

TADPOLE

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Translated from Swedish to English by Edward Blomberg

Scene 10 – THE TOAD

Fairy sneaks back inside the hole. Mrs. Toad is still asleep. Fairy manages to wriggle under Mrs. Toad's blankets. Mrs. Toad opens her eyes.

MRS. TOAD

Good morning.

FAIRY

Oh... Good morning.

MRS. TOAD

Sleep well?

FAIRY

Yes. Wonderfully.

MRS. TOAD

It's rather strange ... I thought I heard a sound, something like stone scraping against stone. You know, like when the stone at the door is pushed aside.

FAIRY

You were probably dreaming. About a cave perhaps – or a mine full of gemstones.

MRS. TOAD

Yes, yes ... I'm sure you're right. Still, it was very strange because I remember feeling a draft, here, on my cheek. A sudden chill.

FAIRY

I bet you were dreaming about a boat on a stormy sea.

MRS. TOAD

You're right I suppose. Still, it's rather extraordinary because at the same time I thought I heard tiny feet. Someone on tiptoes. Sneaking.

FAIRY

Maybe you were dreaming of a hunter sneaking up on her prey?

MRS. TOAD

False mouth! Enough! You have been among the humans!

FAIRY

It was just the girl – the one I told you about-

MRS. TOAD

That smell is no little girl smell. It's the way you used to smell when he was here, threatening to destroy you.

FAIRY

He wasn't!

MRS. TOAD

Wasn't he? Weren't you almost dead when I found you? You'd gone walking up and down the hot asphalt streets, searching. Your delicate toad skin burnt and cracked under the hot sun. Have you forgotten how I bathed your scorched lips and red eyes?

FAIRY

It wasn't his fault. It was yours. Your curse did that.

MRS. TOAD

What curse do you speak of? You came to me begging, "I want to be a child forever." You made a promise.

FAIRY

I changed my mind.

MRS. TOAD

When you promise eternity, there is no changing back.

FAIRY

Please, let me go. Free me.

MRS. TOAD

You are free! Free from responsibility, from duty. Free to play, to run, swim and dance.

FAIRY

You're wrong. I'm a child. Children are never free. They can't decide for themselves. To be a child is to be prisoner.

Fairy walks towards the door.

MRS. TOAD

You're right. You're but a tiny spawn of a human, and human spawn should be at home with their mothers.

FAIRY

I'm no child! And you aren't my mother.

Mrs. Toad roars. She swells until she resembles a terrifying monster. Her eyes are fiery coals.

MRS. TOAD

NEVER SAY THAT AGAIN! I AM YOUR MOTHER AND YOU ARE MY TINY CHILD. MY OWN LITTLE TADPOLE. MINE TO FEED AND CARE FOR, TO BATHE AND TUCK INTO BED.

FAIRY

Yes, mother.

MRS. TOAD

Yes, indeed. Yes.

Scene 11 - ALONE

The sky is full of grey clouds. Ambrosia steps out into the clearing.

AMBROSIA

Fairy? Hello? Fairy?

The girl, she just disappeared. She must have been lying when she said she lived in the forest. Her clothes were dirty. Sure. But dirt. You can find dirt anywhere.

Ambrosia disappears in among the trees.

Scene 12 – COOKIE AND CARRO

COOKIE, 12 years old and CARRO, 13, enter the clearing. Carro is holding a bag from the liquor store. It's full of clinking bottles. Carro hides the booze in a hollow tree stump.

COOKIE

Why couldn't we just hide it at your house?

CARRO

Come on, Cookie... Sometimes you're so... you know. I mean – what would my mother do if she found it?

COOKIE

I get it. But it's only just for one day.

CARRO

She already caught me once, when I had a bottle of wine under my bed. She took it and shouted at me and threatened me – you can't imagine. Plus, I had to pay a scary guy a bunch of money to buy it in the first place.

COOKIE

Couldn't you just get one of Nicky's friends to buy for you?

CARRO

Don't you know anything? Nicky is only 17, they won't sell to him.

COOKIE

Yeah, that's true....

CARRO

Still - my mom thinks he's too old for me. She calls him a creep; says he runs after little girls. She's so dumb.

COOKIE

Mm... Yeah, you can be with whoever you want.

CARRO

Right. But she made me PROMISE that we wouldn't DO IT. It was so embarrassing. You know ... IT? She'd go mad if she found out we were doing IT. She exaggerates everything.

COOKIE

But Carro ... would you want to? Would you do IT?

CARRO

Don't you dare tell anybody ...

COOKIE

What?

CARRO

We actually like ...already did it.

COOKIE

Whaaaat? Isn't it against the law?

CARRO

Against the law? Kalida, grow up. Who cares? You know, sometimes you're such a kid. Who cares if it's illegal? I know lots of girls who do it before they're fifteen.

COOKIE

Okay, yeah ... but anyway.

CARRO

Niklas wasn't a virgin when we started going out.
It's different when you go out with older boys.

COOKIE

Look over there, what's that? You think somebody lives here?

CARRO

Holy shit! That's weird.

COOKIE

Probably just some camper.

CARRO

Yeah, some homeless person. Let's get out of here.

COOKIE

Hang on, I want to look.

CARRO

Don't go near it! It could be infected or something.

COOKIE

Yuck.

CARRO

I'm serious. Kalida, come on.

COOKIE

Okay...

COOKIE and CARRO leave.

SCENE 13 – THE DAD

Sundown. Ambrosia comes backs to the clearing. She wriggles into her sleeping bag.

AMBROSIA

It's not fair. Why should I have to sleep out here in the cold and go hungry when it's everybody else who's acting stupid.

Ambrosia falls asleep. Dad comes into the clearing.

DAD

Ambrosia?

He steps over to her, sees that she's sleeping. He kneels beside her and rubs her back tenderly.

DAD

I just want to say I'm sorry. You know, I moved out to the woods too, once when I was a kid ... You know, maybe I understand things better than you think I do. But I also understand that it won't feel that way to you right now. So sleep tight my darling girl... sleep and we'll talk in the morning.

He pulls up the sleeping bag to cover her shoulders, strokes her hair, stands and leaves.

Scene 14 - TADPOLE

It's night now. Ambrosia is still sleeping. Fairy sneaks up on Ambrosia.

FAIRY

Ambrosia.

AMBROSIA

Help!

FAIRY

Shhhhh... We need to be quiet.

AMBROSIA

Please stop sneaking up on me like this.

FAIRY

Do you still want to be a child forever?

AMBROSIA

What? How do you know about that?

FAIRY

Never mind. Answer me. Is that what you want?

AMBROSIA

Yes. Yeah, that's what I want.

FAIRY

And you're sure about that?

AMBROSIA

Yes!

FAIRY

All right then. Do you have a jar?

AMBROSIA

What are you talking about?

FAIRY

Here, this'll do.

AMBROSIA

Can you just tell me what you're doing?

Fairy leads Ambrosia to the pond.

FAIRY

Here we are. Take your clothes off.

AMBROSIA

What? What are we doing?

FAIRY

Not we. You. You need to dive all the way to the bottom.

AMBROSIA

Here?

FAIRY

Unless you want to grow up and be an adult.

AMBROSIA

No, of course I don't want that!

FAIRY

Okay then ... you're going to need this.

AMBROSIA

What? I have no idea what you want me to do.

FAIRY

Don't swallow it right away – or else it won't work.

AMBROSIA

Swallow what?

FAIRY

You wait until the moon peeks out from behind the clouds.

AMBROSIA

What? What am I supposed to swallow? (raises her voice) I don't get it!

FAIRY

Quiet! This is what you must do - dive down to the bottom and fish around in the mud. There are tadpoles down there. You need to catch one. Then, when the light from the moon shines on it, you need to swallow it whole.

AMBROSIA

That's disgusting! Why?

FAIRY

Because if you do that, you won't grow up. That's what you want, isn't it? Do it now, before someone comes.

AMBROSIA

You're absolutely positive it's going to work?

FAIRY

I'm positive. You'll be a child forever. Trust me.

Ambrosia dips her feet in the water but quickly pulls them out again. A mighty bolt of lightning lights up the sky. In its glow we catch a glimpse of a huge toad towering over Fairy. The toad is bloated with anger and her eyes burn. Ambrosia screams, slips into the pond. She sinks under the water. Everything is black. Ambrosia finally comes up, but Fairy has vanished. We hear a thunderclap. It starts to rain. Ambrosia crawls out of the pond.

AMBROSIA

Fairy! Where are you? Fairy?

Hey! Come on, this isn't funny! Fairy?