



“A Frog Kiss”

Text by [Andrus Kivirähk](#)

Illustrated by [Anne Pikkov](#)

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A Frog Kiss is a lovely story that shows fairy tales do not always work out the way they're supposed to. Everybody knows that a frog should turn into a princess when kissed, but sometimes the unexpected happens. It all begins with Santa Claus flying back home from one of his shopping trips and losing a couple of books along the way. As Fox, Rabbit, and Wolf read the fairy tale, they all develop their own ideas about frogs and kisses. Clever plot twists have always been a strength of Andrus Kivirähk's writing, and the playful illustrations done by Anne Pikkov add another dimension to the story. Why does Bear end up walking on his hands, for a start?

Award:

2013 Good Children's Book



Reading sample

A tiny red plane flew over the forest, coming from the direction of the city and speeding straight towards the North Star.

Sitting in the plane was no other than Santa Claus himself, who had gone shopping to stock up for Christmas. Santa Claus has to collect toys during the summer, of course, so that there is something to put under the Christmas tree for children in winter. The plane was chock full of playthings, indeed. But there was also a hole in the plane that Santa Claus knew nothing about. A rat had gnawed the hole there, and four brand-new fairy-tale books fell out of it. They soared through the air like big, multicolored butterflies, until they finally thudded down between the trees.

One of the books fell on the head of a sleeping bear. The bear paid no attention to the thump, only mumbling in his sleep, and rolled over onto its other side.

The second book fell right onto a hare's dinner table, and broke his carrot in half. The hare thought that a hawk was coming after him, threw himself to the ground in fear, and played dead. It was only after a little while that he dared to crack his eyes open. There was nothing awful to be seen—just a fairy tale book lying open on the table, with one half of the carrot serving as a bookmark.

“Good heavens!” he exclaimed in great delight. “What do I read here? All I need to do is kiss a frog, and it will turn into a princess, while I’ll become a king! Isn’t that just terrific! Yes—it would be great to be a king! I wouldn’t be afraid of anyone, but everyone else would tremble before me. Even the wolf would stick up its paws and quiver. Off to kiss a frog!” And the hare set out towards the lake without a second’s delay—because that is where those frogs lived!

The third fairy tale book splashed into a fox’s bathtub.

“A book!” the fox shouted in surprise, and fished the gift from the sky out of the water. The book was indeed a little soaked and soapy, but the fox paid this no heed and read the fairy tale attentively.

“Well, what do you know!” he exclaimed. “So, a frog becomes a princess with a kiss... Oh, but a princess will certainly have a golden crown on her head! I’ll snatch it for myself right away, and scamper off into the woods lickety-split so she won’t get a hold of me. And then, I’ll put the crown on my own head, and be the most majestic creature in the woods!”

With that, the fox set out towards the lake.

The fourth book thumped down in front of a wolf’s bicycle. The bike tipped over, and the wolf hit his head on a tree.

“Curses! What could that have been?” he swore, but when he saw the book, he grabbed it immediately and started to read.

“Good news!” he said, praising the story after he finished reading it. “If I kiss one scrawny frog, it’ll grow right into a plump princess! That’s a proper mouthful! Good and sweet! I am rather hungry.”

Smacking his lips, the wolf jumped onto the bicycle and started pedaling briskly towards the lake.

Sitting on the shore of the lake were three little frog-girls, each one wearing a clean dress. They were very bored.

“Oh, if even just a single frog-boy lived here!” they sighed. “Then, we could all dance with him one by one. It’s such a pretty evening, and the grasshopper is playing its violin wonderfully!”

However, there were no frog-boys to be seen. Instead, a hare, a fox, and a wolf appeared on the shore, all of them puckering up their lips.

And before the frog-girls knew what was happening, they had all been kissed. Yet, the fairy tale had lied. Not a single princess appeared.

Instead, the shocked frog-girls were being stared at by... three just-as-shocked frog-boys!

“What could this mean?” one of them asked—the one, who had previously been a wolf. “That I’m a frog now, or what?”

“Seems so,” the former fox replied.

“Oh, dear. What do we do now?” the frog-hare cried.

“Now, we could dance...” one frog-girl proposed in a soft and timid voice. “We were waiting for you so long, we were so sad all alone!”

All of a sudden, the three frog-boys felt that they really could do with some dancing!

On top of that, the frog-girls were wearing very pretty dresses, and they themselves were so lovely and shy... They could even use another kiss!

“Let’s dance!” the frog-boys agreed, and upon hearing it, the grasshopper started to chirp an even more delightful song.

Ever since then, six frogs have lived along the bank of the river, and they have never been bored again.

But what happened to the bear and his book? Well, naturally, the bear woke up, noticed the book, picked it up upside-down (the old fool), and saw that the princess in the picture was standing with her feet up in the air.

“Oh, is that in style now?” the bear asked himself in wonder. “And I didn’t even know about it!” He immediately lifted his legs up towards the sky, and walked on his hands for the rest of his life, so people started calling him “the upside-down bear”.

Translated by Adam Cullen

