

Aesop's Fables

2. THE FROGS AND THE OX

By Tony Payne

'Mum! Mum! Come quickly!' called the little frog, hopping and skipping with excitement. 'Come and see the monster!' he called. 'It's got two big spikes sticking out of its head and a funny brush thing at the other end and it goes "OARRR AGH!" And it kicks frogs.'

'Not now, dear,' said the little frog's mother.

'Come on, mum! Please!'

Mother frog looked more closely at the little one.

'You're Stanley, aren't you?'

'No mum, I'm Zebadee.'

'Are you really? You all look so alike.'

She had 247 children, and it is hard to remember that many names, so she called everyone Stanley to give her memory a rest.

'Mu-ummm...' cried Zebadee.

'I haven't finished breakfast, dear.'

The little frog hesitated. 'Can I have some then?'

'No, Stanley,' she said. 'You're not a tadpole any more. Go and find your own slugs - and stop jiggling about, you're giving me a headache.'

'I'm not jiggling about, I'm hopping about.'

'Well stop it. It looks like exercise, and I can't be having with that sort of thing. How would it be if I were to flip and flop about like you, doing exercise?'

The little frog thought about it. 'You wouldn't be so podgy,' he said.

'Exactly!' said his mother. 'You don't get a jelly-belly like mine by exercising. I get all the exercise I need chewing. Now, what's all the fuss about?'

'It's an Ox! And it's really gross and his shoes have split down the middle.'

'There are no such things as monsters, Stanley, and no creature in the pond is bigger than me.'

'But it is bigger than you, mum. Lot's bigger. I promise.'

'Right!' said his mum. 'We'll see about that! I'll go with you, and if you are telling fibs you'll have no worms for a week.'





The damp hollow she sat in was home to a good assortment of slugs. But she had eaten too many of them. The big jelly-belly she was so proud of made it difficult to get about. Now she could only half-hop, and flop, and then stop. Hop, flop and stop, until she was all tired out and could go no further.

‘Stop, Stanley!’

‘You’ve only moved half a metre, mum.’

‘Far enough,’ she wheezed. She took a deep breath - and then she took a deep breath - and then she took a deep breath.

‘Is the Ox as big as this?’ she asked. She sounded odd, because it’s hard to speak, blown-up like a beach ball.

‘Much bigger than that,’ said the little frog.

So she sucked in more air, and sucked in more air, and sucked in more air.

‘No, mum - it’s still bigger...’

So she took in another breath and... and...she shot into the air like an escaped balloon that zips around the room making rude noises because you let go of the end.

‘YAAAAAH!’ she yelled, looping-the-loop and fizzing off in all directions before crashing - with a spectacular splash - right in front of the Ox!

The Ox looked bored with the whole thing. Water dribbled from his mouth.

‘Stanley!’ she called back to the little frog from a field and a half away. ‘Let that be a lesson to you!’

But the lesson was hers really.