



Waltzing is hard. I keep tripping. Pretty soon, I hear boy shouts coming from the pond.

Boy shouts from the pond mean one of two things.

One — somebody pushed somebody else into the muddy stuff that is like quicksand and will suck your feet off if you're not careful.

Or two — somebody found something good.

Annie's looking over at the pond, too, and stumbles into the edge of the sandbox.

"No, no, no!" Veronica Grace shouts. "Watch *me*." She moves over next to Annie to demonstrate again, and Annie falls back into line.

While Veronica Grace is busy, I sneak away to the pond.

"Whatcha got?" I ask Rupert Wingfield. Rupert wears an Orchard Street Otters shirt to school every day. Today, it is streaked with mud.

"Nothin' yet," Rupert says. He points to the water. Alex Farley is balanced on a rotten log. He hikes up the tool belt he always wears, leans over with one foot in the air behind him, and reaches out with his arm stretched so far it looks like it might stretch right off and splash into the pond. Finally, he puts his foot down and hops back onto the grass.

"Nope," he says. "Can't reach him."

“Who?” I ask.

“The fattest bullfrog in the whole universe,” Jimmy Lawson says with a sigh.

I step onto the log. I look into the green-brown water. Beady frog eyes stare up at me. He’s huge all right. But he’s not out *that* far.

“I think I can get him.” I roll up my jeans and push my slippery, shimmery, silver sleeves up to my elbows. I look back at the dancing lesson.

“No! No! No!” Veronica Grace yells from the sandbox. “It’s one . . . TWO-three . . . one . . . TWO-three . . .”

I take one . . . two-three . . . four little steps to the end of the log. I lean down. I stretch out my slippery, shimmery arm.

The bullfrog blinks.

My fingers can almost tickle his webby toes.

I take a tiny shuffle step. I stretch a little more.

The bullfrog blinks again, and I hear a slow sucking noise.



At first, I think it's the frog. Then the sucking noise turns into a crazy big loud *SCHLOOP!* The other end of my log tips up out of the water, and I tumble toward the frog, face-first.

I close my hands around his cool, greeny smoothness right before my face splashes into the shallow, weedy water.

I sit up, but I can't wipe the pond slime off my face without letting go of the frog, and I'm sure not doing that after I went through all this trouble to catch him. Besides, the boys are waiting to see him.

I stand up, pull my sneakers one at a time from the shallow-water mud, and step back onto the grass. The boys gather around.

"Wow!" says Jimmy.

"Awesome!" says Alex. "He's the biggest bullfrog ever!"

He really is. Fat and slippery and fantastic. I don't even mind when he pees on my sleeve.

“Spectacular!” Rupert says, but he’s looking at me —not the frog. “You’re the coolest girl ever.”

“Thanks,” I say.

“Seriously, my sister would never catch a frog or even touch one. She says they’re slimy and disgusting. I think you should be my sister instead.”

I walk around the circle of boys so they can see the frog up close. Then I hear a bossy princess voice.

“What is *that*?” Veronica Grace has come over from the sandbox with a bunch of ladies-in-waiting following her. She stares at the frog like it’s ten feet tall with two heads. “Gross!”

The ladies-in-waiting wrinkle their noses. Even Annie, who raised frogs with me from tadpoles last year, makes a yuck face.

Jane Goodall would never make a yuck face at a frog.