

the beginning of

THE POND NOT TAKEN (from **POOL PARTY**)

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

Time: Once upon a time

Place: A pond in the forest

Characters: A PRINCE, a PRINCESS and
a variable number of LOCAL RESIDENTS of both sexes.

As the play begins, a distraught PRINCE enters and sits by the pond. There has never been a sadder prince in this or any kingdom. He takes off his crown and looks at the pond with a mournful longing.

The PRINCESS enters. She looks as if she has been on a long search. There is a frightened vulnerability about her, as if she is already accepting something which is too painful for her to accept. When she sees the prince, it takes her a moment to speak.

PRINCESS

I thought I'd find you here.

PRINCE

They'll be worried about you.
You shouldn't have come.

PRINCESS

Come back.

PRINCE

I can't.

PRINCESS

Your friends are waiting for you.

PRINCE

They're not my friends.

PRINCESS

Yes they are.

PRINCE

They're not my real friends.

PRINCESS
(with long pauses)
Honey..... I love you..... Darling..... For me?

The prince turns to the princess.

PRINCE
I was happier as a frog!!!

PRINCESS
But you're not a frog.

PRINCE
Yes I am.

PRINCESS
You're a man.

PRINCE
I'm a frog trapped in a man's body!

PRINCESS
You were a man before you were a frog.

PRINCE
I was a boy.

PRINCESS
Still –

PRINCE
Who we are when we are born determines
who we become only if we are too
frightened to become who we can be.

PRINCESS
If you say so. All I know is –
I miss you so much.

PRINCE
I'm sorry, I –... Please go.

PRINCESS
You just want to sit here by yourself?

PRINCE
Soon, when the sun sets a little more,
my true friends will come home, and when
they see I've returned, they will rejoice.

PRINCESS

Sweetheart.

PRINCE

If you love me... let me be alone for awhile.

The princess starts to leave, but then she turns to the prince and asks:

PRINCESS

Do *you* love *me*?

PRINCE

Yes... but I'm miserable in your world.

PRINCESS

I see.

The princess, as sad as sad can be, exits. The prince sighs, as this conversation has made him even sadder than he was before. He is distracted from his grief when he notices something small flying through the air.

PRINCE

Ooo, a fly.

The prince tries to grab it with his tongue, but fails.

PRINCE (cont'd)

I used to be so good at that.

From a distance, we hear "ribbet". First one, then several, then many.

PRINCE (cont'd)

It's dusk. My friends are coming home.

A FROG enters. Then ANOTHER FROG. Then MANY FROGS. The number can vary but could equal, say, the entire cast of an evening of pool plays. Each has their own behavior, but all go "ribbet". The costuming should be simple, perhaps just green t-shirts and green trunks, but the movements and actions are definitely and distinctly froglike.

The prince is overjoyed and moves to greet them.

PRINCE (cont'd)

Hi, guys!

The frogs scatter around and into the pond, frightened by this overeager and overfriendly human.

PRINCE (cont'd)

Guys?... Guys?... Don't you know me? I'm your pal!

The prince runs after them, and they scatter more frantically.

PRINCE (cont'd)
Guys?!

The prince recognizes a female frog.

PRINCE (cont'd)
Mama!

Unfortunately, this frog doesn't recognize him, and she runs as fast as she can when he chases after her.

PRINCE (cont'd)
Mama!!... Mama!!!!... *Ribbet!*

The MOTHER FROG stops instantly. This is a voice she recognizes.

PRINCE (cont'd)
Ribbet!

The mother frog grabs her heart. Consumed with emotion that can only be felt by a mother who feared she lost her son forever, she turns to the prince.

MOM
Ribbet?

PRINCE
Ribbet-ribbet.

Mother and son rush to each other and hug, each "ribbeting" as they do. Then the mother whistles to the others. The other frogs pay attention.

MOM
(as in, "It's my son!")
Ribbet-ribbet-ribbet, ribbet (etc.)

The other frogs excitedly rush to their old pal and greet him, each "ribbeting" along the way.

PRINCE
Hi... Yeah, it's me... I've missed you, too... (etc.)

The mother looks at her son and notes how much he's grown and changed.

MOM
(as in, "You used to be a frog;
what the hell happened?")
Ribbet-ribbet, ribbet, ribbet-ribbet (etc.)

PRINCE

No, I haven't had a face lift.

MOM

Ribbet-ribbet?

PRINCE

It's rather complicated. You see,
once upon a time...

Mom and the other frogs have no idea what he's saying.

THE FROGS

("What are these sounds
he's making?")

Ribbet, ribbet? (etc.)

PRINCE

(overlapping)

Right, you don't speak human. Let's see...
It's been so long since I've spoken frog...

Making the exact same gestures as when he said "Once upon a time":

PRINCE (cont'd)

Ribbet ribbet-ribbet-ribbet...

The frogs shut up. Speaking nothing other than "frog",
the prince acts out his story:

I used to be a frog.

Then a shapely princess came by the pond.

My heart began to pound.

I began to flirt with her.

She found me cute.

I suggested sex.

She was repulsed.

I charmed her.

She became interested.

I suggested we smooch.

She agreed.

We kissed.

I became a man.

She was shocked.

Then she sized me up.

I covered my genitals.

She dragged me away.

A man holding a Bible asked if
we'd take each other in marriage.

She said, "I do!"

I said, "I do!"

And I've been totally miserable ever since.

The frogs all respond to this unhappy tale. One FROG BUDDY hops up to the prince to offer his condolences:

FROG BUDDY

Fuckin' ribbet.

From the woods we hear:

PRINCESS

Darling?

The princess rushes back to the pond.

PRINCESS (cont'd)

I just couldn't stay aw— Oh my God,
frogs! Eww, eww, frogs, frogs!

The frogs, alarmed by the presence of another human being, once again scatter quickly around and into the pool, making sounds as they do.

PRINCE

Don't go!.... Don't go!...

(to the princess:)

You sure have a lot of prejudices, you know that?!

PRINCESS

I'm sorry.

PRINCE

What are you doing here?

PRINCESS

I'm your wife.

PRINCE

Look, I know this will be hard to hear, but...
I married the wrong species.

PRINCESS

I didn't.

PRINCE

That's nice of you to say, but –

PRINCESS

Look, I've seen how unhappy you've been.
I want to work things out.

PRINCE

It's not about you, honey.

PRINCESS

Remember how happy we were
when we first met?

PRINCE

No.

PRINCESS

I had just broken up with a duke, and
so I went for a walk in the woods.

PRINCE

I looked at you, and I became one horny toad.

PRINCESS

And you hopped up to me and said:

PRINCE

"Hey, baby, wanna make out?" And you said:

PRINCESS

"Bleccchhh."

PRINCE

And I said, "C'mahhhhhn. One little kiss."

PRINCESS

"No!"

PRINCE

"Afraid of getting a frog in your throat?"

PRINCESS

"Yes!"

PRINCE

And then I hopped closer –

PRINCESS

And you looked into my eyes and said –

PRINCE

"Mon cherie, je t'aime; je t'aime."

PRINCESS

And I thought, "Holy shit, a bilingual frog."

PRINCE

And you kissed me.

PRINCESS

And you became a man.

PRINCE

And life has sucked ever since.