

The Bridge on the Brook

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Word Count 1000

Gloomy days are like people. The clouds fill up with rain, and try to bottle it up for as long as possible. Eventually they burst and let it all out. They have to, but humans can hold it all in for longer, hold their rage, sadness, and emotions inside until they all just vanish and you forget about them anyways. I didn't let ANYONE see me let it all go. Well, unless you count Teddy Bear, the Toad that lives in the brook. I see why Teddy always chills on his special designated rock. That'd be nice y'know. The Auburn Audrey Brook is always moving, it's like a river, but it never really stops. I'm always moving too. My dad is in the Marines, and we always have to move. Teddy is my only friend who has ever lasted me more than one semester. Only friend really. He doesn't ghost me as soon as they realize I can't do their homework and stuff anymore. He always finds a special place to stare at the oblivion and not move until I come. Teddy Bear is just like that though.

"I wish" I tell him

He doesn't really talk, but I can tell he understands. If he doesn't, that's kind of on me.

"CrOoOooOaAk" Teddy retaliated

At this point I'm not really sure anymore. I'll still count on it though because if he doesn't I've just been trauma dumping on this poor toad that probably thinks I'm a predator. For the most part, I think this is my favorite place we've been, because Teddy is here this time. It's not all unicorns that poop cupcakes though. Next week we will have to move again. My so-called friends already left because I'm not their all purpose calculator anymore. Next time I might just not offer. It never ends well anyways. Gosh, I never learn! Teddy Bear always croaks at me with disapproval whenever I say that my new friend group hates me again. He was right all along. Why does my toad supposedly have more brain cells than I do? That's got to be embarrassing. Ok, ok, I know, he probably doesn't because he is a frog and his brain is quite literally the size of a bush pea. Seriously, look it up! I don't really want to move at all. I like it a lot here. I looked down at Teddy Bear, who sat perfectly still on his rock, his tiny eyes unblinking. It was the same look he gave me last time, before my dad's last orders came through, before the last set of empty promises and new cities. Teddy Bear and I have an unspoken

understanding: this is what we do. I tell him everything so that i dont break down in front of anyone else, he listens and doesn't tell someone else my problems because the conversation got dry. It's our thing. I don't care if it's weird, because this toad is a better friend than anyone else that I've ever befriended.

"People really suck, don't they?" I tell teddy

He just blinks at me. I guess I really shouldn't expect more than that. I climb on to my bike and start riding home. On the way I'm just thinking the same few thoughts, over, and over, and over again.

"I have to say goodbye to teddy"

"I'll never make another friend like him"

"What if I never make another friend *at all*?"

I wish we didn't have to move so much. People tend to think that military kids just arrive at their new place, unpack, and start a new life easy-peasy. Maybe if that were how it really went, I wouldn't have to make best friends with a toad. I've never *ever* had a friend who actually listens to me before. Yes, I know it's sad that the only person who ever made me feel heard is a toad, but whatever. Teardrops fly behind me as I ride down the street at full speed on my bike, wishing that we could just stay here, for just a bit longer, maybe just enough time to make a real human friend who likes me for other reasons than the same excuse :

"Sorry, I have plans tonight. I can't do my homework, can you do it?"

EVERY SINGLE DAY. It might be because toads don't have homework.

As I arrive back home, I march up to my room, lay face-first on my bed and lay there for I don't even know how long. My mind is spiraling with accusations at myself for having some kind of friend repellent sprayed on every inch of me. I give a short little scream into my pillowcase but i'm interrupted by my mom

"Oddete? Are you okay?"

I lift my head, stand up, and tip-toe down the stairs so mom doesn't hear me.

"Oddete? What's wrong? Do you want to talk?" Mom asked

"No thanks, mom, I'm not really in the mood right now" I said bluntly

“Where are you going?” Mom pushed

“Just outside” I said

I open the door to the porch and find my dad poking holes into the lid of a mason jar with a literal watermelon knife, and stuffing moss, pebbles, and a bowl of dead waxworms that barely fits inside of the top of it. He barely even glances up from his little project when I ask

“Dad? What are you doing?” I asked

“Well, I figured that Teddy would need a suitable home for the car ride. It's a whole 13 hours after all.”

Dad said with a matter - of - fact tone in his voice. I just stood there for a second processing. As it finally settled in my brain, I gasped, hugged him and jumped on my bike. I raced back to the brook to find Teddy sitting on his special little rock. I scooped him and held him right in front of my face and said

“Oh my gosh Teddy! You're coming with us!”