

**I KNOW  
HOW MUCH  
YOU LIKE  
TO BE  
ALONE.**

**WORD SHANE CURRY  
DRAW SHELLY XIONG**

## THE WINDOW

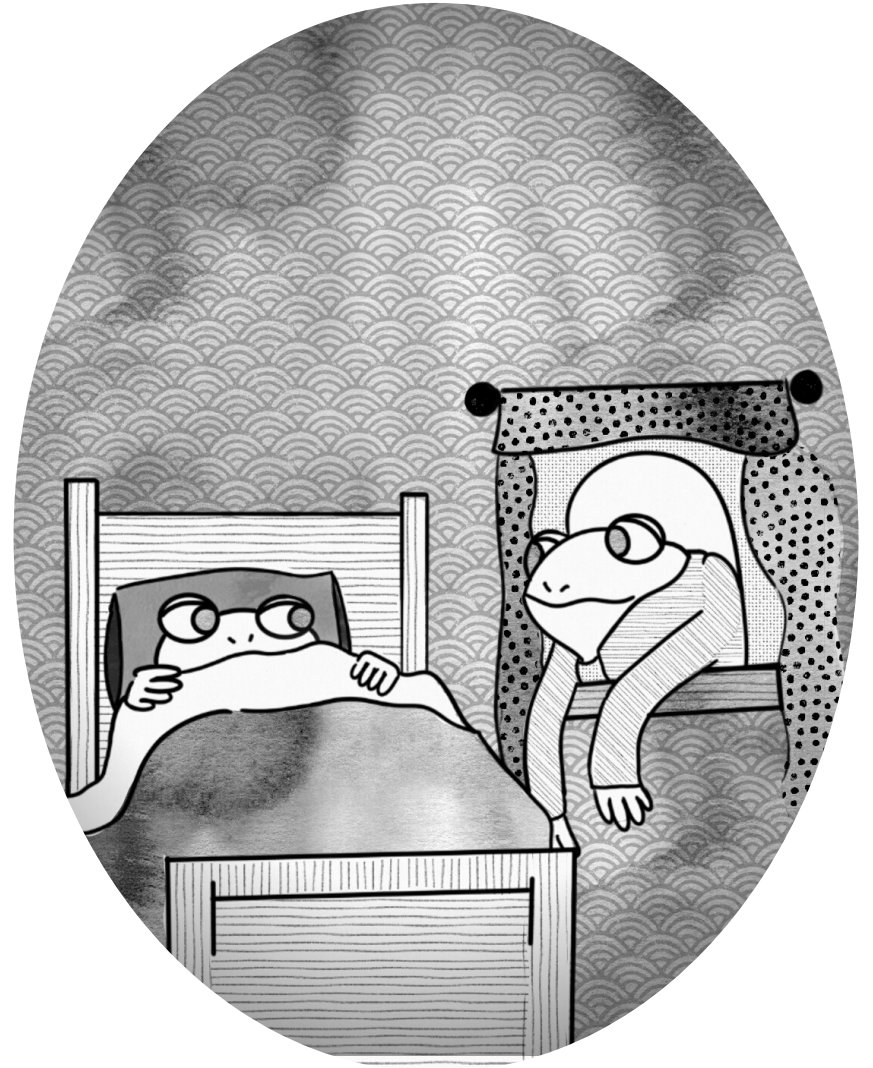
Toad was wrapped in his favorite blanket.  
He had his two favorite pillows on either side of his head.  
"That was a very good breakfast", said Toad.  
"But now I must sleep because it hurts to be awake."

That is when Frog appeared outside Toad's window.  
"Toad!" said Frog, "The pond has frozen over!"  
"So what?" asked Toad.  
"So we can skate on the ice now. We can dance and have fun!  
Winter does not last long and if we wait the ice will melt."

Frog began to climb in through the window. But he did not fit.  
"What are you doing?" Cried Toad.  
"Your door was locked." Said Frog with his arms hanging down  
and his belly stuck in the window.

"Are your feet cold?" asked Toad.  
"Not very." said Frog.  
"I am happy to hear that. Because I am not getting up." Toad  
turned over.  
"But what about Ice Dancing?" asked Frog.  
"There is still time. We will go soon. Just... Not... Now."

Then Toad fell asleep.



## THE PROMISE

Toad stood outside his house. The snow was deep.  
He could see his breath.

"I do not like to see my own breath," he said.  
"It looks like there are ghosts leaving my mouth.  
I will go back inside. Where there are no ghosts."



But just as Toad got to his door, Frog arrived.

"Oh good!" shouted Frog, "you are ready to play and dance on the ice!"

"I was," said Toad, "but you took too long. Now I am too cold."

"But I was waiting for you." Frog said.

"And I was ready. But you did not show. Now I want to be alone."  
Toad opened his door.

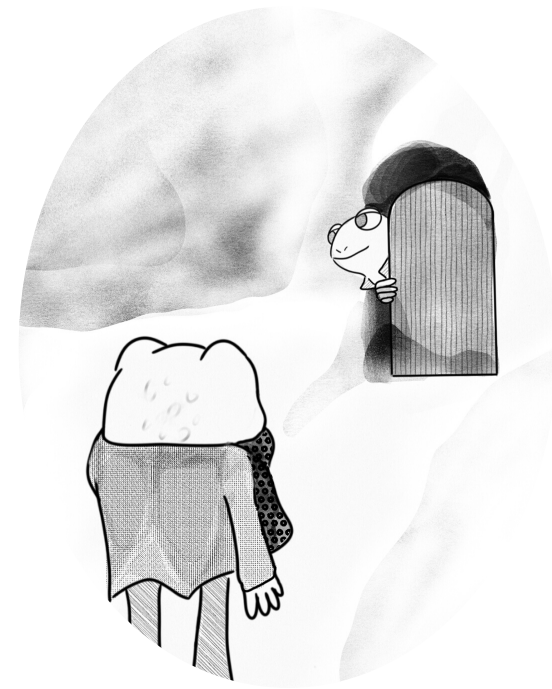
"You are alone a lot." Said Frog.

"I like to be alone." Said Toad as he stepped inside.

"Maybe you like to be alone because you know I am close by."

"Not true," said Toad, "I cannot be alone when you are close by."

And Toad closed his door.



## THE POND

"This is it!" Cried Frog, pushing Toad through the woods,  
"The very last day we can play on the ice!"  
"How do you know?" Asked Toad.  
"The icicles on the branches have begun to drip." Said Frog.  
Toad looked up at the trees.  
"A single drop of water does not mean the pond will thaw!"  
Toad tried to turn around but Frog kept pushing.

At last they came to the pond.  
"I have waited so long!" yelled Frog.  
He grabbed Toad by the hand and ran onto the ice.  
"I wonder how fast we can go!"  
"I do not wonder that at all!" Toad cried.

Frog spun Toad in a circle, faster and faster,  
and then he let go!  
"Yay!" cried Frog as he slid.  
"No!" cried Toad as he slipped.  
They both landed backwards into piles of snow  
on opposite ends of the pond.

"Stay there!" yelled Frog.  
"Yeah." said Toad.  
"I am going to skate over to you!" Frog said as he got to his feet.  
"I will be right here." said Toad.

Frog crouched down low.  
Then he leaped forward. Thud! Whoosh!  
He hit the ice and slid toward the center of the pond!



Toad leaned back and looked up at the sky.  
He could not tell if there were no clouds,  
or if the whole sky was a cloud.  
The trees were slick and black,  
weighed down with crows instead of leaves.

A loud CRACK in the air sent the crows flying and Toad watched them.

Then he looked down.

"Help!" yelled Frog. A small hole in the ice had cracked open,  
and Frog had fallen into the pond!  
"You are a frog in water!" yelled Toad as he stood up.  
"My jacket and pants are weighing me down!" Cried Frog.  
"I am coming!" yelled Toad as he carefully walked toward the center.

But as Toad got closer, Frog sank down and could not be seen.  
"I cannot see where you fell. Where is the hole in the ice?"  
Toad moved slowly, afraid of also falling in.

He looked and he looked.  
But Toad could not see any crack in the ice.  
And he could not see his best friend.

## THE MANUAL

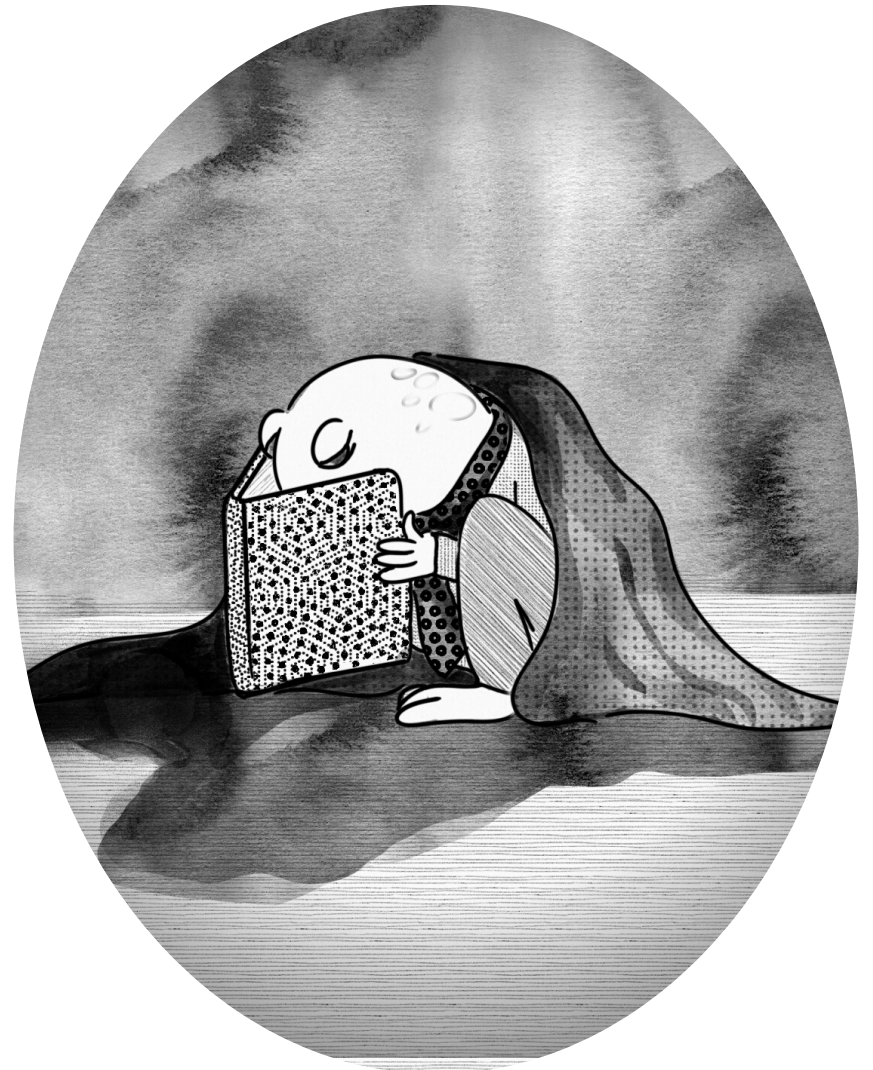
Toad sat down on the floor of his kitchen.  
He ate cake and read from a book.  
"It is fun to eat on the floor sometimes." Toad said.

"We can pretend we are very small!" said Frog's Voice.  
Toad nodded his head and continued to read.  
"In the Spring when you return, Frog, I will bake us one giant  
cookie the size of a cake! And then we will both pretend to be very  
small."

Icicles hung from the branches, but the snow was beginning to  
melt. Green grass could be seen in patches.  
For many days Toad walked out to the pond,  
which was still frozen over, but he never found a crack or opening.

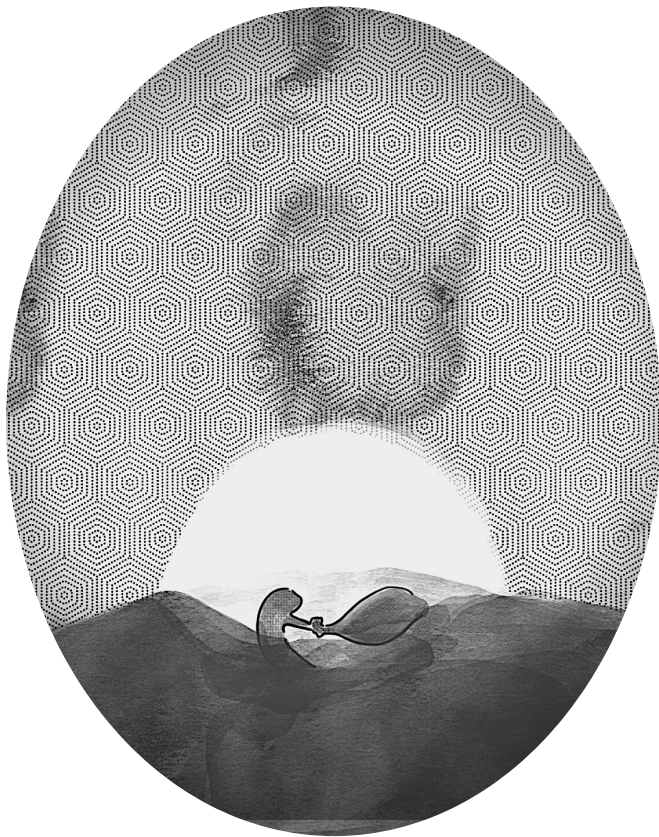
"Is that a good book?" asked Frog's Voice.  
"Not really," said Toad, "it is more like a manual."  
"A manual for what?"  
"For a machine." Toad said.  
"What will it do?" The Voice asked.  
"When I finish building it, it will keep you safe. In the Spring, when  
you return."

Toad turned the page.



## THE BAG

Toad waddled backwards through the woods.  
He was dragging a large brown bag behind him.  
"Now that you are here, you are awfully quiet." Said Toad.  
He stopped and thought for a moment.  
"Maybe you are just feeling shy. It has been a long time."  
Toad continued to drag the bag all the way home.



## THE MACHINE

A maze of cables and wires ran through Toad's house.  
Computer parts and odd bits of machinery were everywhere.  
Toad looked back and forth at several different screens  
as he typed on a keyboard.

At his kitchen table, there sat a robot.  
It had smooth black limbs, round claws for hands,  
and bright colored wires poked out at the joints.  
Instead of a face, the neck was attached to a jar filled with liquid.  
In that liquid sat a little brain.  
The robot was dressed in wet clothes.

"Everything is almost complete." Said Toad.  
"I will test it out by asking you a question."  
Toad typed something out on his keyboard then spoke into a  
microphone.  
"Who are you?" Asked Toad.

An audio speaker on the Robot's chest crackled and buzzed.  
"who are you?" came a voice from the speaker.

It sounded just like Frog!

"I am Toad," said Toad, "who are you?"  
... "I am Toad who are you?" came back the reply.  
"No, you are Frog."  
... "No you are Frog..."

Toad stomped his feet.

"I am Toad and you are my best friend, Frog."  
... "I am Toad and you are my best friend Frog." Echoed the  
speaker.



Toad closed his eyes and rested his head in his hands.  
He took a deep breath and sat back up.

"Hi, Toad." said Toad.

"Hi, Toad." said the speaker.

"It's me, Frog." said Toad.

"It's me, Frog." said the speaker.

"I know how much you like to be alone."

"... I know how much you like to be alone..."

"But I want you to know,  
I will always be here with you,  
even when I'm not around."

"... But I want you to know,  
I will always be here with you,  
even when I'm not around..."

"I love you."

"... I love you..."

"Goodbye."

"... Goodbye... Toad..."

Shane: shanecurrycartoons@gmail.com  
Shelly: shellylynnx (TikTok & Instagram)