

It's a Frog's Life

The water is dark and cool on my skin. Vague shapes drift past, huge but not threatening. Fish roaming the pond, looking for morsels to eat, probably. It is peaceful here, quiet. I push my face up through the curtain of duckweed and flick my tongue out to catch the tiny insects flying past. I can make a good meal if I wait long enough. No rush. Other frogs are doing the same, silently catching bugs with a flick of their tongues, making no sound other than the tiny gulp as they swallow their prey. I drift under the surface, only my nose and mouth showing, a tiny bump on the weed-covered water, almost invisible to onlookers.

Vibrations tell me that a creature is walking past the pond. Not a big creature, probably a bird or a cat, seeking adventure. They won't notice me if I just keep very still. This is no hardship. Most of my time is spent in stillness at this time of year.

It is different in winter. When the cold comes, I climb out of the water and make my way to a quiet spot nearby, a rockery with plenty of undergrowth in which I can hide and shelter from the worst of the weather. Under cover of the plants, I can even hide from the occasional heavy snowfall, safe from predators, with the odd insect coming my way, while I sleep most of the time.

And when at last the Spring arrives, I find my way back to my pond, where I was spawned several Springs ago, where I hatched as a tadpole and grew into a young frogling. I was lucky to survive: most of my brothers and sisters from that hatching were caught and eaten, or just did not live through their long and extraordinary metamorphosis.

So, back to my home, my special place, where I can find a mate and make my own young, a mass of jelly with spawn inside, near the edge where it can find an anchor. Once it is laid, my mate and I can leave it to hatch on its own, while we enjoy the Spring and Summer and Autumn in our quiet world, peacefully catching our prey and enjoying the calm and solitude. We are not a sociable group, we frogs, we prefer our own company. And so the cycle begins again. Eventually our young will be the ones who continue the pattern, when we are done. I am not worried by this. Acceptance is easy, a simple matter of letting things happen. Life is good.

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