

A Dirty Story.

“EEEEEEEE EEEEEEE EEEEEEE” said the frog in the tree.

I looked up to the oak tree to see if I could locate the speaker of the moment. I couldn't spot him, but surely I would...given just a little more time. It was a green tree frog. I recognized the familiar string of 'e's that has its own built in echo that clearly identifies it as a tree frog. A tree frog - not a pond frog, this was definitely a tree frog. Not that I'm an expert on such matters, mind you. It's just that frogs had been quite a form of amusement in our household lately. Amusing to me, perhaps, but not amusing to Peg. There's a story here, just be patient with me.

“Mmm” I said to the invisible frog. “Where are you? If you're hiding, then you'd better continue to hide. Because if Peg catches you just one more time....” I let the sentence go unfinished. Threatening frogs isn't really my greatest talent of intimidation, but it wouldn't hurt to let him think about the consequences.

So I sat there in the chaise on the wooden deck above the river and took another sip of iced tea and pondered the universe some more. I had a glorious view of it from there. From that particular and most extremely comfortable spot I could see down the river for more than a mile to my left. To my right I could see another half mile. And straight ahead I could see the wetlands and swamp-something with the pines and undergrowth and osprey's nest and snags and palmettoes. In any single direction the view had a spark of something interesting for me to examine. Heck, if I was to exert some energy to peer over the railing, I could see the steps going down the riverbank and to my boatdock and boat. Or I could see the river gurgling as it passed by. And of course just behind me was that enormous oak tree with the controversial frog with the filthy mind. The gender of this frog was masculine, it had to be. Between Jason, and that frog and myself, most of Peg's frustrations were guy-irritate-girl related.

I chuckled to myself. Boy, that frog knew more about gamesmanship than I did and I thought I was pretty good at irritating Peg.

Peg is fastidious. She is compulsively neat and sometimes it bugs me. I mean..come on give a guy a break, sure it's a house rule to take our shoes off as we enter the house. But she doesn't need to remind me each and every time. Even as I am stepping out of the car or truck she's busy telling me, “Don't forget to take off your shoes. I just waxed the floor.”

Just once. Just once I'd like to get my shoes muddy and walk across the kitchen floor and leave clear footprints where I walked. I won't do it of course. The grief that followed would not be worth it. But then I'm not a frog. Frogs gather wrath in ways I wouldn't dream of.

“EEEEEEEE EEEEEEE EEEEEEE.” said the frog to tease me to look for the source of his sound.

I gather wrath in other ways.

My latest technique to drive her crazy is to get my tea glass and fill it full of ice, then add tea until it's almost overflowing. My tea glass is a big one. It's a mason jar with a glass handle. I think it holds almost a quart. Full of ice tea like that it sweats a lot. Cold drippy wet sweat constantly coats the outside of the glass. That's what gives me so much fun.

You see, when Peg bugs me once too often it isn't effective for me to fuss at her for being too neat or too concerned with keeping a perfect house. The message is lost if I try to say "Let me be a frog for a while." So I get a glass of tea. That does the trick.

No matter where I go, Peg is following me with a wooden coaster to set the glass on. But I hold onto the glass like it's made of gold.

"Don't you want a coaster for that tea glass?" she suggests.

"Nope, I'm just fine." I say proudly. The plan is coming together. I know what's coming next. Sure enough she says her lines. "Well, don't put it on the wood furniture. The water *ruins* the finish on wood. It's *ruined* forever if you do!" Peg puts particular emphasis on the word *ruined*.

I put the tea glass mere millimeters over the top of a glass table, then pull back. From the corner of my line of sight she's tried to get that coaster down, but I faked her out. Condensation rings *ruin* glass table tops too.

And wet tea classes *ruin* carpeting. And window sills. And magazines. And armrests. And..and..well they *ruin* anything they touch. That's the beauty of a glass of tea. So much potential ruin and no real harm done. All I have to do is hold it for a while and she goes crazy. Retribution is exacted in an almost satisfactory way. I'm not as direct in my methods as Jason or the frog is, but I'm pretty good at driving her nuts.

My chuckling must have been misunderstood by the frog who taunts Peg and converses with me from the relative safety of the tree. He said it once again. "EEEEeee EEEEEeee EEEEEeee".. And I spied him. He was the one alright. His natural color is lime green. He's a pretty frog with smooth soft lime green skin. Big beady eyes and long toes with suction cups on the end of each digit. He's not quiet as big as the palm of my hand, but that's big enough. He's the one. He still has traces of soot streaking him in a zebra-like pattern.

"So there you are!" I exclaimed. "Look, I think that you've pushed your luck too far. Quit while your ahead Mr. Frog. You're filthy ways won't be tolerated much longer."

Yea, right! Like he was going to pay attention to me. I had my fun with a glass of tea, Froggie has his fun with the chimney.

To prove his mal-intentions he leapt twenty feet from the safety of the oak tree to the gutter at the roof line of the house. I kept my eye on him. I knew in my heart of hearts that it wouldn't be long before he'd move to the base of the chimney.

Mr. Frog had this habit see.... For some unexplained reason he liked the dark safety of the inside of our chimney.

The chimney is full of soot. We haven't had the chimney sweep guy out for a while. I'm not sure if it's by frog-intention or not that puts Mr Frog in the house. Maybe Frog loses his grip inside the sooty grimy chimney. Maybe he has a grand plan like I do. But about twice a week,

Froggie will come screaming down the chimney in the middle of the night to ricochet off the smoke damper and land feet down like a cat in our fireplace.

He can't go back up. So Mr Frog wanders around the house until Peg catches him.

He's quiet in the house. He doesn't utter a peep.

It's not that she doesn't like frogs, Peg really is a kind soul. She likes most any kind of critter, including frogs. She likes horses, cows, dogs, cats, foxes, rabbits – on and on. Loves turtles, birds and most everything that swims by the dock in the river except alligators and snakes. She kills spiders and skinx, but tolerates chameleons. Frogs on the outside of her kitchen window are tolerable. But this frog...

He does his falling from the trapeze thing into the fireplace in the middle of the night making a noticeable thump. Then he quietly wanders about the living room.

Remember frogs have sticky long toes. So he can climb up walls, go over furniture, trans-navigate mirrors, counter tops – and even the kitchen floor. And everyplace he goes he leaves a clear frog footprint trail. Black soot goes a long way even if you dip the frog in it only once.

After an adventurous trip up and over the walls and across impossible places with his sooty feet, it sometimes takes Peg an hour or more walking around like scout Kit Carson seeking out his dirty footprints to erase them with a bottle of 409 and a white towel.

Frog watches as long as he can, then gets caught laughing. Peg is sure quick with that towel. She throws it over him like a fisherman throws a cast net and traps him like a Mexican jumping bean frog under the towel.

“Gotcha, you little turd,” she exclaims. Then she carefully swoops him up and through the sliding glass door to the riverbank where I'm sitting. Yep, it's right about here that she gives him a fling out of the towel and a last warning. “Just one more time, Turdhead and I'm going to feed you to an alligator.”

Yeah, right! Like the frog can't swim.

I laugh at the thought and I'm startled by Peg who has quietly moved behind me “Who are you talking to?” she inquires. Her forehead is wrinkled in puzzlement. I notice she doesn't have a coaster for my tea glass. Water rings are permitted outside I guess.

“Oh, nobody.” I reply aimlessly. “I was just thinking about something funny.” I have a devilish smile on my face. I'm not going to tell her that I just saw the frog leap from the gutter to the top of the chimney. We guys have to stick together.

