

Tilly Artaud

by Ann Bogle

NOTES: I spent one summer at my mother's house with a toad, an American toad, a female American toad, a *Bufo Americanus*, who visited each night at ten and left in the morning at six for twelve weeks; then she did not appear at her perch by the glass door for two weeks, a summer vacation.

"If you continue to come here," I said to the toad, "I'll have to buy a terrarium." At the word "terrarium" she crawled off into the night.

My life was quiet then, and that was my entertainment. I studied toads on the internet. The male toads have distinct voices. They call in mating. The females have little red gullets. Toads hibernate under the permafrost. No source seemed to know how long they live.

I reluctantly named her Tilly Artaud. She was free, not a pet. I could only train my cat, Francis, not to eat her if he knew she were a pet. Before the summer was over, I saw him pat her gently on the head.

Tilly appears in my short story "Dumb Luck" in a paragraph. I used it, but it's a longer story than that. Do I write it long form, as a creative nonfic? As a children's story?

I started on a children's story that turned lewd about frogs and turtles. The turtles were the landlords. The wife turtle drove a red Corvair. Her husband fetched six-packs of pop and beer from the country store for the frogs who were guests. He strapped the six-packs to his shell with a bungee cord. He went on foot, crossing the highway at a walking bridge. One day a car hit him, and the frogs didn't care that he was limping. The frogs were a very famous rock band staying at the lodge. Continue?

After not going out for weeks, I went to a bar and met an electrical

engineer, a motorcyclist who raced in the Black Hills, a Renaissance man in a relationship with a young married woman, and I told him about the toad.

