and leap on your king and he remains silent. If a king cannot control his own people and they do not fear him, how can he protect you? A king should be great and strong. Look at me. I am strong. I have pure white feathers. I look impressive. If you make me your king, I will rule well. I will make you the most disciplined community of frogs. You will become famous throughout the world."

The frogs were impressed by the stork's words. "He is right", said they, "Our king is too quiet and passive. He does not give orders or rule as a king should. Our children are becoming very unruly but the king does not check them. Let the stork be our king instead."

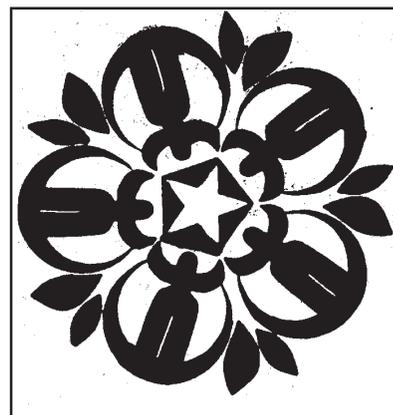
"You are making a mistake", said the old frog, "This stork is cruel and selfish. He will destroy us all." But the other frogs would not listen to her.



"Old grandmother knows nothing of the ways of the world", said they. And they chose the stork to be their king.

In the morning, when they went to bow to him, the stork pounced on one frog and devoured it. "This is the custom of great kings", he explained, "It will make us more disciplined."

The baby frogs were terrified. They grew quiet and dull. "See how great our king is!" said the frogs, "What a powerful beak he has! How his white feathers shine in the sun! What discipline and order he has introduced into our pond! We are fortunate indeed to have such a king. He has made us the greatest nation of



frogs in the whole world."

Every morning, the stork ate one frog. Gradually, he began to eat two frogs a day, then three, then four. He grew fat and sleek, but the frog community grew smaller and smaller. They no longer played and gambolled in the water. They merely waited to be devoured.

Finally, a day came when the stork thought he had eaten up the last frog. "The nation is truly disciplined now" said he, looking at the calm, unruffled pond, "I have done my duty admirably."

But he did not know that the old frog and her daughters had dived to

the bottom of the pond and were living there. After some days, they began to stir the surface of the pond with poisonous weeds. The stork was very hungry by now. He was also very angry to see someone disturbing the calm surface of the pond. "Who dares defy my rule and stir up trouble?" cried he, "I will finish you off, you upstart." So saying, he pounced upon the weeds and ate them. But they were poisonous so he fell down dead.

Then the surviving frogs decided to live peacefully in their pond and never to have another king.

*(adapted by Ruth Vanita from an old fable)*