

STORY FIVE

THE HOUSEBOAT



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KELSO HELPS LILY LEARN TO TRUST HER OWN JUDGEMENT WHEN SOLVING A SMALL PROBLEM

“Brrrrr,” shivered Lily, looking up from her very favorite lily pad. “It’s getting windy and cold!”

The sky at Willow Pond was filled with dark clouds, and marble-sized drops of rain were beginning to plop in the water.

Lily thought, “Usually I can wait out a storm by just staying on my lily pad, but this one is going to be big! I think I’d better head back to shore and wait with Kelso and the older frogs.”



By the time she reached her friends in the grasses, Lily was glad to have found shelter. The wind and rain bent the tall reeds and cattails, and small waves rocked the lily pads.

Once, when thunder rumbled, Kelso pointed and said, "Look! Lightning just hit the old oak tree! That big branch has broken off!" And with a tremendous splash, a giant limb crashed into the pond.

The frogs squeezed closer together. Tucked in their cozy spot under the grasses, they waited and watched. Wild storms like this were rare on Willow Pond and they were glad to have each other for company.





After some time, the wind slowly let up. The thunder and lightning were gone, and the hot summer sun peeked out, making steam rise from the ground.

“Wow! I’m glad that’s over!” said Kelso. “But look at the mess! There are leaves and twigs and broken cattails everywhere! Why even some of the lily pads were blown loose from their underwater roots and are drifting free.”

“No problem,” croaked Lily, happily jumping into the pond. “I’m going back home to see how my lily pad is doing. See you later!” And off she paddled.

But there was a problem. Lily couldn't find her home ...her lily pad had disappeared!

She looked and looked but the familiar lily pad was nowhere to be seen. Finally she went back and asked Kelso to help.

"I know my pad is floating under that tree!" Lily said, pointing to the old oak on the shore. "It's as big as a dinner plate and there's a huge pink flower growing on one side!"

Kelso searched the area and came back to the shore where Lily was waiting.

"Um, Lily, I hate to tell you this, but when lightning hit the oak tree, your lily pad was crushed under the fallen branch! Look!"

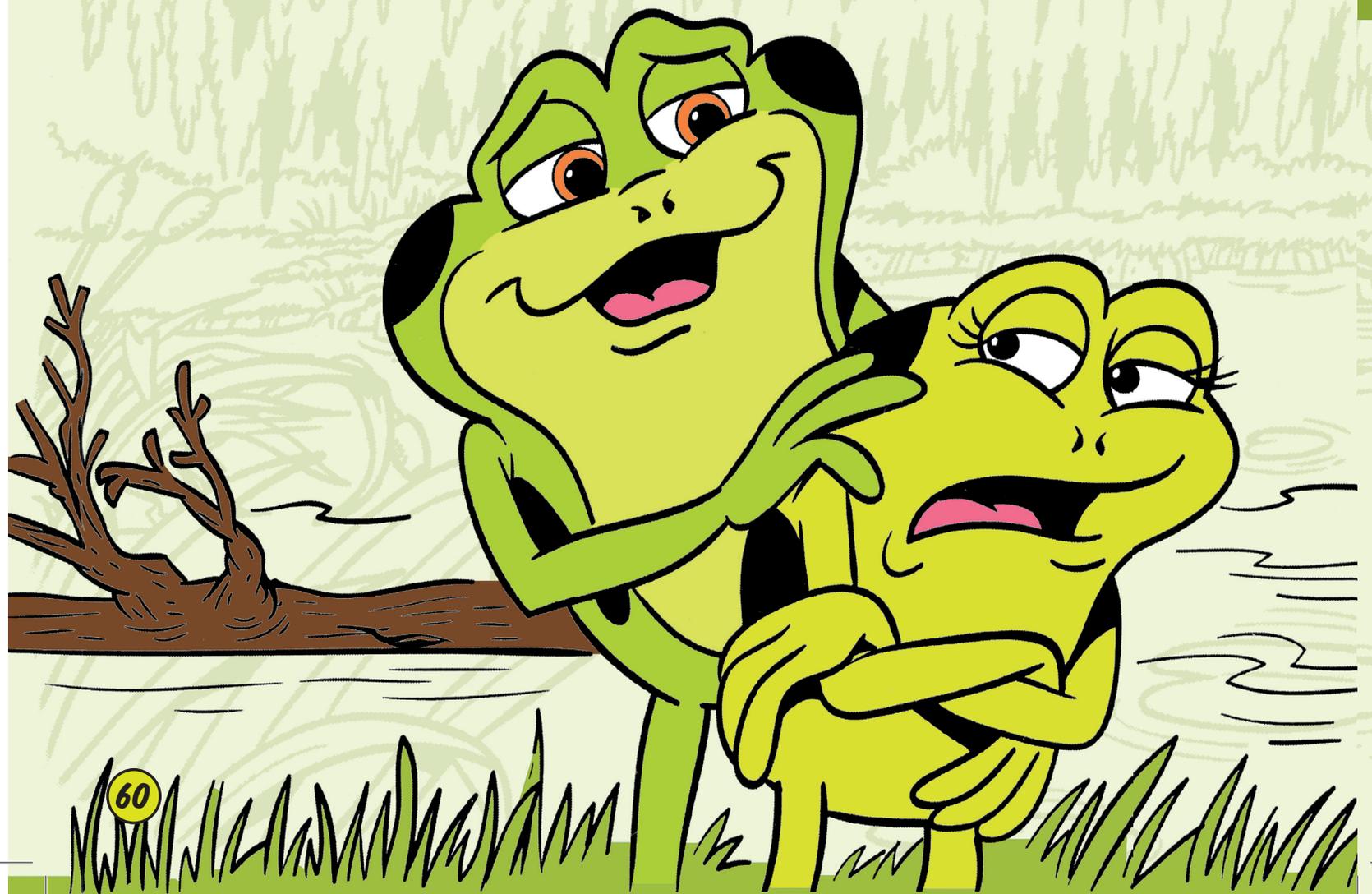


Lily stared where Kelso was pointing. He was right! All she could see were a few pink flower petals sticking out from under the floating limb.

“Oh brother!” Lily exclaimed. “I really liked that pad! It was just the right size, not too floppy, and it was in the shade! Now what will I do? How will my friends find me? They won’t know where to look,” she sniffed, her eyes shining with tears.

“Don’t worry,” said Kelso. “We’ll find you a new place to live. There must be lots of spots around here that you’d like!”

“I don’t know, Kelso,” Lily sighed. “That pad was pretty special to me...”





As she spoke, one of the ducks paddled over and interrupted with a loud quack: "Hey! I saw what happened! Stay with us! We've got the PERFECT nest back in those grasses. You'll love it! C'mon!" And the duck pointed to a sheltered spot on the shore.

"No way, man!" said one of the beavers, who happened to hear the commotion. "Our lodge is quiet and very sturdy. Much better than that slimy lily pad or scratchy duck's nest. Let's go, Lily!"

Tex, a friendly turtle, spoke up. "Whoa! You guys don't get it. Lily's movin' in with us! We've got the rocky island staked out all to ourselves, and Lily'd be more 'n welcome to bunk down with us."

All the animals began arguing at once. "Listen!" croaked Kelso. "You guys aren't giving Lily a chance to tell us what she wants. Just be quiet for a minute and let her choose."

Lily looked at her friends. Quickly, she thought: "I can't live in any of their homes! The duck's nest would be much too dry, the beaver lodge is dark and cold, and the turtle's island is way too hot and rocky. I've got to decide where to live without hurting anyone's feelings. Hmmm..."

As she looked at the ducks, the beaver, and the turtle, she whispered to Kelso: "I suppose I could make a deal with them...spend a week at each home. Or maybe I should wait until we've all cooled off and stopped arguing...and then decide. I guess that I could even go to another pond to live and avoid hurting anyone's feelings. But I think I'm going to talk it out with them right now and tell them how I'm feeling."

Taking a deep breath, Lily spoke up. "I never realized that you guys were such good friends," she explained. "I mean, look how you all want to help me!"

And the animals looked pleased when she said this. Tex stepped forward and said, "Well, Lily, I guess that we'd all be mighty honored to have you stay with us."



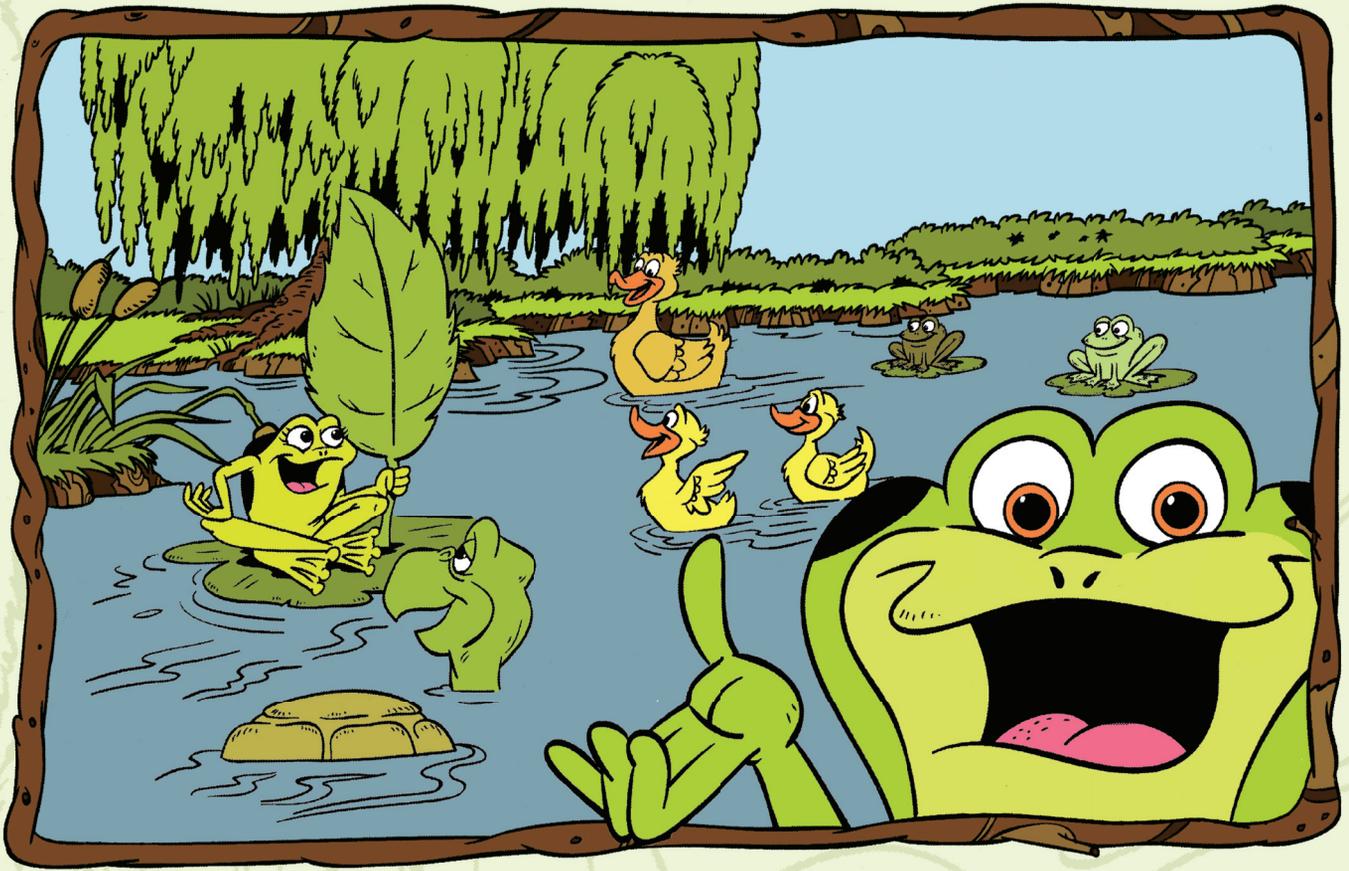
Lily continued: "But you need to understand that we frogs have to have our own place that's not too dry or dark or hot. So I've decided to live on a houseboat!"

"What do you mean?" squawked the duck. "What's a houseboat?"

"Well," Lily explained, "a houseboat is just what it sounds like...it's a floating home! So I'm going to live on one of those lily pads that came loose from its roots. That way, when the wind blows, I can float all over the pond and visit each one of you!"

Everyone listened to Lily describe her new home. They smiled and nodded and called it a fine idea. Some even offered to help her find the perfect pad, while others hurried off to plan a pad-warming party.





As Kelso watched the others talk about houseboats and lily pads and thunderstorms and helpful friends, he stretched out on the floating oak branch and sighed happily.

Young Lily was learning to be a very good problem solver. She was even helping others learn, too. But Kelso wasn't surprised really. Like he always told her:

“You're strong enough and smart enough
to make good choices!”