

The Frog Lawyer (Female Lawyer to Frog-Woman TF)

By FoxFaceStories

A commission for KillerMonkey

Jennifer is a young hotshot high-powered lawyer who aims to make her name big-time with big cases. But when she's saddled by her firm with a case she feels is beneath her and gives less than her usual efforts, her defendant responds by cursing her to become a frog-woman to teach her a lesson. Jennifer must race to try and prevent the slow transformation as it takes place, especially since her poor paralegal Kim is also accidentally hit by the curse!

The Frog Lawyer

Jennifer Williams was going places, and everyone knew it. She was only thirty four years old, and yet she already had a reputation for being a firebrand of a lawyer, working her way up the ranks of *Burke and Ellis*, the most prestigious law firm in the whole damn state. Even if you didn't know she was a lawyer, you could easily pick her out just from the sheer confidence that oozed from her, the professional gait, the level gaze of her green eyes. It didn't hurt that her appearance was quite striking in general: she was five-foot-ten, with light skin that was complemented by her reddy-brown rust hair. She knew it too, and was damn proud at how she could loom over and intimidate fellow competitors, establishing dominance in the boardroom as easily as the courtroom. And, of course, the bedroom as well.

"She's going to make partner soon."

"That Jennifer will go straight to the top."

"What's the bet they'll be adding *Williams* to the firm name by next year?"

The discourse around her knew the path she was taking, and that pleased her. She loved to soak it in, relishing the awareness others had in her own excellence. The fact that she'd just won a major civil case in *Smitherson v Pelldyne Corporate*, a case not even Graham, her mentor and senior partner, thought she could win, just spurred further discussion and adulation, and more than a little cake celebration in the office. Pelldyne had been using blatantly unsafe working practices that had led to a class action lawsuit, and yet she had managed to pull victory from the jaws of defeat by casting enough doubt and aspersion on the plaintiff's claims.

She loved those victories the most. It was, as she often put it, an example of "winning the game." That's what it was to her, really. A game. A board of pieces that could be moved and strategised to get the best jury reaction, to draw forth the most cunning argument, to seal the deal on a lengthy but crucial series of events upon which everything hinged. A way

to beat one's worthy opponent in the worthiest battlefield of all. For if the pen was mightier than the sword, then the decision of the judge and jury held more weight than a thousand post-war treaties.

Which was why she was so excited to be summoned before a meeting of the senior and junior one hot June morning. Her paralegal Kim Sanchez was with her, and almost as excited as Jennifer was, though Jen was much better at keeping a cool lid about it.

"What do you think it's about? Could it be a promotion? An offer? After the Pelldyne case, you'll totally deserve it, boss!"

Jen smiled sweetly at Kim. The hispanic woman was in her late twenties, with an attractive nerdy look that evidently favoured her personal love life, to judge from the rotating cast of boyfriends she continually wept over. Like Jennifer, she was ambitious, but she was not venomous like so many others were in this profession. She had attached herself to Jennifer as her paralegal for two years now, and had proven herself over and over again to not only be loyal, but damn competent as well. Jennifer relied on her thoroughness with a trust she reserved to few others, and it continued to pay off dividends.

"We'll see, Kim. Let's not get our hopes up, but who knows? Partner might still be a bit too early to think about-"

"But *junior* partner-"

Jen held up a hand. "Also could be too early, though not out of the question. Though I think I'd deserve it, and your own star would rise considerably."

Kim grinned, with just a little red in her cheeks.

"Well, that would be great too. But after that corporate case - and the *Dynaguard* thing and how you fixed up Tillerson's shoddy work - they must at least be considering. Oh, do you think they're offering a juicy case to prove yourself?"

Jennifer snapped her fingers in agreement. "Now *that* makes sense. I've hauled in a big fish for them, and now they want to know if I can repeat the trick. Burke alluded to this practice to me before. And given the rumours swirling around this Jacen EV Car recall, I think we might have another whopper ready to reel in."

Kim chuckled with her boss, only to stop. "God, it's hot in here. Speaking of electric, can't we get the aircon going?"

"That's just nervousness, Kim."

"I'm pretty sure it's summer. Seriously, the frogs were filling up the gutter this morning as I went to my car. We're all trying to cool off."

"Well, no time to cool off just yet. Just to *be cool*, and calm, and collected. We've got a meeting to get to."

"And a promotion for you! And me!"

Jennifer smirked. "Or a big case to land. Or both. Let's snap to it and impress them, and they can impress us in turn."

She strode ahead on her long leads, her smart professional suit perfectly tailored to give her an image of pride and power, with Kim walking dutifully behind and to the side of her, carrying her legal notes.

It was going to be a good day. She knew it. Things were happening.

Jennifer was stunned. "I - I don't quite understand, I'm afraid."

Graham Burke leaned forwards, twiddling his thumbs a little awkwardly. "It's a pretty simple case, I know, but I'm sure you'll deal with it well enough."

Again, Jennifer was stunned. "It's . . . it's quite small. I don't mean to be rude, Graham, or to you, Jack, but I thought that after the Pelldyne case-

"The Pelldyne case was a magnificent feather in your cap," interrupted Jack Ellis. He was an older man with monstrously large white eyebrows that made him look like the devil. In fact, it was hard for Jennifer not to see him as the devil at that very moment. "And rest assured, it will pay dividends to you, and this firm. But this is a delicate matter, even if it is a rather simple case. We're assigning you to it because we know you'll do good work on it."

Jennifer couldn't help but briefly look at Kim. To her surprise, her paralegal was holding a better poker face than she was. She'd really hyped herself up for disappointment.

"May I ask about this delicacy?" she inquired. "From what I can gather, it's just a standard fare duty of care case. Herbal recipe store sells a remedy that causes a rash, customer sues for negligence and lack of care, and one side wins out. This is the kind of case, if you'll excuse me, that gets thrown to the rookie lawyers. Sir."

Graham leaned forward. "But it is the case we're giving you, Jennifer, and we expect you to take it. That will be all: consider what you've heard from us and take it as it is."

Jennifer bit the inside of her cheek. "Yes Graham. Jack. Will that be all?"

Jack gestured for her to exit, and she did, keeping her back straight. She returned to her office, and only once Kim had dutifully closed the door and lowered all the blinds did she go into a rage, summoning a storm of curses that would make anyone blush.

"This is bullshit," she finished, collapsing into her desk. "A total nothing case."

"Maybe it's a test?"

"It's a shit one if it is. This is totally beneath me. I'm a goddamn rising star, Kim. I'm the best fucking lawyer this place has, and Burke knows it. He gave me *assurances*, goddamn it. I bet that fucker Jack Ellis is behind it. He hates me. Old misogynistic dinosaur."

"It could be a junior partner," Kim added. "Isaac Harper has always been cold."

Jennifer groaned. "Goddamnit, and he's Jack's protege. They're trying to test me alright, test my patience. This is their way of letting me know how little I mean, even after a big case, I need to know my place. Work my way up. The talk around the office has got them all jealous, or something. Fuck!"

Kim placed a hand on her shoulder, and for once it comforted Jennifer.

"Technically, we can refuse the case."

Jennifer waved her off. "No, I'll have to take it. I'll not show them any weakness, but I'll just get it over with and done."

She steeled herself.

"And then I'll get a goddamned whopper on the line, and reel in such a big fish that even that fat toad Jack Ellis won't be able to deny me my place in the ranks."

The case got worse. The woman's name was Margaret Pritch, though she insisted on being called 'Maggie.' Jennifer was not a spiteful person by nature, just ambitious, but even she thought this woman looked a bit too much like a new-age hippie type. She had brown hair like straw that was certainly not washed by conventional means, and she wore old-timey clothing that would not do well in court, particularly given the bright yellows and clashing greens and purples. She had numerous trinkets and jangling beads that one would expect a witch of the woods to wear, though at least she looked like a normal middle-aged woman beneath it.

"Thank you for taking this case on," she said when they met. "I'm so very appreciate to have such a wonderful lawyer with such a great reputation. I delve in magics and healing, but the law is just so beyond me, I swear! And I like to do things by the book, that's for certain!"

Jennifer held a blank face. This case was getting worse and worse. The woman really did believe she had 'arcane power.' By her somewhat woody smell, she probably lived out in the sticks making her own ganja. As it was, she had to be at least professional.

"That is more than fine, Margaret."

"Call me Maggie, dear, and have a scone! I made them myself!"

She left that to Kim, who was smiling sweetly and clearly enjoying them. They did look nice actually, just the way Jennifer's mother had always made them back when she'd been alive, but she was too mopey to participate now. She just wanted these facts sorted, the details and documents confirmed, and for her to get the damn case over and done with, open and shut, so that this stupid man with his stupid rash from this stupid alternative

medicine remedy crap could be put behind her, and she could get back to *actual fucking cases*.

But she didn't show that anger on her face. Instead, she took some of the documents Maggie had procured and opened them.

"Can you run me through the details of this transaction again for me, Margaret?"

"Maggie, dearie. And yes!"

"I'll need to know the composition of what's in the remedy."

"I'm afraid I can't reveal all."

She could have died there and then. She sighed. "Margaret - Maggie - I'll need to know, because the judge will need to know. We're not opting for a jury, at least."

"Some of it is far too arcane. There are ingredients not even of this mortal plane."

God, it was going to be a long day. She could only hope it wasn't going to be a long case. Margaret Pritch raised her little platter of scones.

"Don't worry dearie, I'll tell all that I can. I just know the case will go my way with such a well-esteemed lawyer such as you on my side. For now, have one, dearie! Do you need more tea?"

"Yeth pleath," Kim replied, already working on her next cone.

Jennifer gave her a look that said, *I'm glad someone's enjoying this*.

"Fine, fine, I can tell you this," Maggie said, grinning a little awkwardly. "Part of the ointment is diffused frog essence."

"F-frog essence?" Jennifer asked.

"Yes. Bits of frog. It's perfectly legal, don't worry."

Jennifer nearly gagged. "And people buy this stuff?"

"It helps the skin and grows the hair!"

The hotshot lawyer sighed. It was going to be a long day.

The case proceeded within the month. The customer - one Archibald Jay - wanted it over as quickly as possible. It was petty shit, really. The man didn't even seem to have much of a long-lasting rash, and he couldn't definitively prove that it was the 'hair growth' remedy that had caused it in the first place. But his photos did document the rash, which Maggie could only explain as due to improper application and, during a disastrous testimony, 'improper aural alignment.'

It was a slog, to say the least. Jennifer had other cases to work on, and found herself preparing for those even when she was meant to be 'on' in the courtroom. She focused her

arguments on specific precedence regarding duty of care, the lack of evidence of causation when it came to the ointment leading to Mr Jay's rash, and evidence that the tonic had functioned well when it came to other customers - or at least the ones that had made no complaint and were satisfied. She acquitted herself well, she thought, though Kim noted more than once that her heart was clearly not in it at all.

Perhaps that was the reason why, for the first time in quite some time, Jennifer Williams actually managed to lose a case.

"I find in favour of the plaintiff on the balance of probabilities," the justice explained. "The defendant has not shown a preponderance of evidence that would suggest a breach in the clear causation of the *frog* potion causing the painful rash for Mr Jay."

He continued on with his ratio decidendi, and with each deliverance of his summing up, Jennifer cringed. All at once, she saw the path to victory, the path she *could have had* if she'd taken the case more seriously and devoted more time to it. As it was, a loss here was quite embarrassing - perhaps that had been Jack Ellis' aim from the very beginning. Or perhaps she just hadn't given a shit.

"Damn," she said.

Maggie turned to her. "You said we were going to win?"

"I'm sorry, Maggie, but I guess they don't turn out that way all the time. I did my best."

Margaret Pritch was still in her funny little costume - Jennifer cursed herself for not doing more to push her to wear something formal for the court - but for the first time her expression was anything but sweet and kind and grandmotherly. "I don't believe you," she said. "I'm going to be out thousands of dollars. My business will suffer - *my* business. It may not be big, or wildly successful, but it's *mine*. You were doodling away on other cases while mine was going on."

"Miss Pritch, I wasn't - the frog thing was just too much to stomach, pardon my joke. There's no way that this case could be decided by-"

"Don't try to deny it. You were! I know you were! I know you think my business is silly, and that I'm a strange old lady, and that magic isn't real and all that. Fine! I get that all the time, it's the way of the world. But Graham told me you were the best. He told me that this was his way of repaying a favour. And you've been nothing but disinterested this whole time. I didn't want to believe I was going to lose until now."

She stood and looked at Kim.

"You, my dear, have been lovely. I'm glad you liked my scones."

Kim nodded awkwardly, trying not to smile too much. "Thank you, Maggie. Jennifer really did her b-"

“I don’t want to hear it. And I told you, the frog thing is legal and not even that unnatural for herbal remedies. I could see you chuckling and mocking it the whole time, though. Good day to the both of you.”

She walked away, the courtroom’s members drifting out. Jennifer had gone white - whiter than usual.

“She was a friend of Graham. This was *Graham’s* doing. Fuck. Shit, fuck, shit! Kim, this was a test. A test of goddamn trust.”

Kim nodded. “Yeah, I can see that. I think . . . I think we messed up big time.”

Jennifer collapsed her face into her hands. “Pride before a fucking fall. Over fucking frog ointment. How am I going to explain this to Graham?”

The explanation was simple, but the apology was not accepted. Graham was a friendly mentor, but his disappointment was clear.

“She was . . . a valuable individual at a very important time for me,” he said. “It’s a private matter, Jennifer, but I wanted you to handle this.”

“Sir, if I’d been told this, I certainly would have-”

She realised she was saying ‘sir’ now, instead of ‘Graham.’ She also realised that he had a steelier look to him as he interrupted her words.

“I didn’t see a need to tell you. We partners have such discretion, and I trusted you. Now, I will be getting Isaac to pursue potential appeal processes, though it may do us no good. You screwed the pooch on this one, I’m afraid. This doesn’t mean disaster, Jennifer. But it does mean that trust will have to be rebuilt. I expect you to understand that.”

“Yes sir, of course sir,” she replied, and Kim mirrored her, similarly nervous. She clenched her fists as she left, feeling red-faced and humiliated, her pride dealt a near-fatal blow. But only *near* fatal.

“This isn’t my fault,” she insisted as they moved back to her office. This was a damn test where I didn’t know the conditions. I can’t believe this! After the corporate cases I’ve handled, I deserve more trust!”

Kim nodded loyally. “I agree Jennifer, utterly agree. Though . . . perhaps we could have worked harder on Maggie’s case.”

Jennifer gave a harrumph. She kept her nose in the air, daring any other employee to mock her for this embarrassment. They all knew she was going places. She was going places. She was determined that this would be a mere blip on her radar. A slight step back on her path to glory and partnership.

“Maybe, but it was a ridiculous case anyway. God, I’ve got a fucking migraine over this. I’ll have to pull some serious all-nighters. I trust you can find the time, Kim?”

“Um, I have a date with Robert, and -”

“Cancel it. We’ve got work to do. You want to be a rising star too, remember?”

And she could see in her eyes that Kim knew it was true.

It was a week of damn hard work that followed as Jennifer did all the damn case preparation for several incoming clients. Kim retrieved paperwork, coffees, and found relevant case precedents for her, and together they worked well into the night, stressing themselves the hell out, just to keep their heads above water. Jennifer wanted everyone to know that she could do it all, and if it meant descending into the constant madness of research and case prep, so be it. It wasn’t like she had anything going on in her social life anyway. Work was her life. No partners, no lovers (at least not recently, though she’d enjoyed some brief closet sex with Darryl a while back), and no real hobbies. She couldn’t even remember the last time she’d been out of the city, excepting the visit to the ‘witch’s’ little shop at the edge of town.

So it came as a bit of a surprise when a gift arrived for the pair of them. It was addressed from that exact individual: ‘Maggie’, addressed specifically to Jen.

“I don’t know how I missed it,” Kim said. “It’s like it was just here on your desk. Maybe she visited?”

“When? We’ve been here the whole time. Spooky woman. It better not be some bath bomb,” Jennifer croaked, voice tired. “Emphasis on the bomb part. Or worse, frogs. I bet it’s full of frogs, isn’t it? It’d be just my luck.”

Kim chuckled as she unwrapped it, then gasped. “Much better than a bomb,” she said. “And frogs as well! Look: a nice, much needed *Sauvignon*.”

Jennifer took the bottle. It was good vintage. It also came with a letter, which she read.

I’m sorry for my harsh words. The French love their frogs, so maybe you will too: enjoy a red wine for your efforts, and try not to go green at the gills. Remember, pride goes before a fall! From Maggie.

“Weird message,” Jennifer said. “But much needed.”

“Let’s crack it open now.”

“Us? It’s addressed to me.”

“Just one glass?”

Jennifer rolled her eyes. It was late though, and she needed to be heading home. Three am was ridiculous. But the wine would do her head good, and she could afford a cab.

“One glass,” she said.

The two drank together, and found it just lovely. Afterwards, feeling groggier than she thought she would after a single glass, Jennifer did indeed take that cab home. She had strange dreams that night. Dreams of greenery, of verdancy. Dreams of delicious flies and cool waters to soothe her slimy skin. It was, strangely, quite a calm, relaxing dream. She had always been a woman on the go, but for the first time in a long time she actually felt at peace in the dream.

She wouldn't wake up quite so peacefully, however.

The first clue that something was immediately wrong when Jennifer woke was that her tongue was strangely swollen, and seemingly longer than usual. Her dreams had felt so damn real that she had planned to luxuriate in bed just a little longer - she didn't need to be back in the office until ten, which was still not enough sleep for a sane person. But the tongue thing was strange.

“Oh Goth, whath wrong wath mah tung?”

She tried to swallow, and it felt weird. What had been in that red wine? Was she coming down with a cold? She groaned a little, working her tongue in her mouth. It felt slimy, but then a lot of her did. As she rose into consciousness more clearly, she realised that her entire mattress and sheets were soaked, as if she had sweated heavily in the night.

“Muth hath leff the heat on inthstead of the cold,” she remarked to herself, still trying to get used to her tongue.

But the air was cool. Refreshingly so, in fact. Summer hit her apartment pretty brutally, so she had always been happy to rack up a large power bill: it was a good city apartment, and she could well afford it. Except her sheets were now slimy, like she had the flue. Or worse, *pneumonia*.

“Ughhh,” she grumbled, throwing the sheets aside. They came away slightly sticky, almost mucousy. “Oh G-God. Groth. Gross!”

Indeed, she was sweaty, or *something* like that. What's more, her skin was odd and unnatural. Jennifer's heart skipped a beat as she looked over herself, eyes wide. She wasn't quite terrified yet, but she was certainly alarmed to say the least.

“I look . . . green,” she remarked, almost doing a double-take at her own words. Her tongue drooped over her lips a little, and she had to snake it back in - seriously, was it somehow *longer*? Did a swollen tongue even work like that? And what the fuck was up with her skin? It was slightly damp, most of the sweat or fluid having dripped into the sheets, but the colouring concerned her as well. She always slept topless and in just her underwear, it

was more comfortable that way, but it gave her now an impression of her body she'd never had, which was one of slight disgust. Her stomach and breasts and insides of her thighs and arms were still their usual white, but she had a slight, almost faint tinge of green along her sides, shoulders, outer thighs and arms. She looked sick.

"F-fuuuck," she groaned, falling backwards, hair tousling about. "Juth wath I n-need. Fucking cold sick flu pneumonia. Bullshit! Need a thower."

She got out of bed and nearly tripped over. For a moment she thought she'd tripped on something, but it was just her toes, which felt strangely numb. Her fingers were the same, which made handling the shower a damned nuisance. But it at least got all the gunk off of her body, and the water was *wondrous*. Surprisingly, she turned it colder than she ordinarily would have.

"Mhmmm," she moaned. "That's so refreshing. God, I don't even *feel* like I've got a cold."

She showered for almost half an hour before she realised she was lost in the sensations of it all, stroking her body in a way that was almost sensual. It wasn't until she heard her alarm go off a second time that she ran from the shower feeling much refreshed. She cleaned herself off and found that her skin felt normal, though she was still a bit green-looking.

"At least I'm getting used to this stupid swollen tongue," she murmured. It still felt too big in her mouth, but she was adapting to it as much as she could while it was there. She grabbed her phone and called work.

"Yes, I'm sorry. It's a sick day, Drew. Yeah, yeah, I *can* take days off, you ass. Oh please, you think Isaac will get the *Crossadine* case? In his dreams. Even if Burke is a little cross at me he's not going to give that bozo the case. I'm the best lawyer at the firm and he knows it. They both do."

She felt a strange shiver course through her body, a tension in her belly. It felt like energy of some kind was being literally *poured* into her. For just a moment, she could have sworn she could taste the *Sauvignon* from the previous night on her lips and on her larger tongue.

"Ugghh," she groaned. Jennifer clutched her head. "Sorry Drew, I'm getting another b-bout of nausea. Just send me the case loads and I'll k-keep working from home. I juth neeth to retht up. I mean, rest up."

"*Jennifer? Are you alright? That sounded like a full on lisp!*"

She ended the call instead of replying, and threw her phone on the bed. The bout of nausea was strong, and though she'd just changed into a casual tee and shorts for relaxing at home, that annoying sweatiness came over her form again.

"Eerrr," she murmured. "I was just feeling better, and now - nghh!!"

She coughed a couple of times, and her throat *bulged*. For a moment Jennifer thought she was actually choking, but when she felt at her throat it was more like a slight, unsightly bulge. She immediately moved back to the bathroom to check it out and groaned in frustration at what she saw.

“Gross! I’m puffing up and everything! Even my boobs feel sore.”

A lot of her felt sore, in fact. Soft. Particularly her thighs. She extended her tongue out and winced at its length - it was definitely a bit unnatural. And that was to say nothing of the way her skin felt slightly rubbery with that thick sweat. The only parts that weren’t truly sore were her bones, which felt oddly compressed - her spine especially.

“Except my damned legs,” she grumbled. “They feel stretchy. Fuck, I thought that shower had me feeling better.”

She resigned herself to a day off work to feel better, one in which she’d get her work done remotely before returning triumphantly back to her office to claim her return as its queen. And partner, one day.

“I’m not letting a little sickness get me down. Gotta live to work.”

She cleaned herself off again quickly, and then got down to it.

The next day, Jennifer’s condition hadn’t changed. It hadn’t gotten worse, but it hadn’t gotten better either. Her tongue was still swollen and oddly extended, though she was getting used to it. Still, apart from being a little too sweaty, something she fixed up with another lukewarm shower, she felt ready to return to work. Despite the summer heat she put on a neck scarf to cover the throat lump, and she applied extra foundation so that her temples and palms didn’t have that slight sickly greenness to them. Her legs still felt a little sore, her boobs too, but there was little she could do about that. She needed to work. It was her life.

The day was warm, terribly so. When she parked her car and got out, Jennifer’ focus landed on a puddle of water in the lot from the light shower in the night. Ordinarily she would have thought nothing of it, but at that moment she was drawn to it, to the coolness of it beneath the shade of the one tree by the lot, which was wonderfully green and scenic. How had she never noticed it before? Why wasn’t the lot more green? Slowly, she went to take off her shoes and dip her toes in the water . . .

"Jennifer? What are you doing?"

Jennifer flinched and spun around, her voice making an odd croak of surprise as she shot her tongue out. She suckered it back in, humiliated by her odd expression. The man who had been speaking was Isaac, the slick black-haired, pale-faced rival of hers.

"I heard you were off sick yesterday," he continued. "Are you sure you're alright to come back? You looked a bit dazed."

Anger coiled up inside her like a viper ready to strike. Or a cobra about to spit, judging from the saliva brewing around her larger tongue. She managed to bite back anything *too* cutting.

"It was just one off day, Isaac," she said brusquely. "I think you'll find I'm more than right to *ribbit* to work."

Jennifer halted, and so did Isaac, who raised an eyebrow.

"Jen, did you just *ribbit*?"

"You're imagining things, Isaac," she replied, moving to head to the entrance.

"I'm sure you did. You sure you don't have a frog in your throat after that last case, huh?"

That tore it. She wasn't going to put up with that. She spun on the spot and placed her hands on her hips. With her heels - which were rather annoying on her sore toes at that moment - and her own impressive 5'10 height, she could easily loom over him.

"Isaac, I would take offence at your obvious jest, but given that *you* still don't have a major whopper of a case, and I've brought in plenty of good fish, maybe *you're* the little toad in the pond next to me, hmm?"

He had no retort to that other than an annoyed grimace. With an easy smile, she turned on the spot again and continued to her office, whereupon she picked up speed rapidly.

"Oh G-God," she stammered to herself. Her stomach was going off, and there was a terrible lurch in it once more. It had happened immediately after her comment to Isaac, but it was growing in strength. She took a turn away from her office at the last moment and stumbled towards the ladies bathroom instead. Her toes were killing her - her entire feet were all of a sudden! She barrelled through the door and was immediately grateful that no one else was in, because she was literally starting to make horrid croaking noises of discomfort.

"*C-croak!* Oh God, what the fuck? *CROAK!*"

She stumbled into one of the stalls and locked it shut, and tried to control her breathing. The bulge in her throat grew with each strange croak, and she swallowed several times, feeling the strange lump rise and fall. It now had a defined and disturbing weight to it. What's more, it wasn't the only place of bloat either: her stomach had gained a slight softness to it that she was certain wasn't meant to be there, and her thighs burned as they thickened a little.

"This c-can't be! Wath the thuck!? NO! MAH TUNG!?"

She clasped her mouth shut, covering it with her slightly sweaty fingers. They felt like sausages left out too long, except for her little pinky fingers, which had not swollen at all, and in fact looked smaller than they were meant to. Her tongue sloshed in her mouth, falling out a little before she sucked it back in, as if it were a reel on a fishing line.

But as disturbing as all that was, her feet were concerning her the most. Her toes *burned* in pain, compressed into her professional black work heels. She had no choice; she had to remove them. As she did so, there was an immediate sensation of relief, which sadly turned to despair.

“Mah feet,” she said, still getting used to her newly-enlarged tongue. “They tho big!”

They had indeed become larger, her toes especially. Longer, and thicker, and somewhat tubular in shape. It looked like she’d developed gout, but that same greenness was present as it was in other parts of her skin: faint but perceptible, and increasingly concerning.

“I need to thee a doctah,” she said. “I muth hath an infecthon. Thith better not be that thtupid woman’s doing!”

Jennifer opted to return to her office in bare feet, having texted Kim to get her some socks and work shoes and sent her the money to get them. Kim, loyal as ever, was already on the move, but she looked alarmed at Jen’s state when she got to the office.

“Oh my God, boss, you look terrible! No offence. Are you sure you should be here today?”

“Ith juth - ugh - *it’s just* a little sickness,” she responded, swallowing again. She hated swallowing, it made that lump in her throat puff up a little, and only her neck scarf hid it away from view. “Besides, I have to be seen to be here. I’m sticking here in the office and prepping for this *Riley PTY* case and then there’s whatever Graham will hand me as punishment for messing up. Need to prove myself. Need to work.”

Kim sat, looking a little bit concerned. “So long as you aren’t burning at both ends, boss. You’ve been real stressed lately. I mean, I know we both want to go up in the ranks and stuff - and I know you can do it - but you don’t seem real happy lately.”

“The frog ointment case just sent me round the bend, that’s all.”

Kim looked like she was about to say something, so Jen waved her to hurry up and say it.

“It’s just that . . . you’ve been really stressed even before that meeting. I guess we were just looking for the rewards from the big fish case, but I’m worried you’re going to burn

out. You're my friend as much as my boss, you know? Well, at least as much as someone like you can be a friend."

Jen looked up. Her fingers were cramping while she was signing documents. She hated they had a slight green tinge to them, so she kept them out of sight.

"What do you mean by that?" she asked.

Kim looked a bit guilty. "Well . . . you don't exactly have a life outside of work to hang out with, right?"

"I . . . do nature walks."

"When?"

Jennifer realised she couldn't think of a single time in *years* when she'd gone on a nature walk. Hell, when she'd even really appreciated nature. The closest thing was going to the so-called witch's hut at her herbal store, which had that swamp and forest backing. But she hadn't appreciated at the time. Now, however, it stuck with her. For an awkwardly long moment, she imagined the lushness of the place, the warmth of the air and the cool of the water. Of what it would be like to submerge in the swamp, and thrive in it, maybe eat a fly or two . . .

"Um, Earth to Jen?" Kim asked.

Jen snapped out of it, horrified at her own thought. "*Ribbet*," she said. "I mean, *recently*. I just go alone. Fine, whatever, I'll try to scale back a bit, if that's what you think. I don't want *you* getting ill as well as me. Your eyes look a bit red, you know."

Kim winced. She must have already known. Indeed, perhaps she was picking up something, because beyond the strange redness in her eyes, she was starting to look a little sweaty.

Jennifer didn't think much of it at the time though. There was work to be done.

Unfortunately for the hotshot lawyer, the changes continued apace, slowly and in spurts. She had hoped to get better fast, and quickly re-emerge as the star of the show so that the whole frog incident would fall behind her. Instead, she spent her nights dreaming of frogs, and waking up with a body that *felt* frog-like, right down to some strange lingering instincts that she attributed purely to her sick state.

At least, at first she did, especially once Kim did indeed get sick and started showing the same symptoms. Both of them saw doctors, and the GPs gave similar reports: *'Likely a flu of some kind, or post-viral response. The discolouration of the skin is abnormal, but your bloods are coming back fairly normal at the moment. The lump on the throat would be*

concerning, but seems more a general swelling. Come back if your prescription shows no results within a week, or immediately if you have trouble breathing or any pain there.'

"Useless," she said to herself upon leaving the appointment. "I'm wasting valuable case prep time on *this* nonsense. And I have a case to present in court tomorrow. Goddamn it, why won't these symptoms go away?"

Instead, they only got worse. She was wearing shoes a whole two sizes larger due to what she assumed was fluid retention in her feet, which had also caused her toes to slowly swell, mostly in length. She was also wearing gloves on her hands to contain the mucus-like sweat she developed on them, and to hide away that her fingers were also swollen and longer. The throat bulge grew, sometimes rumbling oddly when she chuckled, or wept, or got angry. Mostly, it just expanded and contracted with her breath, and it made her think of a frog. Her tongue was more under control, but if she got exasperated it would 'shoot out' to its full length. Once, it even did so automatically at the sight of a fly on her wall, and she was damn glad no one else had seen her do it.

"Mental changes. Just paranoia. Fatigue and sickness. Making me act funny."

This was the mantra she told herself by the sixth day of her changes. It was getting harder to *not* think about her dreams, about the call of the wild and the warmth of the verdant swamp. The fact that her skin felt *wonderful* when placed in warm or lukewarm water only increased these feelings, and soon she was literally *hopping* into the bath in a ridiculous manner whenever it was full, savouring the splash of water each time before ridiculing herself.

"What the actual fuck am I doing? Seriously, what the fuck is this?"

The only comfort - and it was a sad one - was that Kim Sanchez was experiencing a similar journey, with only minor differences. Her ace paralegal was also getting a green tinge to her skin, but whereas Jen's was darker, with patches of yellow and black, Kim's were much brighter green, to an almost alarming extent. Her eyes were also quite red, and not in a bloodshot way, just as Jen's green eyes seemed to overwhelm her pupils. Between the two of them, they were almost looking inhuman.

"I - I don't understand!" Kim balled one morning in the office. "I've tried everything. My doctor can't explain it. No test can! Jen, my tongue is huge! And my skin is slimy and turning green. I - I'm starting to croak and ribbit like a damn frog. I'm a freak! The only good thing is that my boobs are getting bigger."

"Mine too," Jennifer said, massaging her chest idly. In fact, she was bursting out of her C-cups bras, and she had started at a nice B-cup. Normally this wouldn't be totally terrible, except that she didn't want to look like a damned office bimbo, or to have the disgusting jackals like Pryce downstairs to be ogling her. "I think my ass is a bit bigger too. God knows it feels bigger."

Kim winced again. "Mine too. Seriously, this is getting weird, Jen. I'm worried. I'm having to wear prescription glasses so people don't think I'm weird - I'm just telling them it's a hormone issue getting sorted out, but the docs can't answer a thing! Why is this happening? It's not natural!"

Jen had no idea, though some small sneaking suspicions were falling into place. Ever since that red wine the two had shared, the one with the strange message: *Pride goes before a fall*. Not to mention all the frog symbolism: she felt very froggy lately.

But she waved it off. It was too unrealistic, too ridiculous! She was a woman of logic, or argument. A lawyer who won the game through legal precedent, not through hokey folktales.

"Maybe just a few days off," she conceded. "We'll get some fresh air. That's what my specialist recommended. Some warm summer air on a hiking trip together after the procedure in court tomorrow. The next day after that - does that work?"

Kim was eager. "That'd be marvellous. I can't exactly hang out with my boyfriend right now. I don't want him to see me like this. I look disgusting."

It was Jen's turn to cringe a little. Her own condition was more advanced than her paralegal's. Hell, her throat lump was getting hard to disguise by that point. Ever since she'd made a sly comment about still being on the path to partner to Jared in the office it had grown a little bigger, just as her feet and thighs had swollen yet again when she'd tried to regain some prestige by boasting to her coworkers about how much work she'd been doing even while sick.

She was starting to feel there was a connection there, but she hadn't quite made it yet.

The day in court was a disaster. A successful disaster, one in which she'd argued with spirit, and easily won the day for her defendant against the plaintiff's claims of negligence. She'd poured all the effort into this case that she should have with Maggie's, but as much as her legal mind was on track, there was no denying that there was something *off* about her in the eyes of everyone else in the room, and even in her own self-perception. She had to cough multiple times to disguise her strange croaking sounds, and more than once she'd actually given that strange *ribbet* when using a word starting with R, such as 'recent' or 'relevant', the latter of which came up embarrassingly often. There was some sniggering even from the judge. The fact that she was covering herself up much more than would be normal in a courtroom, including doing everything she could do avoid drawing attention to the rounded bulge at her throat, only made her come across as strangely eccentric.

This was not helped by other strange behaviours that she simply couldn't account for. Whenever she was called to cross-examine, or make a point, or even felt spurred to interject regarding a point of law, Jennifer didn't simply stand up professional or raise a hand, she actually *leapt*. Hopped. At one point, she literally squatted down and bounced up into the air before landing on her feet. It gave her a brief glimmer of *freedom*. Kim kept trying to caution her, but the behaviours happened automatically, and by the end of the case - and several comments and warnings about 'histrionics' by the judge - she could see that Kim was practically bursting to do the same. The younger paralegal was much more rugged up though, and trying to keep her caution: her shoulders and arms and legs were quite forest green by that point.

"Miss Williams, I must commend you on your victory today," Judge Prose told her in the aftermath. "But in the future, I would ask that you reign in your odd behaviours. You won today on your legal cunning, not on your presentation. I doubt a jury would view such behaviour so lightly."

"Y-yes, your honour," she replied, thoroughly embarrassed. She could barely pay attention to him. A fly was flitting up in the light fixture, and it made her slurp her long tongue against her mouth. The judge was so shocked that he simply sighed and walked away, muttering something about "strange lawyer types these days."

"I'm not a strange lawyer," Jennifer muttered beneath her breath. "I'm a *fantastic* lawyer. The goddamn best."

The moment she finished the prideful statement was the moment that bubbling series of pressures rose up within her. Jennifer looked to Kim, who recognised immediately what was happening. The two ushered themselves to the court bathroom, with Kim keeping watch outside to stop anyone coming in. Jennifer launched herself into a stall, barely able to control her breathing. She groaned, clutching her form as she hunched over.

"Nnnghh! Wh-why!? Why is this h-happening!? *CROAK!*"

Her neck bulge expanded, the skin thinning as it puffed full of air. She erupted with another croak, the sound so loud that she had little doubt that passerbys in the hallway could hear it. But that was not her only concern: her skin was changing. Jennifer whimpered in horror as whatever fine feminine hairs lay on her skin shedded away, leaving her body almost rubbery in its smoothness. This was accompanied by a further change in her colouration. She backed out the stall, trying to ignore the pain in her once-more cramped shoes.

"Mirror! Need a m-mirror!"

She ran to the one by the sink, only to see the colouration become much more obvious.

"No no no no no! NO!!"

Her eyes were changing, her face was changing, even her *ears and nose* were changing. It was slow, and discomforting, but also strangely appealing in a way that was borderline instinctual. She had to push aside that particular feeling, as revulsed by it as she was intrigued. She pulled away her neckscarf and removed her glasses, tossing back her hair so she could witness all her changes. Her ears reduced in size by almost fifty percent, while her nose became obviously flatter, though thankfully not gone completely. Her eyes, already quite emerald, became even more so, her irises seeming almost to swallow her pupils and overrun her whites. This was accompanied by a general shift in her skin tone: it went from discoloured green to *fully* green, with a mottled pattern on her forehead and upper arms, and a little on her cheeks. They were like freckles, and they darkened from their yellow to a darker green than the rest of her.

“RIBBIT!!”

Her neck sac bloated up and puffed back down in two great heaves, alarming her. As if taking their sign from this, her chest bloated up as well.

“Nghh! S-so much p-pressure!”

She felt at her chest, trying futilely to keep her C-cups within their cups. But the pressure was insurmountable, and she was borderline feverish from the need to release.

“Ohhhhhhh G-God! OHHHH!!!”

That was definitely heard outside the hall, because Kim started whistling *very* loudly. Jennifer could do nothing though: she was at the whims of her expanding chest, as well as her expanding thighs. So much of her was getting thicker, stronger, musclier. Her upper arms ripped several seams, and her skirt tore in more than one place as her hips creaked wider. Her thighs felt like they were doubling in size, gaining an enormous amount of muscle and energy. Only her breasts remained fatty, expanding in fullness, her nipples becoming large.

“Mmhhmm - don’t want it to f-feel good! *RIBBET!!*”

She unbuttoned her top as quickly as she could and *tore* the bra off, uncaring that she’d ruined the clasp at the back. It was far too small now, and her breasts far too big. They were immense, heavy D-cups that were full and flushed upon her form. And green. Damn green, with dark green nipples that were larger than they should have been.

In the aftermath, the ambitious lawyer stood there panting, trying to control her breathing. Her neck puffed up and back down, and the only thing she could be thankful for was that her ‘throat sac’ could now shrink seamlessly back into her neck, becoming obvious only when it expanded - which was now apparently when she was agitated.

“What - what is h-happening to me?”

At that moment, a large, fat, buzzing fly entered through a crack in the wall. It flew right in front of the mirror, and a sudden urge hit Jennifer that she was powerless to resist: her tongue lashed out instantly, smacking into the fly and pressing it against the mirror over

a foot away. It sucked against the surface for a moment before detaching and reeling back into Jennifer's mouth. Before she could even comprehend what had happened she had the struggling fly in her mouth and was devouring it.

It was *fucking delicious*.

"Mhmmm," she moaned, swallowing down the delicious treat. Then she paused, green eyes going wide.

"Oh God. I'm cursed. I'm turning into a fucking frog-woman!"

It was only with Kim's help that she was able to extract herself, running straight for the car and trying to ignore every damn fly she could sense in the courtroom. She went home weeping, not telling Kim a thing for fear she'd be seen as crazy. She needed privacy. She needed to convince her paralegal of what was happening to them. Most of all, she needed time to process it, which included a *lot* of crying. She spent the rest of the day at her apartment, wearing just her gym outfit: workout shorts and a short grey tanktop. It allowed her rubbery skin to be free, which was a bit of an instinctual urge by that point, and for her to inspect her changes, of which there were many. She still looked human, albeit a frog-human, and her feet didn't have webbing or anything yet. She still had her hair, though it was oddly more red than usual. If she could paint her skin and wear the right clothes, she could look just like a very fit, quite voluptuous woman.

But she knew better, and so did her strange urges. She had another bath, and daydreamed reluctantly about jumping in trees and hopping along the ground. When she got out, she couldn't resist moving about on all fours for a bit, placing her muscular thighs to either side of her in a squat so that she shuffled forward, occasionally hopping forward in a manner that no human could possibly achieve with ordinary muscle mass.

"Ughh! What's wrong with me? I can't do anything like this! I'm a fucking lawyer, not a frog freak! That woman did this to me, I know it! But I won't give her the satisfaction. She'll turn me back, and I'll never eat a goddamned fly again!"

Unfortunately, she ate those words quite literally, because soon she was leaving the window open for flies to come in. They were too delicious, and her increasingly long tongue could get them with precision. Food other than insects just failed to arouse her hunger, and she nearly gagged trying to make herself something as simple as toast. And far worse, she simply couldn't reach the witch by phone or online: the business had temporarily closed down, it seemed. Or relocated. Worse, Margaret Pritch had seemingly changed her numbers or left town, and was failing to answer any attempt to reach her.

In the end, Jennifer went to bed, trying to get used to her larger chest, muscular frame, and general curves. Her sweatiness was now more obviously the slick, wet surface of a frog's skin, so she slept fully naked, with even her womanhood bereft of hair. She tried to ignore the tension in her toes and hands, and the further pressures in her face.

'Kim,' she texted for falling into a deep sleep. 'We meet at the hiking trail I was talking about at 11 tomorrow. Lots to discuss.'

The reply was instant. *'Yes. We need to talk. I can't go in public right now!!!!'*

"God, you too?" Jennifer said to herself. But she was too tired to think about it. She just hoped that together, she and her paralegal could turn back.

Both women met at the entrance to the trail, both well overheated in the summer sun due to how much clothing they were wearing. It was the weekend, at least, so it was a day off for the pair, but both knew things were seriously wrong by that point. The fact that they were both disguising themselves, wearing overly-large shoes, and generally hopping from foot to foot in a near-parody of nervousness was a dead giveaway.

"Before we talk any further, I want to be on the trail and away from prying eyes," Jennifer said.

"Same! Same!" Kim said eagerly. "I've . . . changed more. Big time."

Jen could have laughed. "You and me both, sister. I have a theory, but you might think it crazy, but I don't want to talk about it here. There's an older trail I used to go on that leads along a river. I don't think anyone uses it anymore. It's in disuse. We can compare notes there, okay?"

Kim nodded eagerly, literally hopping forward in enthusiasm. Jen cringed: she wanted to do just the same, and barely restrained her empowered muscles.

"Let's go. And be quick about it, before I say something stupid and change more."

Her paralegal cocked her head, but Jen wouldn't elaborate. She had a further theory of why the changes occurred when they did, but Kim was an uncertain factor.

"Just follow me."

They continued into the forest, and for a long series of minutes neither really said a word. Jennifer was entranced by all the greenery, and even more by how her skin would resemble it. Be able to camouflage in it, almost. That enticed her in ways she couldn't quite articulate, but she got the distinct sense that Kim was likewise experiencing a similar thought, because she too was staring up at the canopies with something approaching awe, her jaw dropped, her neck sac occasionally puffing up.

"This place is sooooo beautiful," Kim said in an exaggerated drawl.

"I know," Jen said, her voice almost a whisper. "I had forgotten just how gorgeous it was. *Is*. And in the summer . . . I feel so lovely here."

"Me too."

They wandered a little further, until it was clear no one else was around. Jen took Kim to the side, off the path just in case, and led her to a small stream that ran to a surprisingly deep pond. Lily pads floated on the water, and sure enough there were frogs there too, lazily enjoying the cool of the water against the warmth of the air above. It was utterly scenic, the rays of sun cascading down onto this little slice of heaven.

"Okay, here should be safe," she said. In fact, it felt more than safe. It almost felt like *home*, in a strange way. She removed her glasses, her neck scarf, her overly baggy clothing that was leaving her far too hot, and revealed much of her form to Kim, as she was wearing only a crop sports top and gym shorts beneath - she hadn't gotten a new bra for her larger bust yet. Kim gasped.

"You're so green! And your thighs!"

"I know. They're huge."

"And muscular! Are mine going to end up like that?"

Jen shrugged, stroking her thighs absent-mindedly. They really were tough, with impressive muscle, though at least quite feminine - thick, as modern men liked them. More than thick, in fact. For just a small moment, she felt a sliver of pride in them, but she clamped down upon it. It was the damn mental changes, she was certain of it.

Beneath the light of the summer day Jennifer indeed looked much like a frog-woman. She got the distinct sense that her changes weren't done yet: her feet, while larger in the toes, didn't feel finished yet, and the same was true of her hands. Her stomach had gained more muscle, and her upper arms too, but something about her changes was leaving her quite muscular, and oddly sexy, with a figure that was both very athletic as well as quite curvaceous. Her nose was broader, flatter, but her ears - while reduced in size - still had a dull pressure, like they wanted to retreat further. And, of course, her skin still had a number of those dark green spots that were appearing.

"Your turn," she told Kim.

Kim nodded anxiously, but removed her clothing as well. Sure enough, she had changed dramatically, her body much more vibrantly green than Jen's, and her eyes bright red. Her figure was slimmer, though her legs quite powerful, and Jen couldn't help but notice that her lips were larger also in a way that her own weren't. Were they different species of frog-woman now?

"I think I'm, like, a red-eye tree frog," Kim said, rubbing her arm awkwardly. "It's disgusting. I'm a total freak."

“Then that makes me even more of a freak,” Jen said. She crouched down automatically, her thighs spread wide to either side of her, just like her amphibian resemblance. Kim followed suit automatically.

“How the fuck do we stop this?” Kim whimpered. “I don’t want to be a frog woman! I don’t want to be stuck like this!”

“Me goddamn either,” Jen said. “But I think I know what it is. This is no fucking ordinary medical condition, that’s for sure. Medical conditions don’t make you ribbit like a frog, or turn green, or become a little slimy, or - or -”

“Or want to get into that damn pond,” Kim said, “and relax in the water. God, I can’t stop thinking about it.”

Jen turned, and looked at the pond. It was indeed a heavenly sight, and it made her mouth water just to think of how many flies would be in there. She lost her train of thought, the water looked so tempting. Then she looked back to Kim.

“One quick dip. Oh God, this is humiliating. One little dip, and then I’ll have the peace of mind to tell you everything. Okay?”

Kim nodded eagerly. The two embarrassed women looked around, unbelieving what they were about to do, but their new amphibian urges were simply too damn strong. Jen was first - she was usually much more resistant and strong-headed than her paralegal, but her changes were a little further along. Besides, she had good reasons to avoid stubbornness and pride, reasons she would share with Kim as soon as she could relax her naked frog-woman body in that pond.

In the end, as soon as her clothes were off, she *sprung* in, vaulting with her powerful legs so that she literally *splashed* into the pond, her reddened hair getting immediately soaked.

“Mhmmmm,” she moaned, and Kim moaned as well when she leapt in. For a moment, both women forgot any sense of shame, and simply kicked about in the deep bond. Jen’s dreams came rushing up in her mind, images of having yet longer, more muscular legs, complete with long webbed toes, and similar webbing for fingers. She imagined her nose a little flatter, her ears gone, and her hair bright red. She would be a sight to see. She would be beautiful and sexy and froggy all at once.

“Fuck,” she suddenly said. “I’m getting weird thoughts.”

“M-me too,” Kim replied.

“Thoughts about liking this too much? About transforming further?”

“Y-yeah,” she stammered.

“Fuck! Oh, and shit! Bugs!”

“WHERE!?”

A swarm approached, and the two women simply couldn't help themselves. Their tongues were longer now, but Jennifer found herself desiring a yet longer specimen just to reach further. She managed to lash nearly a dozen bugs from the swarm into her mouth, gulping them up greedily.

"Mhmmm, delicious," Kim said. "And totally fucked. Oh God, I just ate bugs! I'd been resisting! I'd been resisting, Jen!"

Tears formed in her already-wet eyes, and Jennifer found herself having to steel against her own too. They were a pair of freaks, and the changes were making them worse, physically and mentally. Kim's breasts were easy C-cups now, and her own were D-cups, but while their bodies were taking on somewhat pleasing shapes in some respects, the rest were just . . . monstrous.

"Please tell me now," Kim said. "I need to know there's hope. I can't live like this. I can't see my boyfriend. Normal food tastes weird and that was the best meal I've had in ages. God, Jen, I can't survive like this! What will we do?"

Jennifer had to grab her by her rubbery, wet green shoulders. "Get ahold of yourself, Kim. I'm your boss, not just your friend, so consider it a directive as much as getting my coffee. I have a theory, and it's a good one. It's all deduction, but there's precedent. Just think of it as a legal case, okay?"

Kim whimpered, but seemed to indeed control herself.

"Okay, Maggie is behind this. The wine was meant for me, for ruining her case. It had a curse - the note was about frogs, and had several jokes like that. But more than that, it had the line: *pride goes before a fall*. Or something like that. And I've noticed a pattern: *every time I say or do something smug or prideful I end up changing more.*"

The woman who was slowly becoming a red-eyed tree frog swallowed.

"Oh my God, that's terrible. But - no offence - it makes sense. You say a lot of that kind of stuff, especially around Isaac."

"And under my breath. I made a comment about me being the best damn lawyer around yesterday, and I changed."

Kim raised an eyebrow. It reminded Jen that her own were quite thinner, though judging from how red they were now, they were at least likely to stay in some form.

"But wait," the paralegal said. "I'm not changing like that. I've just been changing at random! And not even at the same time as you!"

Jennifer thought about this. She idly picked up a frog that was next to her - it didn't seem to mind her presence - and stroked it without thinking. Several had gathered around Kim, and the two had their own little congregation.

"*Ribbit!*" Kim croaked to the frogs.

'Ribbit ribbit ribbit ribbit!' they croaked back. She laughed, and Jen smirked at the strangeness of the sight. The weird *rightness* of it. But she was stuck in thought.

"Maybe that rule only applies to me. Maybe you weren't meant to drink the wine."

"Can we test it?"

Jennifer paused. "How?"

"We could, you know, get you to say something smug or prideful."

The hotshot lawyer narrowed her eyes. "I really don't think that's a good idea."

"How else can we know? Jen, you're the best boss I've ever had. I'd do anything for you, and you know it. I *have* done everything for you. But if you screwing up that case - and I don't blame you for that - but if it *was* you screwing up the case that led to this, and it was meant for just *you*, then please . . . I think . . . I think you owe me this."

Jen would have snapped at her. The old Jennifer would have, all full of hot air and confidence. Now, however, she felt sufficiently humbled. Guilty. And more than that, there was the sensation of being in a place of total belonging with the other frog-woman-to-be that made her feel less hesitant to embrace another change. She knew it would be a mistake. She knew it would be to her detriment. But like a gambler who just wanted to pull the pokey machine switch one last time, she gave in to the urge.

"Fine, fine," she said. "This better not be dramatic. Because if I'm right, it means we *have* to find Margaret Pritch, ASAP. Got it?"

"Got it! Oh, thank you, Jen."

"Don't thank me yet." She croaked a little, summoning the urge to do what she needed next. "The only reason I'm doing it, after all, is because I've always been far more confident and self-assured and willing to take charge, Kim. No offence, but you lack the drive I have. The essential way of taking risks, like this."

Kim looked aghast. "Boss! That's pretty mean, given all - Ohhh, I see what you're doing!"

Evidently, so did the magic, because at that point the series of pressures and changes came over Jennifer. She moaned, giving in to the changes much more readily than she ever had. Her thigh muscles expanded further, and so did her calf muscles. They bulged, maintaining a sleek feminine beauty while also extending, and soon her legs were longer than the human average, pressing against the surface beneath the pond's waters.

"Ohhhhhh, yesssss," she moaned. "It f-feels good! Ahhh! And d-different!"

"Good?" Kim said, horrified.

"D-don't s-say anything!" Jen snapped. "I c-can't help - oh God, my tits! My tits!"

She caressed them, cradled them as they grew yet bigger, rising up another cup size so that they must have been heavy, juicy E-cups. Her womanhood became moist with a strange arousal, and she snapped her tongue in the air three times in quick succession,

each time longer until it extended almost two feet from her face before reeling back in. Her nose became a bit broader, a bit flatter, while her ears sunk almost right into her skull, leaving just two little holes over which her hair sat. But the most noticeable change was in her feet and hands. To her horror and reluctant delight, they extended both, developing little balls at the end of the digits. A strange film - webbing - slid into place between these elongated toes and fingers, so that she was now fully frog-like in a deeply noticeable way. Kim couldn't see these changes as well, but it didn't take long, because Jen literally hopped backwards onto the ground behind the pond's edge in surprise, landing with expert precision. Her fingers were later, fatter at the ends, and the same was true of her feet, which were now flatter and wider so that her toes spread outwards, suckering to the ground.

"Fuck," she stammered, shocked at the extent of the changes. "Fuck! That was too much! I didn't mean - oh God!"

Kim's jaw had dropped. "Jen, you're missing a finger. And a toe! On both sides!"

Jen raised her hands. Sure enough, she now only had four fingers and four toes. It somehow seemed significant, even among all the rest of her changes. She'd *lost* something. She now had sixteen digits in total, not twenty.

"Why did I do that? Why the hell did I do that? I can't even wear shoes at all now, and what gloves would fit these hands! UGH!"

She snapped three flies out of the air in annoyance, chewing them down to sate her upset feelings. Kim wisely said nothing.

"Well, that proves my damn theory! I've changed, probably for good, unless we can find Maggie. Margaret. Pritch. Whatever we want to call her."

Kim slid out of the water to comfort her boss and friend. Jen was oddly soothed by the way Kim rubbed her back, and she croaked a little, her neck sac bulging before disappearing again. To have fallen so far, it was absurd. She could scarcely believe it. She'd need to work from home for life - both of them would - if they didn't find a way to turn back. Stuck in their apartments as frog women, trapped in the city as solitary freaks.

Only the idea of even *returning* to the city felt all wrong. Even just standing at the edge of the pond was making her anxious: she wanted to slip back in, and just luxuriate in it. Eat flies, take in nature, enjoy the ambience that she had never stopped to appreciate when she'd been all go-go-go as a lawyer.

"You look younger," Kim said.

"*Ribbit*. I mean, huh?"

"Sorry, it's just . . . you look younger too. Like, seriously, in your twenties. Except as a frog lady. But that's not bad, right?"

Jen looked over herself. Indeed, she seemed to look younger, and more energetic. But it didn't seem like something to take on board as very good at that point. She was still a freak. A shorter one at that.

"Ribbit. You're taller than me, now," she remarked to Kim.

Kim gave a sheepish look. "And I'm shorter than me, too. I was five-seven. Now I'm five-five."

Jennifer slapped her wet forehead with her frog-like hand. "Damn it. I must be getting down to five-two or something now. I hadn't even realised among the other new changes. How small will I get? Christ, this *CROAKING* humiliating."

It was at that point that the pondering of the two began. They needed to find Maggie, but all their personal research had turned up nothing. She'd vanished off the map, and her business was empty and currently closed, likely for rebranding. No contact details could reach her at all, and none of the information from the office had helped. The two frog women continued to retreat to the pond, taking on new positions and swimming through it, Jen especially. Kim was subtly changing as well, and it was clear that she was following Jen's path, albeit without any 'pride' trigger, for whatever reason. As they swapped back various plans - including how to disguise themselves - they continued to croak and ribbit in their speech intermittently, and do things like laps around the pond. They even climbed the trees around the edge of the pond, hanging over the water and eventually dropping into it, like they were children enjoying themselves. Kim continued to catch herself and become anxious, and Jennifer soon followed. But the lawyer couldn't help but think of her dreams, and the peace she felt in the water. It was so, so different from the high-powered life of being a lawyer, and it wasn't entirely a bad thing. She promised herself to cut loose and enjoy nature like this when she was free of the curse.

If she was ever free of the curse.

"We better get out," Kim said. Some hours had passed, and it was clear the paralegal was only getting more anxious. The mental changes weren't as strong for her, and Jennifer was both jealous of her and pitied her for this.

"You go. I'll stay and think. There has to be a way to change back. I'm Jennifer fucking Williams. I can do anyth-NGH! Oh, shoot! *CROAK! RIBBIT!*"

She lost three inches of height across the course of a single minute, and her hair become a bit longer, down to her shoulders now, and a bright, fiery red by this point.

"Ribbit. Shit. I have to watch myself. I think I'm less than four feet now."

"I'm so sorry, Jen. I shouldn't have asked-"

But Jen waved her off with her green, fat-fingered hand. "Just go. You take care of yourself, Kim. I'll find a way to get us back, and to find Maggie. I just need to stay and think."

Kim gave her a look that seemed almost suspicious of the motive, but she got out of the pond and got dressed. She put her shades back on, looked at Jen one last time, and headed off, fully covered again, but clearly a bit odd-looking. Jen remained in the pond, and relaxed in it. She tried to keep her thoughts on being human again.

Instead, she was so peaceful, she instead fell asleep and dreamed froggy thoughts.

Jennifer was woken in the night, and for a moment she was terrified. She was underwater! And yet . . . somehow, she was breathing. Her skin felt strange. It was like she was breathing through her skin. She *was* breathing through her skin. She croaked, chin inflating as she burst out of the pond.

“Holy *croaking* shit!” she exclaimed as she made it to land. “I was asleep underwater. I fell asleep. Jen, you idiot!”

But she didn’t have time to think over the weirdness of her body, or her life, or even the changes. The loud ringing of her phone in her coat pockets had woken her, and she scrambled to see who it was, desperate for it not to be Graham.

It wasn’t Graham.

It was Maggie.

“Yes! Please! Oh God, please!” she exclaimed. She was scrambling on the ground to reach it, and already it had been ringing for a while. Thinking quickly, she used her tongue to dart and grab it, pulling it in and immediately hitting respond with her hand.

“J-Jennifer W-Williams speaking,” she answered. “Is this - *ribbit!* - Maggie?”

There was a laugh at the other end. “*It is indeed, my dear, but it sounds like you have a frog in your throat, Jennifer. Been a bit proud lately, have we?*”

Jennifer could have killed her, but she took a deep breath instead.

“You did this to me. You turned me into a - *croak* - freak!”

“*Only as a punishment dear, to teach you a lesson about pride and falls. And, I must admit, to teach you the value of frogs. You know, you never actually asked me what the frog ointment was from. You just assumed I was killing them. I would never! It’s from their mucus! The slim on their skin. The same slime you might have now, dearie, if my magic tells me right.*”

Jennifer rolled her eyes. She had made that assumption already. She didn’t like *knowing* it though, especially since the slick feeling was strangely nice at times.

“I’m sorry, okay?” she said. “I’m really sorry. I’ll do anything I can to undo what I did, and work any case *pro bono* for you in the future. But I can’t live like this, you must

understand that! And my poor paralegal Kim Sanchez, she doesn't deserve to be changed too!"

There was a pause on the other end of the phone.

"Kim - your lovely assistant? The one that loved my scones?"

"Yes, she's changing into a frog too. She ate her first fly today, and her changes are almost catching up to mine. Please, neither of us deserve this, but especially her."

Maggie cursed on the other end of the phone. For a woman who was normally so sweet, at least until the nature of her magic was clear, it was almost out of character.

"Oh, this is not good. Not good at all. I didn't mean for that! It was meant for just you."

"We both had a glass."

"But that means . . . oh gosh. I'm very sorry. This was just meant to be temporary, you understand? I have the cure. I'll be back at my home in two days, by my business in front of the swamp. The same place you visited. You must come around, both of you. I'll be there by three o'clock in the afternoon. I'll do what I can."

"Wait - what do you mean *meant to be*?"

But the call cut out. Jennifer was so exasperated that she croaked again, her neck sac puffing right up so that she had to lift her head. She only got it back down again after calming herself.

"For fuck's sake! What the hell is she playing at? She cut me off when I needed to know what she meant! *No one* hangs up on Jennifer Williams, or - oh, shit."

The pressure returned, and she groaned in annoyance. Another change was due.

Kim had to drive. She was the only one tall enough. Jennifer crossed her arms during the entire trip, shamed by her now-four foot tall stature. She'd had to negotiate some work-from-home aspects to her job with Graham and Jack on video call the day previous, and during that time she'd had to really justify this demand by selling her stellar record as a lawyer for the firm. This had required some rather prideful comments, which in turn had left her, as far as she could tell, fully transformed. Her height was miniscule, her nose now just a small bump that practically sank into her face, and her ears had perished utterly. She hopped with ease, and subsisted entirely on flies and insects for now. The dreams were stronger than ever, and her apartment was suffocating - just *seeing* the plants and nature they passed on the drive calmed her a little, though not much, because Kim was quite jittery.

"Ribbit. This has to work," the paralegal said. "I can't be a - *croak* - tree frog lady. I can't have red eyes. I can't have these fingers!"

Her changes had proceeded apace as well. She was now 'full tree frog', complete with oddly beautiful red eyes that were a little large on her face, with dark slitted pupils. Her toes were developing webs, and she was now only five-foot-three, which was still a heck of a lot taller than Jennifer was now. She'd also given in on eating flies - the two had a bucket they were eating like it was a bowl of popcorn in the theatre.

"She says it's temporary?" Kim asked for the umpteenth time.

"I told you she did. Over and over again."

"I know. It's just . . . I'm scared. I don't want to be stuck like this."

"Me either," Jen said, crossing her arms over her larger breasts. She didn't want to give voice to how relaxing her baths had been, or the familiar tingle of excitement she was experiencing at visiting the swamp. Or even that despite all the worries that had been occurring, all the terrors of transformation, that she was still calmer as a frog-woman than as a high-strung, overly-ambitious lawyer constantly on the clock.

"No, not listening to these - *ribbet* - frog thoughts," she said to herself.

"What was that?" Kim asked, looking down at her.

"Nothing. Keep driving. We're almost there."

The pair arrived at the Herbal Hut, as it was known. It had been two days of anxious waiting, and they were just a little early, but neither were particularly caring about that. The important thing was that they could see Maggie's car under its cover. Someone was home.

"Please let this be her," Kim said. She stuck out her tongue and reeled it back in, then wiped some slime off of her arms to make herself more presentable. Jennifer did the same, though the coating of slime was fairly necessary under the hot sun as she exited. She plonked down to all fours in a squatted stance, and Kim did the same on the other side. Both women realised what they were doing, croaked a little awkwardly, and stood to their full (albeit quite shortened) heights.

"God, I'm so fucking tiny," Jennifer whined. "Four feet! I knew I laid it on too thick with that call."

"At least you still have nice eyes?" Kim suggested. "I've got these weird red ones!"

"They actually don't look all that bad on you. But let's not keep them."

"Let's."

Both women advanced to the house, nervousness in their hearts. Jen took the lead as usual, despite her shorter height, and knocked several times on the door. For a moment, both feared that Maggie was not home and that this was another trick, but then there was a shuffle of feet and the door opened, and there the middle-aged woman was, looking down at them with an expression that was a mixture of amusement, embarrassment, and perhaps even guilt.

"Good to see you made it," she said.

“How could we not?” Jennifer responded, trying to keep the snark out of her voice. “Look what you turned us into! It’s not like we had a choice!”

“Please, we’re very sorry,” Kim added. “Will you please turn us back? We’ll do anything?”

Maggie frowned. “You did nothing wrong, dearie. It was all your boss here. I never meant to punish *you*. In fact, the magic should have only affected her. But clearly your auras are so well aligned in your work partnership that you were, in a sense, *infected* by my curse. For that I am very, very sorry, particularly as it complicates things.”

Jennifer snatched a stray bug out of the air with her tongue without thinking and chewed it down. She wasn’t even that ashamed anymore. This woman knew what she had done: all humiliation had already been heaped upon her.

“Complicates things, how? You can’t turn us back?”

Margaret Pritch gave a heavy sigh. “You best come with me out the back. I’m reopening the store in a week under its new name, and hopefully Graham can get everything sorted nicely for me with my new lawyer. But it’s the swamp where I do my *real* work.”

Both frog-women looked at one another. “The swamp?” they said, perhaps a little too eagerly. Neither could deny the draw of it, especially on a hot afternoon. Jen especially.

“Yes, I thought you might feel that way. It’s not just part of the curse, though. There is a real freedom and luxury and beauty to the place, once you experience it. It’s why I stay out here. Come. It’s best I explain there.”

She led the women through her house, which was full of jars and trinkets and ointments and smells - many of them quite lovely. Out the back of the Herbal Hut and its second story home was the forest and swamp that bordered it. It wasn’t what one automatically thought of when the word ‘swamp’ came up; rather it was a vibrantly green and life-filled area, with gorgeous trees whose roots ran down into the water, which was covered over in lily pads and leaves. Life abounded, not just insects but birds and mammals and fish, and it seemed a vibrant place to explore and take in, to breathe in the humid air and swim through its warm, murky waters. To feel the mud between one’s thick green toes. Jennifer sighed contentedly. It was even more resplendent and verdant than the pond from two days before, and with so much greater an area for swimming, eating, relaxing. Of simply *being*.

“It’s . . . it’s marvellous,” she said, voice filled with awe.

Kim looked at her with a funny expression, but said nothing. Maggie took off her shoes and socks and waded a little into the water beyond her deck, and the two joined her. Both shivered a little, not from cold, but anticipation. The mud was indeed wonderful between their toes, and with Jen’s shortened height she was working hard to resist submerging herself yet further. There was a oneness to this place that was capturing her soul, revitalising it with nature, and it was harder for her to resist. The call of it was more

powerful than any victory in court, and contract signed, any judgement rendered or case taken. Making partner had never seemed so distant, or so unimportant.

“It’s just frog thoughts,” she whispered to herself. “*Croaking* frog thoughts.”

The witch stopped in the swamp by a tree, and reached through one of its hollows. She brought out a potion that looked to be made of a sort of slime.

“Frog slime,” she explained. “It needs to ferment a little. You have to drink it - all of it. It will reverse your situation.”

“Thank God!” Kim cried.

“Yes!” Jennifer added. “No more being four feet tall. Having my skin back! I can work again!”

But Maggie’s expression stopped them. There was a clear catch, and the lawyer in Jen recognised it immediately. It was, after all, only a very small bottle.

“There’s only enough for one, isn’t there?”

Maggie nodded. “It takes a great deal of time to brew - I don’t want you to think I’m vengeful or anything, but a good witch always has a few curses and cures prepared years ahead of time. Yes, *years*. Magic may act quickly, but it is slow to make. And I never realised something like this could happen.”

The shock of it set in. Jen’s eyes widened, heart quickened. She hopped a little in anxiousness, causing small splashes. She croaked several times, puffing out her neck sac, and Kim joined her in sympathy.

“Do you mean that one of us has to be stuck like this?”

“For a few years at least,” Maggie said. “Um, it would be around five or more, actually, in the interests of honesty. I had no idea that -”

“Oh God,” Kim cried. “Oh God, this is terrible! *Ribbit!* This is f-fucking unfair! I don’t want to be a *croaking* frog lady! I want my eyes back! Please, there must be a way to magic up one more! To change us - *ribbit* - both back!”

Jen swallowed, trying to control herself. So many flies were around it was distracting, and the coolness of the water was mingling perfectly with the heat of the sun upon her green shoulders.

“This can’t be happening,” she said, though her gaze was on the swamp, not on Maggie or Kim, and her words seemed to contain a double-meaning that even she wasn’t sure of.

“I’m sorry, but it is. I am truly sorry. I only wanted you to feel bad and show remorse, and lose some of that pride, which I know you have done. I never intended for this result, you must believe me. Naturally, I will do everything I can to accommodate whichever of you chooses not to transform back. I can only leave that discussion to the pair of you.”

Maggie walked back up to her deck, leaving the two frog women in the swamp. It went up to Jen's hips, making her want to submerge completely, and for Kim it went to her mid thigh. Both looked as if they belonged there. For Jen, she *felt* as such too.

"Jen, what the hell do we do?" Kim asked, looking to her boss's leadership.

Jennifer didn't respond for a long time. She was on a precipice, one she could never imagine sitting - or squatting - on. But in the last week and a half, so much had changed, including her own outlook. It couldn't be put easily into words. It was in her body, her new energy, her connection to nature, even her new diet. So much of her old world had fallen away, but she strangely didn't miss it as much as she had thought. The quiet life was before her, and there was something about it that was almost hypnotising after years and years of the high-end rush.

"You change back, Kim," she said.

"*CROAK!* What!? What do you mean?"

"Just that," she said, smiling with uncertainty. Was this a huge mistake? It probably was, but Kim had been loyal, and done nothing to deserve this. She said as much to her: "This was my curse, not yours. You were just caught up due to my *ribbiting* pride. You have a boyfriend, a life outside of work. I . . . don't."

"But - but you'll be a frog! *CROAK!* For years!"

Jen wiped a tear from her eye, though there was always a little bit of that soft mucus covering now. "I - I know. I don't know how I'll handle it, but I guess I'll have to. Be resigned to it, try to enjoy the flies. *Ribbit*. Enjoy the swamp. Maybe take some time to relax." She gave a silly laugh. "Hell, maybe it'll just be some nice extended leave for me! Well-earned, I'd say!"

Kim hugged her, picking her up. Jen had never felt so small now that her waifish assistant could pick her up. She was glad at least that she wasn't going any lower than four feet, because beyond that would be ridiculous.

"Thank you, boss," Kim said. "Thank you."

"You can thank me by becoming a proper lawyer, and working damn hard in my absence. But not - *croak* - too hard, okay? Now let's hurry up and get you to drink that potion before I change my *ribbiting* mind, alright?"

They made their way back to Maggie, who had been watching patiently and respectfully. "Have you made a decision?" she asked.

"Kim will take the potion," Jen said, leaving no room for disagreement. "I'll stay here, if you'll, um, have me."

"Of course, dearie! Don't worry, you'll be safe here, and I'll work on slowly making the potion - slowly, but quickly as I can. It may only take four years."

Jen gave a sad laugh. "Only four years as a frog woman. What even is my life? Fine, that will work. I guess I don't have a choice."

"I'm sorry, dearie."

"Me too," added Kim.

"Yeah," Jen said, turning to look at the swamp. "Me as well."

Kim drank the potion, and there was a flourish of energy that seemed to course almost visibly through the woman. Her features began to subside, her height return, her eyes going back to normal. She giggled in relief, excitable as her changes were undone so quickly, unlike the initial transformation. Jen only watched a little. Part of her was too forlorn.

But another part was looking back at the swamp.

"I guess this is me now," she said. "This is my life."

Jennifer remained in her froggy form, and Maggie got to work on the cure. Kim stayed in touch in the following days, weeks, months, and - yes - eventually *years*. As Jennifer had asked of her, she became a lawyer in full, working hard and successfully, though not so much as to throw her own personal life away as Jen had. She even got married to her boyfriend, having finally found 'the one.' Jennifer attended via remote video - she couldn't exactly go out in public these days, after all.

And yet, she didn't mind all that much. After a year of living in the swamp behind the witch's business and home, and being free to relax and eat and swim and even play through the trees and delight in her new environment, Jennifer found less desire to return to her old life than she could have imagined. Her summers were easy, and her short hibernation periods - when she didn't just go indoors and enjoy the fire by Maggie's side - were like a long rejuvenating respite. She had long since gotten over her love of eating flies and bugs, and even had numerous platters of them, arranged in order of taste and crunch and sensation, something Margaret found very amusing. About the only other thing she could enjoy eating, ironically enough, were the witch's scones, which were delicious indeed.

Indeed, as the years passed, the simpler life of the swamp and forest and water held a much firmer grip for the former lawyer, and the city seemed to bustling to ever return to. Even her shorter height was not too much of a bother now: she could hop with the best of them, and it gave her more space to swim in 'her swamp.' Indeed, the only thing she occasionally felt she was missing out on was romance, that being a part of her old life she had ignored, but could no longer achieve in her current state. Maggie noticed this also, because while the cure was still brewing away, Jen had ceased asking questions about it, and seemed to almost dismiss any mention of it at all. The due date to turn back was

drawing near, and yet Jennifer only wanted to spend another summer, and another, and another, lazily enjoying the song of her fellow frogs and the cool depths of the waters under the hot sun.

“Well, you don’t have to take the potion right away,” Maggie said to her one day while she was sitting out on the deck and Maggie was floating on her back.

“Exactly,” Jen said. “I help out here. I help with the business. I keep on top of the bug problem. I’m earning my keep.”

“Precisely. No harm staying a little longer. The potion will always be there for you.”

“*Croak!* Indeed! No point rushing things. Besides, summer has just started, and it’s my favourite time as a frog-woman.”

“A good time for romance too. A shame you can’t get into the dating scene.”

Jennifer side-eyed her, hopping a bit closer. “What are you playing at?”

The older witch gave a gentle grin. “Oh, just that I’ve had a young businessman try to buy out my land, and he’s quite adamant. And very handsome. But he was also quite the bulldozer. I think he might need a lesson in pride. And frogs.”

Jennifer grinned. “If he does, I’ll be happy to make his acquaintance.”

The End