

A Swamp Tale

By: Megan E. Tripaldi

CHARACTERS:

BUG CHORUS: A trio of musical storytellers.

HANK: Called Hans by his family. A prince who is looking for his purpose.

SASHA: The warrior princess, Hank's long-lost sister

STEVIE: Hank's lost friend who he discovers as a frog

BURT: Hank and Sasha's Dog

FAY: The mystery girl/faerie/former frog avoiding becoming a frog again

SCARLET: A snake with a secret

PERRY: A bird lookout

THE QUEEN: Hank and Sasha's Mother

THE KING: Hank and Sasha's Father

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE: For the purposes of having a small cast Puppets are **highly** encouraged. Really, any opportunity to use puppets should be taken. This is the perfect play for puppets. All of the flying and swimming? Come on!

Remember: the BUG CHORUS is in charge of this story, so if they are technically the only non-puppets on stage, that works perfectly.

In regard to music, there is no sheet music for the song FAY sings. Honestly, just have fun with it and let it be whatever it needs to be!

SCENE BREAKDOWN:

(NOTE: The Bug Chorus could remain on stage the entire time if it works for the production.)

1. Prologue (Hank, King, Queen)
2. The Transformation (Hank, Fay)
3. Meet Sasha (Sasha, King, Queen)
4. Stevie!?! (Hank, Stevie, Perry, Scarlet)
5. The Quest (Sasha, Burt, Fay)
6. The Fight (Hank, Stevie, Scarlet, Perry, Burt, Fay)
7. Corn Kernels (Hank, Stevie, Perry, Fay, Burt, Sasha)
8. Epilogue (All)

A Swamp Tale

SETTING: The woods: dark, but terribly beautiful and exciting.
Always changing, filled with magic.

AT RISE: The BUG CHORUS enters, ready to tell a story.

PROLOGUE

BUG 1:
Ever hear of a fly on the wall?

BUG 2:
Is that what we are? Flies?

BUG 3:
I'm not sure I even know what we are...

BUG 1:
Wait, what?

BUG 2:
I feel like we're getting off track and we haven't even started.

BUG 3:
But WHAT ARE WE!?

BUG 1:
I've always just called us bugs?

BUG 2:
That feels right. Easier for the audience.

BUG 3:
Ok, I feel better.

BUG 1:
And we have an audience!

BUG 2:

Wait, where? Oh!

BUG 3:

Hi, audience!

ALL BUGS:

We are the Bug Chorus!

BUG 1:

Ahem. As I was saying: Ever heard of a fly on the wall?

BUG 2:

Well, we aren't sure if we're actual flies -

BUG 3:

But that's how we know this story!

BUG 1:

Because we can see what most people can't.

BUG 2:

And in times like this we use it to our advantage.

BUG 3:

And as a way to tell very good stories.

ALL BUGS:

And this is a *very good story*.

BUG 1:

Who here knows the story of the Frog Prince?

BUG 2:

Don't be shy, raise your hands!

BUG 3:

I think most of them do, it's why they're here...right?

BUG 1:

Well, this story is *kind of* like that.

BUG 2:

But not really.

BUG 3:

But sort of?

BUG 1:

It has some of the same themes, I guess.

BUG 2:

Magic, mystery, confusion -

BUG 3:

Princes turning into frogs -

BUG 1:

Really, that's the only thing...

BUG 2:

Sometimes in life stories repeat.

BUG 3:

Or are reimagined.

BUG 1:

Reconfigured!

BUG 2:

Re...written? Is that a thing?

(The other two nod. BUG 2 does a "yes!" gesture.)

BUG 3:

So we've taken it upon ourselves to, well, rewrite this one!

BUG 1:

We've been all over the place.

BUG 2:

And heard so many versions of this story.

BUG 3:

And because of that we've decided -

ALL BUGS:

We're going to tell you a new version of the story!

BUG 1:

Let's start at the top!

BUG 2:

Picture a kingdom.

BUG 3:

Picture a King and a Queen.

(KING and QUEEN enter and wave as King and Queens do.)

ALL BUGS:

And a Prince!

(HANK enters, standing in front of his parents. As the BUGS narrate, the scenes play out in front of them. *Puppets are encouraged.*)

BUG 1:

Once upon a time there was a family. And they were happy. Or they were sort of happy. They were...OK.

BUG 2:

You see, the kingdom had experienced years of wealth and prosperity and the citizens were all comfortable and never hungry.

BUG 3:

But then came the drought. Crops all wilted and died, food became scarce, and people became hungry and miserable.

BUG 1:

The King and Queen were very kind. They wanted nothing more than to fix their subjects' problems.

BUG 2:

They bartered with other kingdoms, sacrificing their own riches for food, but soon they ran out of riches to offer.

BUG 3:

They tried to save food scraps to make into new, exciting dishes, but soon those ran out, too.

BUG 1:

It seemed that everything they tried only worked for a short while.

BUG 2:

So one day they sent their only son, the prince out to search for food, or help, or...well, anything he could find!

BUG 3:

They were desperate. And the prince was nervous.

BUG 1:

You see he, like his parents, was kind and generous, but he didn't know what kind of prince he wanted to be.

BUG 2:

An Adventuring Prince, however, had never crossed his mind.

BUG 3:

But his parents insisted that he go and try. Who was he to say no?

BUG 1:

He loved his parents and the kingdom. He only wanted to help them.

BUG 2:

But it came at a price.

BUG 3:

When they sent him off they didn't realize that the prince, their son -

ALL BUGS:

Would be gone forever.

BUG 1:

Or at least for a very, very long time -

ALL BUGS:

But we're getting ahead of ourselves!

BUG 2:

Let's start with the subject of our story.

BUG 3:

One might say the protagonist!

BUG 1:

The Hero, possibly?

BUG 2:

His name was Hans.

BUG:

But he preferred Hank.

ALL BUGS:

The Prince!

SCENE 1: The Transformation

(Music! The BUG CHORUS returns to their musician corner and HANK comes to the edge of the woods. He mimes rustling through the trees, attempting to navigate, but not doing a very good job.)

HANK:

Hmm. I feel like I've seen this patch of trees before...

(FAY enters and watches him from the dark.)

Yup, definitely. That one looks like an angry owl. Ooh, that is an angry owl, oh boy...

(He runs in another direction.)

Now I don't know where the path went! I could have sworn I just saw a clearing this way...Come on, Hank. Get it together.

(FAY steps out of the shadows.)

FAY:

Hi, Stranger.

HANK:

Oh sugar plumb!

FAY:

You ok there?

HANK:

Oh, I, uh -

FAY:

You look like you're lost.

HANK:

No, no I'm not. I'm totally - sorry, you just startled me.

FAY:

Sorry about that. I'm Fay.

HANK:

I'm...I'm Hank.

FAY:

So *are* you lost?

HANK:

N-no, I just - don't know where I'm going.

FAY:

Right.

HANK:

I guess I'm lost.

FAY:

Well lucky for you I know these woods like the back of my hand. I can help you find your way.

HANK:

Oh, no that's not necessary -

FAY:

Of course it is!

(She circles him, menacingly.)

I'm from here, you are new to the area. I'm obligated to help.

HANK:

Well...All right, yeah! Thank you. Just trying to do it on my own, I guess.

FAY:

I understand.

(They begin walking.)

So what are you doing here, if I may be so bold?

HANK:

Ah, it's - it's my parents. They needed my help.

FAY:

With what?

HANK:

Well it's more like my whole - how do I put this delicately. I'm a Prince?

FAY:

Really.

HANK:

Yeah! And I have absolutely no idea what I'm doing.

FAY:

Interesting.

HANK:

And my kingdom is suffering so my parents asked me to help and it seemed like the perfect opportunity to, well...figure it out, you know?

FAY:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, sure.

HANK:

I just want to *find* myself and -

FAY:

(Scoffs.)

Find yourself? Really?

HANK:

I know it's cliché, but I want to make a difference.

FAY:

But you're a prince. You don't have to prove anything, you just have to, you know, *exist*.

HANK:

I mean, I know, but what kind of life is that? My people are starving and I just *exist*?

FAY:

Exactly. You have it easy. Some of us would do anything to just exist.

HANK:

I know, I get it, I'm lucky, but I don't know...I don't just want to be one of those princes who rides up on a white horse, waves a sword, saves a princess, and whatever.

FAY:

Right, so you want to be *Special*.

HANK:

I want a *Purpose*. I want - I want to be important.

(FAY grabs him by the shoulders and moves him to a very specific spot.)

Princesses, by the way, are *way* stronger than the stories give them credit for. None of them really cover that...What are you doing?

FAY:

Oh, you know just...trying to find the best light...

HANK:

That doesn't even make any sense...

FAY:

And - there! Perfect!

HANK:

Fay, what are you - ? Hey, my feet are stuck. Why can't I move? What's going on!?

FAY:

I debated it. Whether or not to use the first person that I saw.

HANK:

For what??

FAY:

Look, I'm sure you're great. In small bursts. You do talk a lot. But honestly I'm not sure I could've picked a better candidate.

HANK:

FOR. WHAT?!

FAY:

Oh, you'll see.

(Music!)

You want to have a higher purpose? I've got you covered!

HANK:

Where is that music coming from?

FAY:

I've been hanging around this old swampy town for too long.

HANK:

Are you singing right now?

FAY:

Waiting for the day a poor schlub like you would come.

HANK:

Yup, you're definitely singing.

FAY:

*And I now I have to thank you
And now I can be freeeee!
Thanks to you and your...generosity.*

HANK:

I don't appreciate the way you said 'generosity.'

FAY:

*Spirits of the wind
Spirits of the wood
I've brought him
Spirits of the wind*

Spirits of the wood
Set me free

(HANK begins to twitch like he is changing.)

HANK:

What's going o -

(He starts to croak. The BUG CHORUS begins to attach Frog Parts to him as FAY says each line.)

Spin your webs and entangle him
Angle him
Stretch him
Flex him
Contract him
Subtract him
Extract it from me!

(He is now fully Frog.)

Oh...OH! HA! IT WORKED!! I'M FREE!!

(He croaks at her.)

Oh don't be like that! It had to be *someone* and you, well, you were convenient. You live a life of comfort and privilege while your whole country is starving. It's selfish. But now? Well, you just saved your family an extra mouth to feed. I bet the absence of your princely diet will cover three whole families a day.

(He tries to jump at her, but doesn't quite have the hang of it yet.)

Look, I couldn't keep turning into a frog anymore and I have this opportunity and I just - look, you said you wanted a purpose, right? Well here it is! You helped me...and in a strange way I helped you! We're both heroes!

(He sadly croaks.)

Thank you, Hank. I'd kiss you, but I don't want to risk changing back. You know how it is.

(FAY exits. HANK sadly croaks and looks around.)

HANK:

Well this is not what I had planned.

(He hops to the Orchard.)

SCENE 2: Meet Sasha

BUG 1:

So Hank was a frog. Out of nowhere.

BUG 2:

This was not the purpose-fulfilling epic journey he had imagined.

BUG 3:

But at least it was an adventure?

BUGS:

Ten years passed.

BUG 1:

And this story isn't just about Hank!

BUG 2:

In fact we forgot to tell you about a very important character.

BUG 3:

Someone who would grow up never knowing her brother.

ALL BUGS:

Sasha!

(SASHA enters, swinging a wooden sword. BURT follows and they hunt together for apples.)

SASHA:

Come on, Burt!

BUG 1:

She was the Princess and Hank's little sister.

BUG 2:

And Burt was her trusty canine sidekick.

BUG 3:

And her best friend.

BURT:

Right behind you!

(They continue their epic game.)

BUG 1:

They shared a bond like no other pair of friends because, well, they could talk to each other!

BUG 2:

That doesn't sound impressive...

BUG 3:

The impressive part is that Burt is a dog!

BUG 1:

When Sasha was a baby and learning to crawl she escaped from her playroom and made her way into the forest with Burt.

BUG 2:

It is said that she met a forest sprite who gave her the ability to speak to him.

BUG 3:

But she has never really told anyone about it.

(HANK hops on. SASHA and BURT see him and chase him.)

BUG 1:

She had no idea that Hank had been turned into a frog.

BUG 2:

And every so often he would try to come home.

BUG 3:

But every time he would be chased out -

(PERRY swoops in and joins the chase.)

BUGS:

And he would be banished to the woods again.

QUEEN:

Sasha, come in from the orchard!

(SASHA groans. She and BURT return to the castle. HANK, exhausted hops back to the forest after a terrifying ordeal.)

KING:

Hey kiddo. Slay any villainous apples out there?

SASHA:

Barely. Just one.

KING:

Ah, well. There's always tomorrow. An apple a day, right? Eh? Eh?

QUEEN:

I think he thinks he's funny.

SASHA:

Let's just let him think that. It makes him happy.

KING:

What was that?

SASHA:

Nothing, father.

(She and the QUEEN laugh quietly together.)

QUEEN:

Despite your father's ill attempt at humor I hope you know we do appreciate the apples, Sasha. The seeds are helping.

SASHA:

I'd still like to do more.

KING:

You're doing plenty, kiddo. Seed collecting is not for the faint of heart!

SASHA:

But I'm old enough now, I know I can survive in the woods.

QUEEN:

Sasha, we've talked about this -

SASHA:

I can hunt and forage and I can take Burt with me for protection -

QUEEN:

Sasha -

SASHA:

Please, Mother! You know I can do it!

QUEEN:

You are eleven years old. Absolutely not.

SASHA:

Father?

KING:

Oh no, no, don't play us against each other. I've caught onto that game. I'm with your mother. You're too young.

SASHA:

But Hans was my age when he left!

KING:

Exactly.

QUEEN:

We don't want your fate to be the same as his.

SASHA:

But he could still be out there! He could just be lost!

KING:

For all this time? Impossible. He must be d -

(The QUEEN gives him a look.)

Um, uh...otherwise occupied?

(The QUEEN sighs.)

QUEEN:

What your father is trying to say is that he may not want to come home.

SASHA:

Well, that's ridiculous. Why wouldn't he want to come home?

QUEEN:

Oh my dear. We sent him away because we couldn't save our own kingdom and we thought he could do it. It wasn't fair of us.

SASHA:

Then why did he go?

QUEEN:

He was so kind, so giving he would have done it no matter what.

KING:

Because of that it seems we barely gave him a choice. If I were him I wouldn't forgive us for that.

QUEEN:

We trusted him with our lives, with the lives of our subjects. That wasn't fair to put on someone so young.

KING:

And we are not making the same mistake with you.

SASHA:

But I know I can do it!

KING:

We know you could, kiddo.

QUEEN:

But we love you too much to let you go.

SASHA:

Did you love Hans?

QUEEN:

With all our heart.

KING:

We just made a mistake.

QUEEN:

Do you understand?

SASHA:

I...do.

QUEEN:

And you make us proud every day, you know that, right?

SASHA:

Thank you, mother. May I go back out to the orchard?

QUEEN:

Of course, my darling.

KING:

Don't stay out too late. And take Burt with you.

(He whistles and BURT comes bounding in. The KING and QUEEN exit.)

SASHA:

See you soon!

(To BURT.)

It's not technically a lie if I say 'soon' right? I mean soon could mean anything!

(BURT shrugs.)

Well, that's how I'm going to take it. Did you get the scent?

BURT:

Oh yeah. It's him alright.

SASHA:

Excellent. We have a brother to save!

BURT:

Can we get a snack first?

SASHA:

Duh.

(They exit.)

ALL BUGS:

Now back to our Prince!

SCENE 3: Stevie!?

BUG 1:

As we said before ten years had passed.

(HANK enters, fully frogged out.)

BUG 2:

Hank had gotten used to being a frog pretty fast.

BUG 3:

He had a particular aptitude for jumping and swimming.

BUG 1:

After all the attempts to come back home he decided to try and forget about his life from before. But there was a hitch in that plan.

(STEVIE hops on.)

BUG 2:

When Hank was very young, one of the nobles that lived in the kingdom had a daughter named Stephanie.

BUG 3:

But Hank called her Stevie.

BUG 1:

She and Hank loved to play by the woods.

BUG 2:

But one day Hank couldn't come with her; some royal duty prevented him.

BUG 3:

So she ventured out on her own.

ALL BUGS:

And was never seen again... Until now!

(They retreat to their corner and take up their instruments. SASHA and HANK do a sort of dance of hopping just close enough to each other, but not quite making themselves known. This happens for a few moments before they finally bump into each other, startled.)

HANK & STEVIE:

Sugar plumb!

(They each take a defensive stance.)

STEVIE:

Who are you!?

HANK:

Who are *you*?

STEVIE:

This doesn't seem like your area, *friend*.

HANK:

Well...you're right, it's not. I usually keep to the swamp on the North Side.

STEVIE:

Then what are you doing here?

HANK:

I was feeling adventurous today.

STEVIE:

Funny thing for a frog to be feeling adventurous...

HANK:

Well, I'm no ordinary frog.

STEVIE:

Yeah, yeah that's what they all say.

HANK:

But I'm - ! Never mind.

STEVIE:

You know, now that I'm really looking at you, you seem familiar.

(She lowers her defensive stance.)

Are you sure you've never been to this side of the wood?

HANK:

Not consciously...come to think of it you seem familiar, too.

(They start circling each other.)

STEVIE:

Well I've never gone to the North Side.

HANK:

But what if you - nah, nothing.

STEVIE:

What?

HANK:

No, no it's nothing.

STEVIE:

Well, I'm curious now!

HANK:

It's silly.

STEVIE:

I haven't spoken to anyone in two months because everyone is in hibernation for the winter. Please, I'm *so bored*.

HANK:

Well, why aren't *you* hibernating?

STEVIE:

You first, stranger.

HANK:

Well you may not believe me, but -

(She horribly croaks at him.)

All right, all right! I...I used to be a human. Wow, I haven't said that to anyone since it happened...that felt good!

STEVIE:

No way.

HANK:

See, I knew you wouldn't - !

STEVIE:

No, no! I did, too!

HANK:

What!?

STEVIE:

Yeah!

HANK:

No way!?

STEVIE:

I know!

HANK:

When did it happen to you?

STEVIE:

Oh man, years ago. I was just a kid.

HANK:

Me, too.

STEVIE:

Yeah some lady claimed she had to do it because she couldn't be a frog anymore or something. She didn't look like a frog, but -

HANK:

Was her name Fay??

STEVIE:

Oh...I think so, yeah!

HANK:

She got me, too!

STEVIE:

Oh man, this is bananas! I can't believe I met you!

HANK:

I know! See, I had a feeling about today. Something important was going to happen, I just knew it.

STEVIE:

Well, it's nice to meet a fellow human-frog. I'm Stevie.

HANK:

Wait...what?

STEVIE:

Do you not like that term? It's what I call myself, I just figured -

HANK:

No, no I just - your name is Stevie??

STEVIE:

Yeah!

HANK:

Short for Stephanie??

STEVIE:

...Yes? How did you - ?

HANK:

Stevie, it's me! Hank! Hans! The Prince!

STEVIE:

Hank? Hank... Haaaaaank! HANK HANK HANK! OH MY GOODNESS!!

(They do a hop-dance around each other.)

HANK:

I thought you were gone forever!! I can't believe it's really you!

STEVIE:

Neither can I! I mean I can't believe we suffered the same fate either!

HANK:

I've been thinking about you all this time. I felt so bad that I couldn't go with you to play that day.

STEVIE:

Oh, it wasn't your fault, we were just kids! You had your royal whatever and I wanted to go play.

HANK:

Well it's still good to see you, Stevie.

STEVIE:

You too, Hank.

(PERRY zooms in.)

PERRY:

Hey froggy folks!

HANK:

BIRD! RUN!

(He hides.)

STEVIE:

Hey, Perry! I didn't know you were back from migration already!

HANK:

Perry?

PERRY:

Just got back this morning! Things are starting to melt early, so I figured why not? The drought has everything all mixed up.

STEVIE:

Hank you can come out, Perry won't eat you.

HANK:

Sorry, that hasn't been my typical experience with large birds.

PERRY:

Ah, I never had a taste for frogs. Not really my thing.

STEVIE:

Perry makes a great lookout. Don't you?

PERRY:

Ah, I'm alright. Say, speaking of that, you two best find a good place to hide for the moment. I saw that creepy, venomous snake wandering around this way a few minutes ago.

HANK:

Where should we go?

STEVIE:

Follow me.

(They both duck “underwater”. PERRY hides in a tree. SCARLET, a terrifying looking snake enters and slithers across the stage, tasting the air.)

SCARLET:

I feel some froggy vibrations here. Someone isn’t hibernating like they should be.

(She tastes the air and PERRY caws menacingly from his tree. She shrinks back.)

Mmm. I’ll be back, little frogs.

(She slithers off. The trio pop out from their hiding places.)

PERRY:

All clear!

HANK:

Oof. That was scary.

STEVIE:

And a close call. Thanks for the heads up, Perry.

PERRY:

Any time! Now if you’ll excuse me, I have a stash of corn kernels I left in a tree somewhere that are calling my name!

(He flies off.)

HANK:

Nice bird, that Perry.

STEVIE:

Speaking of corn, I’m starving.

HANK:

I know a place that’s filled with mosquitos!

STEVIE:

Ugh, I’m drooling. Or maybe I’m just slimy. Lead the way!

(They hop off.)

SCENE 4: The Quest

ALL BUGS:

Meanwhile at the edge of the forest...

(SASHA and BURT appear at the edge of the forest.)

SASHA:

Here we are!

BURT:

This is the entrance to the wood.

SASHA:

If he's in there, we'll find him.

BURT:

Isn't this where I'm supposed to tell you to turn around?

SASHA:

Why would you do that?

BURT:

That's the human thing to do.

SASHA:

Right, right, right...

BURT:

But I'm a dog so I don't understand human motivations and therefore have no fear.

SASHA:

That's a good point.

BURT:

And wolf ancestry.

SASHA:

That's also a good point. Ok, well what would you say if you were human?

BURT:

Hmm. I guess I'd say...it could be dangerous?

SASHA:

Right, but we are strong! I can use a sword and a bow and you're a dog, so...again wolf ancestors. What else?

BURT:

We have no experience wandering through the woods?

SASHA:

True, but we've been training. The castle orchard was good for that. Anything else?

BURT:

We don't know if he's in there?

SASHA:

But you can still smell the trail, right?

BURT:

Yes, but -

SASHA:

Perfect! All settled then.

BURT:

Wait!

(BURT sniffs the air and ground.)

Something is strange. It's hard to say what.

SASHA:

Don't dogs remember smells forever?

BURT:

It's not about how long it's been; I remember what he smells like. I mean if he was still in there I'd smell him pretty clearly, but there's...I don't know the more I smell, the weirder it seems.

SASHA:

What do you mean weird?

BURT:

It's like a combination of him and something else I don't know.

SASHA:

But he's a part of it?

BURT:

I can't be sure, but I think so.

SASHA:

Do you think you can follow it?

(BURT sniffs.)

BURT:

Yeah. yeah, I think I can.

SASHA:

Lead the way!

(They start to wander in when they nearly bump into FAY.)

FAY:

Oh!

SASHA:

Oh goodness, sorry!

(BURT growls.)

I didn't see you.

FAY:

Yeah, it's like you just appeared.

SASHA:

Are you heading into the wood?

FAY:

We are.

SASHA:

Something about her smells wrong.

BURT:

What do you mean?

SASHA:

What?

FAY:

The weird smell is coming from her.

BURT:

Do you think she knows - ?

SASHA:

Are you talking to your dog?

FAY:

I think she knows something about Hans.

BURT:

Are you sure?

SASHA:

I mean, I'm literally standing here watching you do it -

FAY:

I am.

BURT:

(They both stare at FAY.)

Oh-kaaaay. I'm going to go -

FAY:

Stop her.

BURT:

I wonder if you can help us with something.

SASHA:

Oh, I really have to get -

FAY:

Please? It will only take a moment.

SASHA:

I guess...I mean I can give you directions?

FAY:

No, we are all set with directions. It's more like a person we're trying to find.

SASHA:

There aren't really any people in there, I can tell you that much.

FAY:

Really.

SASHA:

Either people are afraid of the wood or it swallows them.

FAY:

Swallows them?

SASHA:

FAY:

At least that's the rumor that passes through the outside townships. "People who go in there aren't seen again!" You know how townspeople like to gossip.

SASHA:

Funny you should say that though.

FAY:

Is it?

SASHA:

It seems that is exactly what happened to my brother.

FAY:

Your - your brother?

BURT:

She's getting nervous...

SASHA:

Yeah. He went in to find food years ago and never came back.

FAY:

I'm terribly sorry. That must have been hard for you and your family. He must have run off to one of the neighboring towns.

BURT:

She's lying.

SASHA:

I'm way ahead of you.

FAY:

Right...so if that's all -

SASHA:

No chance you've seen him then?

FAY:

What, your brother? I told you people don't go in -

SASHA:

Then what are you doing here?

FAY:

Me? Oh, I -

SASHA:

You seem human enough.

FAY:

What exactly are you accusing me of?

SASHA:

We aren't accusing you of anything.

BURT:

Except that we are.

FAY:

Look, I don't know anything about Hank, ok? I'm sorry, but I can't help you.

SASHA:

I never told you his name was Hank.

BURT:

Gotcha.

FAY:

I -

SASHA:

I mean, I've always called him Hans, but my parents told me he preferred to be called Hank.

FAY:

I'm sorry, I can explain, I -

SASHA:

Oh, you're gonna explain! What did you do to my brother!?

(BURT growls.)

FAY:

Look, I didn't hurt him, ok!? I just couldn't take it anymore!

SASHA:

Take what?

(The lights change as FAY tells her story. The BUG CHORUS assists as puppets/characters. The story surrounds SASHA and BURT.)

FAY:

When I was younger I loved to play in the forest. My family, we're not like the average people. We're part faerie. That means that magic runs through us. We can do things other people can't, but it also means we're targets. People want to use us for our magic, take it from us, harm us. I wanted to protect my family so I made a deal with a forest spirit to keep them safe. Every night I would turn into a frog like clockwork; the sun would set and I would shrink. If I could find two people to turn into frogs permanently then my curse would be lifted and I could go back home, so that's what I did. The first was a young girl from your kingdom, the second was your brother. I chose them because they were convenient, nothing else. I wish it didn't have to be that way, but now my family is safe. And I don't regret that for a second.

(The story fades and the BUG CHORUS retreats.)

SASHA:

But don't you regret taking them away from their lives?

FAY:

Like I said, I wish there was another way -

SASHA:

You have magic, don't you?

FAY:

It's not the same. The forest spirits are a different kind of powerful.

SASHA:

So let's ask them? Every spell can be broken, right?

FAY:

I don't know...

SASHA:

Look, it's the least you can do since you're the reason I'm here in the first place.

FAY:

Fine, I'll help you. But can I ask you a question first?

SASHA:

Sure.

FAY:

How long have you been able to talk to animals?

SASHA:

Oh, it's just Burt. And that, my friend, is a long story for a long walk. Come on.

(They exit. The BUG CHORUS plays Music.)

SCENE 5: The Fight

BUG 1:

This story is going well so far, don't you think?

BUG 2:

I think so.

BUG 3:

Very compelling.

BUG 1:

We're very good story tellers.

BUG 2:

I think we're about to hit the climax of the story.

BUG 3:

Things are getting exciting!

(They retreat to their corner as HANK and STEVIE enter.)

STEVIE:

You weren't kidding, there were a *lot* of mosquitoes there.

HANK:

I never thought I'd be good at tracking them, but here we are.

STEVIE:

Some things just get cooler when you're a frog.

HANK:

Yeah...

STEVIE:

You miss it, huh?

HANK:

Huh?

STEVIE:

Being human?

HANK:

I mean, yeah. I've tried to go home every so often since I changed. Every time they chase me out like I never belonged there.

STEVIE:

That sounds awful. Why do you keep going back if it hurts so much?

HANK:

I don't know. I just want to feel like I belong somewhere. I'm not human enough, not frog enough. Nothing ever seems to just fit.

STEVIE:

I get that. It was hard at first for me, too.

HANK:

And now?

STEVIE:

Honestly? There are days I barely remember it, my life before. Some days I forget entirely.

HANK:

Wow that sounds...easy.

STEVIE:

It can be. But when I remember it's really, really rough.

HANK:

How do you handle that?

STEVIE:

I know it sounds simple, but...I just try to stay positive.

HANK:

You were always good at that.

STEVIE:

The more you do it, the more natural it gets. You know, I don't want to make you feel bad, but I had almost entirely forgotten until we found each other.

HANK:

Is that a bad thing?

STEVIE:

I don't think so, no.

HANK:

At least we're not alone, right?

STEVIE:

Who's the positive one now?

(HANK laughs. PERRY swoops in.)

HANK:

Hey, Perry! How were the kernels?

PERRY:

I barely found them in time. You have to hide!

STEVIE:

The snake again??

PERRY:

Yes, and you don't have time, you have to -

(SCARLET slithers on. She stares them down.)

HANK:

Too late!

STEVIE:

What do we do?!

PERRY:

Run!

(He flies away.)

HANK:

Looks like we have no choice. We stay and fight.

(A Dance! The BUG CHORUS plays music as The Frogs jump and the Snake slithers around them.)

SCARLET:

Wait!

HANK:

What??

STEVIE:

What do you want from us??

SCARLET:

I have to ask - why won't that bird eat you?

HANK:

Ummm...

STEVIE:

Why do you want to know?

SCARLET:

I'm just curious. Are you venomous? Poison dart frogs?

HANK:

I don't think so?

STEVIE:

I don't think so.

SCARLET:

What is wrong with you then?

HANK:

Nothing that I know of.

STEVIE:

Well...apart from the fact that we used to be human.

HANK:

There is that.

SCARLET:

Human? Really?

STEVIE:

Really.

HANK:

I even used to be a Prince!

SCARLET:

No way!

STEVIE:

It's true. I lived in his kingdom.

SCARLET:

Bonkers.

STEVIE and HANK:

We know.

SCARLET:

Would you believe me if I told you I used to live two towns over?

HANK:

What, is there a swamp there?

STEVIE:

No, Hank! She means she was a human, too.

SCARLET:

My name was Scarlet.

HANK:

Does everyone around here have run-ins with creepy magic people?

SCARLET:

No, I just did a spell wrong on my own. It was my first time trying it by myself. My mother came home and saw the snake and, well, here I am.

STEVIE:

Do you ever want to try and go back?

SCARLET:

Nah. At this point I feel much better as a snake. I have way more power than I did as a human. Venom, teeth, strength...

STEVIE:

Yeesh...

HANK:

That's...a good way to look at it...

SCARLET:

Well now that I know I'm looking at two fellow ex-humans I'll leave you be. I can't say my friends won't try and eat you, but I'll do my best to steer them away.

HANK:

Thanks, Scarlet!

STEVIE:

Good luck...snaking.

SCARLET:

Good luck frogging!

(She slithers away.)

HANK:

Huh. That was strange.

STEVIE:

Yeah...I was surprised she didn't seem even a little bit interested in going back to her old self.

HANK:

So was I. I think about it all the time. But I also wonder what I'd do if I went back.

STEVIE:

You'd probably get a parade.

HANK:

But what if my parents don't even remember me? Or want me home? What if they think I abandoned them?

STEVIE:

I don't think they think that.

HANK:

I went on this journey because they told me to. I always just did what they told me to. This time I thought that I would find something. Maybe I'd be a hero and that would be my thing? I don't know.

STEVIE:

Why do you even need a thing?

HANK:

What do you mean? I'm - I *was* a prince. Princes need *things*.

STEVIE:

Hank...you don't have anything to prove. You're just you, isn't that enough?

HANK:

But I don't even know who I actually am.

STEVIE:

You're kind, you're generous, you're a great friend. Even after all these years! I think that's your *thing*.

HANK:

Wow...gosh...I wish frogs knew how to hug.

STEVIE:

Sticky high-five?

HANK:

Sticky high-five.

(They high-five. It is indeed sticky. PERRY swoops in.)

PERRY:

I hate to break up a best friend moment, but you've got company again.

HANK:

More snakes?

PERRY:

Two humans and a dog.

STEVIE:

Humans? But nobody ever comes out this far.

PERRY:

Looks like today is the day that that statistic is no longer relevant.

HANK:

Should we hide?

STEVIE:

I'm not in the mood to be made into stew. So.

HANK & STEVIE:

Bloop!

(They plop under the water and PERRY flies off.)

SCENE 6: Corn Kernels

BUG 1:

The worlds are about to collide!

BUG 2:

Brother and sister will meet after all this time!

BUG 3:

Friends, I think we're spoiling it...

Oh...right. Spoiler alert!

BUG 1:

Sorry, we're just excited.

BUG 2:

It's ok to be excited, we just shouldn't spoil it!

BUG 3:

Right!

BUG 1:

Of course!

BUG 2:

On with the scene!

BUG 3:

(The BUG CHORUS retreats to their corner. SASHA, FAY, and BURT stumble on, their feet getting stuck in the muck. BURT is actively sniffing around.)

SASHA:
I didn't realize that this was going to be so...swampy.

SASHA:

It's a swamp.

FAY:

But I thought it was the woods!

SASHA:

Swamps can occur in the woods.

FAY:

I am learning so much on this trip.

SASHA:

It's close!

BURT:

SASHA:

How close?

FAY:

Does he smell something?

BURT:

It's *really* close...

SASHA:

Like, in this area?

FAY:

Oh, I feel something...

SASHA:

Am I the only one that has no idea where anything is?

BURT:

Right there.

(He points to the area where the Frogs are hiding. In one instant PERRY shrieks from the bushes, BURT lunges, FAY and SASHA fall in the water, the Frogs jump - it's chaos.)

PERRY:

DON'T TOUCH MY FROGS!

STEVIE:

HANK RUN!

HANK:

SUGAR PLUMB!

BURT:

I GOT 'EM!

(The Frogs plop back underwater. Everything stops. Every person on stage is in a stand-off.)

SASHA:

Is that them?

FAY:

I'm not sure.

PERRY:

Look, Dog, tell your humans to scram.

BURT:

I can't do that.

SASHA:

What's he saying?

PERRY:

Uh...She can understand you?

BURT:

Yeah! It's a gift, don't worry about it.

PERRY:

All right then...

BURT:

We're looking for a couple of frogs. Have you seen them?

PERRY:

Depends.

BURT:

On what?

PERRY:

What you're going to do to them.

BURT:

We just want to take them home.

PERRY:

To eat them!?

BURT:

One of them is her brother. The other was a young girl from our kingdom.

PERRY:

What's her brother's name?

BURT:

Hans.

PERRY:

Well I'm sorry, but there is no Hans here.

BURT:

He says there's nobody with the name Hans.

SASHA:

Oh...wait, Hank! He goes by Hank!

BURT:

I've been informed he also goes by Hank.

PERRY:

Hank...

(HANK bleeps his head up from the water.)

HANK:

Yeah?

BURT:

Hans?!

HANK:

Burt!?!

BURT:

HANS!!

HANK:

BURT!!!

(They do an awkward “I’m so happy to see you” dance around each other, asking a thousand questions that make sense only to them. STEVIE bleeps her head up and watches them.)

What’s going on?
STEVIE:

Apparently they know each other.
PERRY:

Stevie, it’s Burt!! BURT, STEVIE!!
HANK:

Burt your - your dog!?
STEVIE:

Yeah!!
HANK:

Oh my goodness hi, buddy!!
STEVIE:

Stevie!!
BURT:

Burt!!
STEVIE:

(Another happy dance.)

But wait, wait - Burt, why are you all the way out here?
HANK:

I came with some friends.
BURT:

Burt, that’s the person that turned me into a frog...
HANK:

STEVIE:

And me!

HANK:

And I don't even know the other person.

BURT:

Yes you do.

HANK:

I mean she looks familiar, but -

BURT:

Hank. That's Sasha.

SASHA:

That's him? The frog that was always hopping around the orchard?

BURT:

Seems like that's him.

SASHA:

But I always chased him away...

BURT:

We both did.

HANK:

Sasha? But she's just a baby...

PERRY:

Who's Sasha?

STEVIE:

His little sister.

PERRY:

Oh boy, this is going to be a moment...

(PERRY flies away.)

BURT:

It's been years. She's all grown up.

SASHA:

Hank, if I had known it was you I never would have chased you...I'm so sorry...

HANK:

Can - can she understand me?

BURT:

No, but I can tell her what you say.

(HANK tries to think of something deep and important to say and instead puts up his hand. SASHA puts up hers in response. A sticky high-five.)

STEVIE:

I'm sorry to break up this truly beautiful moment, but why is that faerie woman here?

HANK:

She's going to turn Sasha into a frog! Sasha, run!

BURT:

No, no she is here to fix what she did.

HANK & STEVIE:

How?

BURT:

Fay, that's your cue.

SASHA:

It's time!

FAY:

Look I'm sorry for what I did to you two. I'll explain it all later, but now I have to fix you.

(She prepares to sing.)

*Spirits of the wind
Spirits of the wood
I've come back*

HANK:

Oh boy she's singing again.

STEVIE:

This is how it works, shush!

(HANK and STEVIE close their eyes.)

FAY:

*Spirits of the wind
Spirits of the wood
Set them free*

*I've made a mistake
For my own selfish gain
Take these poor souls
Make them right again*

*Stretch them
Flex them
Command them
Expand them
Give it back to me!*

(Suddenly FAY disappears.)

SASHA:

It didn't work...

FAY:

Oh no...

BURT:

She's gone...

SASHA:

Yes, I see that, Burt!

(HANK and STEVIE open their eyes.)

HANK:

What happened? Are we human?

STEVIE:

I still feel sticky...

BURT:

It didn't work.

STEVIE:

Oh boy...

SASHA:

What do we do now??

BURT:

I don't know.

SASHA:

She was supposed to fix Hans! She was supposed to get me my brother back! I didn't mean to hurt you, Hank. Please, you have to believe me. I just - I thought you were something I could play with and chase...but you're not! I should have known better and I'm so, so sorry...

(She starts to cry. BURT nudges her sadly. HANK hops over to her. Again, he doesn't know what to say so he puts up his hand for a sticky high-five. She laughs through her tears and puts her hand up, too.)

SASHA:

Can I still come visit you?

(HANK nods, smiling.)

Goodbye, Hans.

(She kisses her hand and places it on his head. Suddenly he starts to shudder and his Frog Pieces start to fall off. He grabs STEVIE's hand as it's happening and her pieces start to fall off, too - a chain reaction of magic! When it's over they stare at each other, stunned.)

HANK:

Stevie?

STEVIE:

Hank!

HANK:

STEVIE!

STEVIE:

HANK!

(They have a real hug followed by a non-sticky high-five.)

SASHA:

...Hans?

HANK:

Sasha, I can't believe you came for me!

SASHA:

Of course I did. I wanted to be brave like my big brother.

STEVIE:

That's a pretty great goal.

SASHA:

Hans, I missed you so much.

HANK:

Aw, Sasha. You can call me Hank.

(He musses her hair and they laugh. The trio has a lovely reunion off to the side. FAY pops up as a Frog. She tries to hop away, not wanting to ruin the reunion.)

BURT:

Hey! You're a frog!

FAY:

It appears so.

(She tries to hop away again.)

BURT:

Wait! Where are you going?

FAY:

Does it matter?

BURT:

I think so.

FAY:

I just didn't want to ruin the moment.

BURT:

Don't you want to be changed back?

FAY:

I don't know if that's possible.

BURT:

Maybe we can find some help for you back at the kingdom?

FAY:

Nah. I think I'll give this frog thing a chance for a while. My family is safe, and those two made it look like fun.

BURT:

If you change your mind, I'll put in a good word.

FAY:

Thanks, Burt.

(She puts up her hand for a sticky high-five. He reciprocates and she hops away. PERRY swoops in.)

PERRY:

They're human again, huh?

BURT:

Indeed they are.

PERRY:

I'll miss them. But I'm happy for them.

BURT:

So am I. Especially now because I have three people to play with.

PERRY:

I wish I could tell them - oh! Oh! I'm a genius!

BURT:

Uhhh...

PERRY:

I have a parting gift!

BURT:

What is it?

PERRY:

Stevie told me about the drought and the crops. I have a huge stash of seeds and corn kernels for them to bring back.

BURT:

That should be a big help!

PERRY:

Should we tell them now?

BURT:

Nah, let them have their moment.

(They watch the trio celebrate as lights fade. The trio moves off to the side. The lights come back up on the BUG CHORUS, center.)

EPILOGUE:

BUG 1:

This is the part where we tell you about the happily ever after!

BUG 2:

Some stories may end happily at one point and then get sad later.

BUG 3:

But this isn't one of those stories.

BUG 1:

The King and Queen were thrilled to see their children back and safe.

(The KING and QUEEN enter and embrace their children and BURT.)

Hank discovered that his "thing" was being the best older brother he could be.

(HANK squeezes SASHA.)

BUG 2:

Stevie was reunited with her family and took charge of spreading the seeds that Perry had given them.

(STEVIE enters looking very farmer-like.)

Soon a whole new crop of...well, crops began to grow.

BUG 3:

Fay, it turns out loved being a frog since she'd given it a chance.

(FAY hops on.)

She ended up befriending Scarlet the snake as well as Perry, the best lookout ever, making a brand new family for herself.

(SCARLET and PERRY enter and squeeze FAY.)

BUG 1:

And that, as they say, is that!

BUG 2:

That's our story!

BUG 3:

I think we did a really good job.

BUG 1:

I agree. Some of our best work.

BUG 2:

Wait, aren't we forgetting something?

BUG 3:

Oh, right. Of course.

ALL BUGS:

The End!

(Everybody bows.)