

Maki and the Frog

Maki leaned against the trunk of a great tree above the muddy shore of a great lake. Next to him was his clay bucket filled to the brim with squirming fresh worms, the bounty of a long early morning dig. In his hands he held his newest fishing rod which he finished shaping not an hour ago. He speared a worm on the hook and cast his line. Before too long it bobbed.

“Aha!” he exclaimed and grasped the rod to begin the contest.

For ten minutes Maki dueled against the underwater leviathan that thrashed about under the surface. *This is a truly monstrous fish*, he thought. He’d never fought such a battle in this quiet lake. Only when his feet sank into the mud did he notice he was standing at the water’s edge. In a moment the line went slack. Maki clenched his teeth and anchored his feet and tugged with all the force he could muster. With a tremendous splash his prey leapt out the water straight toward him.

“Arg!” He yelled.

“Wah!” The monster yelled back as it hurtled towards him. In a flash Maki found himself facing the sky. He felt an unsettling sliminess across his chest. He looked down and saw a large green face staring back.

“Hello there,” the monster said to him.

Maki pushed the creature off and grabbed his pole for what pitiful defense it could offer. He stared at the slippery looking creature in front of him. It was at least as large as him. Its green skin was wet and so smooth it glistened in the sunlight. Its eyes were large and black, and webs connected its fingers. He saw this when it pulled his hook out of its mouth. The creature tossed the worm in the air and in a flash a pink sinewy tongue stretched out past his arm and snapped the worm back down its gullet.

“What manner of beast are you?” Maki asked the slimy creature.

“I’m not a beast, I’m a frog. Frog is my name. Frog the Frog.”

“I am Maki. I’m a human.”

“A human? I’ve never heard of a human. It’s a pleasure, Maki the human,” Frog said as he gave a bow. Maki loosened his grip on the pole, less afraid than confused and curious.

“Why did you bite into my line?”

“Why was your line attached to my worm?”

“I was trying to catch a fish to eat.”

“But you have a whole bucket of worms,” Frog said as he pointed to Maki’s bucket.

“That ought to be enough to fill your belly.”

“I do not eat worms. I use them to catch fish.”

“There isn’t many fish near the shore. Why don’t you fish where it’s deeper?” Frog asked. He leapt out onto the lake and landed on a hollow log floating in deeper water and waved.

“There’s many fish out here,” he shouted back.

That is incredible, Maki said to himself. He must have leaped the length of ten men.

Frog paddled back to the shore on the log and dove into the water. He popped his head above the water and said, “Here, you try it.”

Maki tried to step on the log but his foot rolled off into the muddy bank. Next he tried to crawl onto the log but fell headfirst into the water. Frog giggled. Maki attempted to hoist himself up but his hands pushed the log under the surface.

Maki crawled back onto the shore and threw his hands up. "I cannot do it. I am too heavy."

"Not too heavy, you're just shaped wrong," Frog said.

"What is that supposed to mean?" Maki snapped back.

"As you pushed down, the water pushed back. You need to be flatter."

"I don't understand," Maki said with an annoyed tone.

"Watch this." Frog leapt out of the water onto the muddy shore next to Maki. "If I poke a single finger into the ground it makes a deep dent, see?"

"Yes, I see."

"But if I spread my digits out and press into the mud with the same force, the dent is shallower. See?"

"I think I understand," Maki replied. "If I had a wider log, it would sink in the water less. But where could I find a wider log?"

"Perhaps you could cut this one in half, and tie the halves together. That way it would be twice as large, but weigh the same."

Maki leapt to his feet. "Wait here Frog. I must get my hatchet." Maki ran back to his home and found his hatchet and ran back without even bothering to change out of his soaking muddy clothing. To his surprise and pleasure Frog was still waiting for him. With two mighty swings Maki split the log in two. He laid the two halves side by side and used long reeds to fasten the halves together. When the task was done he pushed the device into the water. With a tree branch to steady himself he stepped one foot onto the log. It did not sink so he stepped on with his other foot. Then he was standing on the water. "Frog, look! I'm floating!" He exclaimed.

"Hooray!" Frog shouted.

"This is a wonderful invention, Frog. What shall we call it?"

"How about this?" Frog said. He then croaked a word in Frog-tongue that sounded like "Buwaaot."

"I do not think I can pronounce that Frog, but it sounded like Boat. How about we call it a boat?"

"Ah yes, that does sound easier to pronounce," Frog said.

"Frog the Frosc, I must reward you for aiding me."

"Nonsense, Maki the human. Sharing knowledge is its own reward. Also I am late and must return to my brethren. Do ask for me if you ever see another of my kind."

After a final wave and bow Frog leapt up and summersaulted back into the water and with a tremendous splash he disappeared underwater. Maki waited to see if Frog would surface one last time but he did not. Maki used his branch to paddle back to the shore and grabbed his fishing pole and bucket, eager to fish in deeper water. But when he reached over to bait his line he discovered the entire bucket was empty.