

THE COLOR OF THE WIND

Fables for a New Age

by

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THE FROG WHO KNEW TOO MUCH

Scribbles the Frog had been an unusual tadpole. At a very early age it became clear that he was not destined to grow into your ordinary, garden variety frog. His parents often complained to their neighbors over the fact that their child did strange things, such as going off to a quiet corner of the swamp and spending days deep in thought and contemplation of his surroundings. To the world of frog beings, this was simply useless dreaming. There were flies to be caught and eggs to be cared for and a litany of other practical frog chores to be carried out. Quiet reflection on the purpose of the universe was just not an acceptable way to spend one's time.

One fine summer day, Scribbles decided that the pond in which he had been born was too small for him. To his mother's great sorrow, he packed up his lily pad and headed off into the wild unknown. Now for a frog to hop off alone into the land of predators is considered pure frog lunacy by all species. Scribble's brother, jealous of his frivolous sense of independence, warned him that he would end up on a hairless monkey's plate, between the broccoli and the mashed potatoes. But even this horror story could not hold back our adventurous frog from obeying his urge to discover some kind of meaning to it all.

In his wanderings, he came upon many fascinating individuals, most of whom are featured in his collected memoirs. He learned about life, liberty, and the pursuit of helpless prey. An old owl taught him the basics of survival -- keep your eyes and ears open and stay away from hairless monkeys. But hairless monkeys were precisely what Scribbles was searching for. Scribbles' frog-fate was to come upon one of those rare exceptions of nature, a wise hairless monkey. The creature lived alone in the woods and spent most of his time sitting under an ancient tree doing nothing in particular.

The day Scribbles hopped by, the strange hairless monkey was floating in mid-air next to his favorite tree. This sight caught Scribbles' attention because he was well enough educated to know that hairless monkeys are not generally known to float, except sometimes in water.

The hairless monkey gracefully drifted down to the ground, opened his eyes, and turned a piercing gaze upon Scribbles.

"You interrupted my concentration, friend."

Scribbles was astounded. He had never heard of an hairless monkey who knew how to ribbit.

"Pardon me, Mister Hairless Monkey. I didn't mean to...I was so surprised at seeing you up in the

air."

"You must not be from this part of the woods. All the local inhabitants have been watching me for many years."

Scribbles was intrigued by the hairless monkey's unexpected gentleness. He got up the courage to come a little closer.

"I'm on a journey."

"Oh? What sort of a journey?"

"I'm searching for Truth."

"Aaah.."

The kind hairless monkey smiled merrily and closed his eyes.

Scribbles hesitated for a moment.

"You don't happen to know where I can find it, do you?"

"Truth is everywhere, my dear frog."

"What's that suppose to mean?"

The hairless monkey sighed and looked up at the sun shimmering through the leaves of his favorite tree.

"I came out into the wilderness precisely to get away from conversation."

Scribbles hopped right up next to him and stared at him, rather irritated.

"You mean to tell me that you would withhold vital information critical to your fellow beings?"

The smiling hairless monkey stretched out his hand and lifted Scribbles onto his knee.

"I used to teach in the great cities of the world because I thought that all those who came to me were sincerely seeking for understanding. I felt it was my duty. But most of them wanted a leader who would tell them what to do with themselves. They wanted to make me important after I had spent so much time learning how to get rid of my self-importance. So I gave it all up."

Scribbles felt terribly dejected.

"I've travelled far from my pond and faced many great dangers and lost my lily pad, and I finally come upon someone who has some answers and he won't give them to me. I think I'll go drown myself."

"Okay."

Scribbles looked up in astonishment. "What do you mean, 'okay'? Don't you care about me?"

"You're the one who doesn't care about yourself, little frog. If drowning makes you happy, why should I stop you?"

Scribbles thought on that one for a moment.

"Alright, I won't drown myself. What can I do for you so you'll tell me about Truth."

The wise hairless monkey shook his bald head, smiling cheerfully.

"I don't need anything. That's why I have the answers. Besides, what good would it do for a frog to know about Truth?"

"Well, I can't go on living like I have. Eating flies and hopping around all day like an idiot. There's got to be more to life."

The hairless monkey who didn't behave like a hairless monkey placed Scribbles in the palm of his hand and lifted him to eye level. He stared deeply into his frog eyes.

"What's wrong with fulfilling your duty to Mother Nature and living out a normal frog life?"

"It's terribly boring. Besides, I get the feeling that I'm being used."

"And you think that finding Truth will change all that? Do you think it will stop you from hopping after flies?"

"I don't know. But I've got to find out why I am what I am."

"What are you?"

Scribbles was taken aback by his ignorance. "A frog! What else?"

The hairless monkey touched his head with his fingertip, eyes twinkling like distant stars.

"You are a part of the Universe, a part of the wind and the sun and the rain and the earth. You just happen to be in a frog-form. And I just happen to be in a hairless monkey form. But that's only the outside world. It's in the inner, invisible world that you find your true identity."

"How do I get to my inner world?"

"Stop asking so many questions and just be aware that you are a part of everything that Is."

"You mean, Truth is already in me?"

"That depends on which you you are referring to."

"Me! Scribbles!"

"The Scribbles who chases after flies or the Scribbles who wants to find Truth?"

Scribbles began to feel dizzy. This was getting too complicated. The kind hairless monkey read his thoughts and placed him on the ground.

"It's all very simple, my dear Scribbles. When you stop looking for it outside of you, you'll find it."

"But it can't be that simple! If it was, why hasn't everyone figured it out?"

"Because everyone is too busy looking, or think they know already, or they're not interested in the questions. Hop along now, I've said too much already. Words tire me."

"But...I just got here."

The hairless monkey began floating up into the air.

"I'll leave you with a question, my dear friend. If you find the answer, you will understand Truth. What is the color of the wind?"

Scribbles watched him rise toward the summits of the tree. He thought about the question for a moment and realized that all he had ever learned made it impossible for him to understand the question itself, let alone find an answer. And that realization suddenly made something dawn within his frog-soul. A wave of ecstasy swept through him as he felt himself freed from the thousand and one questions and the thousand and one answers.

The birds sang in the trees and the sun smiled upon the earth as Scribbles the frog, content at last, merrily hopped off along the pathway carved in the meadow by a guiding breeze.

Other Fables in the collection THE COLOR OF THE WIND:

LONG TAIL THE LIZARD

THE OTTER WHO WENT TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA

THE SINGLE-WATTLED CASSONARY AND HIS LETHAL TOE

THE REBEL GERBIL

WHY HAIRLESS MONKEYS TURN OUT SO BAD

THE EAGLES' WATCHTOWER