

Small Boat Row Told Through a Roughed Out Dungeon Window

by Darryl Price

The princess knew exactly where to find the annoying gurgling frog of her childhood, but she wasn't wearing the right shoes to step onto lily pads with, so she decided there and then to take a stolen boat out onto that soft mission, all by herself instead. It was a small row boat with one red stripe painted around its

bursting bulk. She got in, adjusted her scandalous scarves and creamy purple hat, and set out to get some real if, hopefully, finally revealing answers from her little magic mud-soaked friend. A swan looked her over suspiciously before deciding it wasn't worth chasing her back to the shore, too much bother. Two hefty clouds

squeezed together, but couldn't make it rain, so they let her pass with a little patch of sunlight thrown in. Her lucky day said one cloud to the other before closing its eyes and beginning to snore. As the princess got closer to the spot where she knew the frog liked to sit, lick his lips and wait for incoming drunken flies, she

adjusted her headpiece once more and began to whistle a well-rehearsed happy sound. Soon she heard a familiar splashing bobbing up and down just near the boat's peeling stern. Well. What is it this time, he spoke, another rejection, another helping webbed hand I suppose to get you out of a rather sticky situation with a

bratty prince of some royal sort, or another, or perhaps just a fun poke in the ribs for your old forgotten companion, for old time's sake? Ah, there you are. You don't have to be so bitter, she said, I've told you before it's nothing personal, I just wanted something more than a lake and a nice place to hibernate in winter. All

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right, let's hear it, he croaked, my legs are getting tired, plus there are immoral fish, not to mention gangster snakes in here who would love a bite of fresh frog legs to go with their slimmy suppers tonight. She reached down and scooped him up in her velvety hands and set him kindly into the boat, right on the middle beam,

out of harm's way. There, she said, now we can look each other in the eyes and be perfectly honest with one another. If you say so, he croaked miserably back at her, but secretly he was beginning to feel kind of warm and even tingly all over, just like always. Uh oh, he said to himself. Never mind all that, she mock scolded him

and added her wagging finger to the scene for good measure. This time I want the simplicity of truth, no riddles, the absolute truth, or so help me I will never speak to you again and I mean it, she shouted. A couple of laughing birds went tumbling by just then making quite a high racket in the sky before he could build bravely up

to his own answer. Please don't leave me, he suddenly winced out loud, I have no one to talk with but you, no other frogs speak English in this part of the marshy kingdoms that I know of. It's lonely. It's all your fault, he added, and began to sulk. So. what is it you command of me, Your Highness? That's better,

she said. We are friends, good friends, aren't we? Yes, he croaked. Well then, she started, it's like this: I've recently met someone, a very nice someone, but he doesn't even know I exist. Oh, I suppose I've danced with him a dozen times or more, but so has every other girl in the court as far as I can see. At this the little

frog grabbed an invisible arrow from the air cupboard of his tiny life and mercilessly shoved it deep, deep, deep into his beating sad heart, but since nothing awful happened immediately he continued to listen to her voice. What am I to do, she went on and on, how am I supposed to get him to notice me

above everyone else? How do I know, he answered, maybe ask him his name? Very funny, she said. You are full of the witch's green magic and I know you know unusual things, so tell me before I go

perfectly m-mad and throw you back into the darkening water with all the bad, bad mannered snakes, what am I to do

right now to win his heart for my own? The little frog sighed, closed his eyes, and went into a stony trance. He began to glow like a railroad lantern. You must first give him a ring of pure silver on his 21st birthday, and it must be decorated with three perfect rubies in a triangle shape, the frog murmured slowly, and you

must say these words into his eyes exactly, now we are one, under the sun, under the moon, one are we. That's it, she laughed, but that's so very easy. My father has many rubies to give me and the silversmith is a far cousin of mine (on my mother's side). Oh, thank you so much, dear thing. I hope I haven't injured

your pride or anything like that too much. No, thank YOU, Princess, he said, and jumped with all his might from the middle of the now slightly moon speckled boat all the way back into the browning watery well of his own drowning dreaming destiny and waited to be suddenly violently taken under.

Bonus poems:

They Are Lying

by Darryl Price

like the icecold yellow wolves they are when they say they believe in love. What they're really

doing is trying to game the outcome in their

hungry for your living blood(y) favors. This shouldn't really surprise you at all.

They've often shown you their biggest fangs before. That wasn't

a fluke. The jungle never disappears, it just
advances on you slowly, becomes the corner
where you live. You should go ahead and accept that
terrible fact. It won't hurt you. And as for love,

it can grow just about anywhere, but that doesn't make it
any stronger. It's a color, not a piece of
fallen concrete, it can change underneath a quick
momentary sky in the blink of an eye, which

is about all the time you've got left anyway.

Don't let it ruin your day. Eat what you've got left and be glad
that you've somehow tasted the same nectar as the flying gods,
after all

there is no end to the thirst for more sweetness. That's why
there's

never enough money for Scrooge to hoard and never will be.
Never enough

sex to go around the Mulberry bush. There's never going to
be enough new music

in your floating through the endless clouds cloud bank to store.
There's never enough soulful kisses

to follow you into the next century. Even if she

stayed on top of your heart for a year and a day it wouldn't
matter, not in the end. You'd still be wondering where in the world
the

silver magic got off to. Poets bring a lot of their own flying
children into this world but they don't always take such

good care of them, because they're all in line like
the else, scared by the exciting finish of the
last ride, a word or two about thrills and chills, the

sad noticings and knowing winks of the constantly nodding
off cosmos we're sewn to like hidden dolls inside a heart
shaped basket.

The Many Stars by Darryl Price

The struggle has its own cocoons, but I still think
We ought to dance, ever blinded by our old yellow bedding,
Believing in something more to come. I don't want to
Think of you as winked out of existence just because

You've stepped into the wrong set of rooms. The struggle probably
makes

No sense, but it feels right to me. How can

Your beautiful electricity never again light up another moon? You
can

Point that out to me with the many stars at your disposal, the
endless days

Of each season's flowers, but they do not compare. When
You are a witness to Beauty like me you find out if
You are a born liar or not. The struggle renews itself
In many ways, but, for me, the greatest challenge was when

Your eyes met mine on the field of life's battle.

The struggle is being slowly squeezed out of me, still

I feel I might owe you something more than one

Last faithful breath, so here's the start of this one and the same
dream.

