

FINDING TOMORROW

By Jeff Dunne

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## CHARACTERS

- TONYA                      A willful girl, fiercely independent and not sure what to do with the feelings that have developed for Daniel
- DANIEL                     A boy who is funny and smart, yet inwardly shy as so many adolescent boys are when it comes to feelings.

## SETTING

Present day on the edge of a small bog or pond.

SCENE

*(Lights come up on a young girl, Tonya, who is looking out over a bog or pond. She is idly sketching something in a book. After a few moments, a young boy, Daniel, backs onto the stage. He's holding a box against his chest, and looking to see if he has been followed. The girl sees him a moment before he turns to see her, and puts down her sketchbook to look at him.)*

DANIEL

Oh.

*(Tonya studies him, and he looks at her, surprised.)*

I... Never mind.

*(Daniel turns to leave.)*

TONYA

Dan, right?

DANIEL

*(Turning back...)*

What?

TONYA

You're Dan. From—

DANIEL

It's Daniel. *(Pause.)* Danny. Everyone calls me Danny.

TONYA

I don't like that.

DANIEL

What?

TONYA

Danny. It sounds like a little kid's name.

DANIEL

A little—

TONYA  
You should go by Dan.

*(Daniel just looks at her, not upset, just surprised at how forward she is.)*

Tonya.

DANIEL  
I know.

TONYA  
You looked like you didn't.

DANIEL  
I did. You're the new girl.

TONYA  
From Kentucky.

DANIEL  
The teacher said you were from Kansas.

TONYA  
You got a good memory.

DANIEL  
I guess. *(They study each other. Then...)* So which is it?

TONYA  
Alabama.

DANIEL  
No it isn't.

*(Tonya laughs, then...)*

TONYA  
It's Kansas.

DANIEL  
So you were testing me?

TONYA  
What if I was?

DANIEL  
Why?

TONYA  
I don't know. Just because. Does that bother you?

DANIEL  
I don't know.

TONYA  
You passed. You know, if it makes a difference.

DANIEL  
Is there some kind of prize?

TONYA  
What's in the box?

DANIEL  
Do you always change the subject like that?

TONYA  
Sometimes. So what's in the box?

DANIEL  
*(Considers the question. Then...)*  
A snake.

TONYA  
No it isn't.

DANIEL  
Why do you say that?

TONYA  
Because I think you want to get back at me for testing you.

*(Slowly, a grin comes to Daniel's face.)*

DANIEL  
It's a frog.

Can I see? TONYA

You're not afraid? DANIEL

Of a frog? Be serious. TONYA

Okay. Sure, I guess. DANIEL

*(She walks over and looks in the box.)*

That's not a frog. It's a toad. TONYA

You can't tell the differen— DANIEL

Toads have shorter legs. TONYA

Shorter than what? DANIEL

Giraffes. TONYA

Well that explains it. Still, I think it's a frog. DANIEL

Where'd you find it? TONYA

*(Daniel looks nervous.)*

What? Did you steal it or something?

Depends. DANIEL

TONYA

Oh my god. You did steal it, didn't you?

DANIEL

Liberated.

TONYA

Liberated?

DANIEL

You know, rescued it away from captivity.

TONYA

Let me guess – the Asian Market on Pinecrest Street. Next to the Dairy Queen.

DANIEL

How'd you know?

TONYA

My parents go there sometimes, and I always go back to look at the toads. And I always think how inhumane it is to keep them in the case like that.

DANIEL

I know! There's so many frogs all piled up that—

TONYA

Toads.

DANIEL

Whatever. Piled up on top of each other. There must be like a hundred of 'em packed in there, all sitting on top of each other because there isn't enough room.

TONYA

It's awful. It's so cool that you rescued one.

DANIEL

I wanted to get a whole bunch, but they're really big and it was tough enough to grab and hold on to even one.

TONYA

Well at least this one will live to see another day.

DANIEL

Right. Yeah, right. Do you know what they sell them for?

TONYA

Yeah. People make soup out of them.

DANIEL

How did you know that?

TONYA

People eat toad soup in China all the time.

DANIEL

And how did you know *that*?

TONYA

I read about it.

DANIEL

In what? *Weird Things They Cook In China* magazine?

TONYA

I—

DANIEL

Never mind. So when I found out that the frogs were g—

TONYA

Toads!

DANIEL

You really need to let that go. Anyway, when my mom told me what they were there for, I asked if I could get one. Of course she—

DANIEL AND TONYA

...said no...

DANIEL

So when she walked away, I grabbed one and ran.

TONYA

Where'd you get the box.

DANIEL

Tupperware aisle.

TONYA

Of course.



DANIEL

And I figured I'd bring it here and set it free.

*(Tonya nods appreciatively.)*

I mean, it's just one of them, but—

TONYA

It's one more than none.

DANIEL

Right. *(He looks at her, his expression softening.)* Right.

*(Daniel goes towards the water, ready to release the toad.)*

TONYA

Wait.

DANIEL

What?

TONYA

You can't just dump it out like it's a rock or something.

DANIEL

Why not?

TONYA

I mean, maybe it's not just any toad.

DANIEL

Frog.

TONYA

Give it a rest, Dan. It's a toad.

*(He smiles at this.)*

DANIEL

Not just any frog... Huh.

*(She is about to correct him, but he gives her a look and she changes her mind.)*

You mean he could be like the king of frogs or something?

TONYA

He?

DANIEL

Now you can tell its gender too?

TONYA

The forearms are—

DANIEL

I don't wanna know.

TONYA

It's a sh—

DANIEL

Fine. She.

TONYA

And I don't think she's a queen or anything.

DANIEL

You've got to be kidding me. Are you saying you can tell gender and social standing from its forearms.

TONYA

I just don't think toads would have royalty.

DANIEL

So they're like an autonomous collective.

TONYA

Monty Python?

DANIEL

What else?

TONYA

But we shouldn't just dump her.

DANIEL

We?

*(Tonya stares at him, challenging. After a moment, their gazes both soften and they smile.)*

Alright. So how should we do this?

TONYA

There should be some kind of ceremony.

DANIEL

Yeah. Yeah, I like that. What would—

TONYA

No idea.

DANIEL

There should be a platform or something for him to sit on...

TONYA

Her.

DANIEL

...and maybe like a little baptism thing where we splash water on him before...

TONYA

Her.

DANIEL

...he jumps...

TONYA

She.

DANIEL

...jumps into the pond.

TONYA

And there should be music.

DANIEL

Music. Like someone writes frog-freeing songs.

TONYA

There don't have to be lyrics or anything. Just toad music.

DANIEL

Like croaking?

TONYA

Maybe. Do you know how to croak?

DANIEL

I thought I'd leave that to you.

*(She laughs uncomfortably.)*

TONYA

Oh, no. No no no. That's all you.

DANIEL

You're scared.

TONYA

I'm not scared.

DANIEL

Yes you are.

TONYA

I'm not.

DANIEL

*You are scared.*

TONYA

I'm *not* scared.

DANIEL

Then what?

TONYA

I just... I just... I'm just not a croaking kind of girl.

DANIEL

What's that supposed to mean.

*(She shrugs.)*

Like there are girls who croak and girls who don't?

TONYA

It's just... too silly. I don't do silly.

DANIEL

We're talking about a ceremony to chuck a frog into a lake...

TONYA

*(Under her breath)*

Toad.

DANIEL

...We passed the silly/not silly point a long way back.

TONYA

Well I just don't.

DANIEL

I'll do it with you.

TONYA

That doesn't matter. You're silly all the time.

DANIEL

It does matter. You can't just... What?

TONYA

What?

DANIEL

What you just said.

TONYA

*(Suddenly realizing, and then very self-consciously denying it...)*

I didn't say anything.

DANIEL  
You said I'm silly all the time.

TONYA  
So?

DANIEL  
How do you...

*(It takes a moment, and then it hits him. He points at her...)*

You...

TONYA  
*(Even more self-conscious)*

Just...

*(She turns, goes back and grabs her sketchbook and then starts to leave, hurrying past him.)*

DANIEL  
Wait!

*(She stops but doesn't turn to look at him.)*

Don't... don't leave.

TONYA  
Why not?

DANIEL  
I... because... Just don't.

*(She starts to walk again.)*

Please. Please stay.

*(She stops, still does not look back.)*

TONYA  
I shouldn't be here.

DANIEL

So? I shouldn't have stolen the frog.

TONYA

*(Shaking her head in a "stupid boy", eyes rolling way)*

Toad.

DANIEL

Please stay.

TONYA

I...

DANIEL

You don't have to croak or sing or anything. Just... just...

*(She turns to look at him.)*

Don't go. Okay?

TONYA

Why?

*(He wants to tell her that he watches her in school a lot as well, and his mouth opens to speak a few times, but he can't bring himself to say it. Finally...)*

DANIEL

The ceremony was your idea. You should be here to see it. To see the fr— The toad go free.

TONYA

It's probably gonna die, you know. *(Pause.)* Here. In the pond.

*(Daniel stares at her, unsure how to react to this.)*

I mean, it doesn't know the place. There are birds and foxes and... *(She notices him staring.)* What?

DANIEL

What what?

TONYA

You're staring at me.

DANIEL  
*(He looks away.)*

No I'm not.

TONYA

Yes, you were.

DANIEL

I wasn't.

TONYA

You were.

DANIEL

Fine. What if I was?

TONYA

It's rude.

DANIEL

Sorry.

TONYA

And... and it makes me uncomfortable.

DANIEL  
*(Turning away, and mumbling...)*

Never did before.

TONYA

What?

*(He turns back.)*

What did you just say?

DANIEL

Nothing.

TONYA

Yes you did. What'd you say?



DANIEL  
Nothing. I didn't say anything.

TONYA  
Fine.

*(She starts to walk off again. He hesitates until she is almost off, then...)*

DANIEL  
Wait!

*(She stops but doesn't turn.)*

I said... I said 'you never did before'.

TONYA  
*(Turning to look at him.)*

Did what?

DANIEL  
Mind.

*(She gives him an "I don't understand" look.)*

You know, when I stared at you.

TONYA  
When was that?

DANIEL  
*(Adopting an "in for a penny, in for a pound" mindset.)*  
Only all the time. But you sit in front of me, so...

TONYA  
You stare at me?

DANIEL  
I mean, not like—

TONYA

Why?

*(Daniel shifts uncomfortably.)*

Why?

DANIEL

I... I don't know. Just... Look, forget it, okay?

*(She wants to press the point, but can see how uncomfortable he is suddenly. She walks back to him, and after a moment points to a spot near the pond.)*

TONYA

I think that would be a good spot.

*(Daniel continues to look at her. Then, without even looking where she pointed...)*

DANIEL

Yeah. That would be a great spot.

*(She smiles, and a moment later he matches it.)*

TONYA

Come on.

*(She grabs him by the hand and leads him to the spot by the pond.)*

So... so how do we...?

DANIEL

I think we should make a little platform that he can hop across. Like a graduation ceremony.

TONYA

And we can pile up some leaves and stuff around for decorations.

*(They start to build it...)*

DANIEL

I wish we had some frog friends around to see him off.

TONYA

*(Timidly, her tone changed.)*

You're not the only one.

DANIEL

I don't suppose you have any?

TONYA

That's not what I meant.

*(Daniel looks at her, confused.)*

You're not the only one who... you know...

*(He still looks at her in confusion.)*

Who looks when the other person can't see.

*(Daniel considers this for a moment. Then he smiles.  
Then she smiles.)*

DANIEL

Maybe we don't need to make more frog friends. He's got us, after all.

TONYA

Yeah.

DANIEL

Just having even one really good friend...

TONYA

...it's all you really need.

DANIEL

Yeah.

*(They turn back to making the 'freeing' environment.)*

TONYA

That is, I think, the worst liberation platform I've ever seen.

DANIEL

Feel free to give it a try if you think you can do better.

*(She tries, and after a few moments...)*

TONYA

You know what? Yours was fine.

DANIEL

Thank you.

*(They fuss a little more, then...)*

So do you think we're ready?

*(Tonya nods, and Daniel kneels down by the pond and puts the box in the scene they've made. While whistling/humming Hail To The Chief.)*

TONYA

Hail To The Chief? Really?

DANIEL

Oh, sorry. I wanted the graduation song. How does that go?

*(Tonya starts to hum/whistle the standard graduation processional.)*

DANIEL

Oh right. No, that doesn't really work. It's so...

TONYA

Somber.

DANIEL

Yeah.

TONYA

Well what then?

*(Daniel thinks for a moment, and then starts to whistle Caribbean Amphibian from the Muppets.)*

Is that Caribbean Amphibian?

DANIEL

You recognized it?

TONYA

I love the Muppets!

*(They have a moment of smiles, then...)*

DANIEL

Well, little toad. This is it. Your Liberation Ceremony. Enjoy freedom.

TONYA

It's not all it's cracked up to be.

DANIEL

But it's way better than being soup.

TONYA

Have a good life.

DANIEL

A happy life.

TONYA

You represent a new beginning for all toadkind.

DANIEL

Try to avoid getting eaten by anything.

*(They squat there, staring at the toad.)*

TONYA

She's not moving.

DANIEL

Huh.

*(He stands up, and considers the toad. A moment later, Tonya does the same.)*

TONYA

She's still not moving.

DANIEL

Maybe it's a 'he', and he's suddenly feeling self-conscious about his feminine forearms.

TONYA

Maybe she's just stunned, wondering why you're staring at her.

*(Daniel turns to Tonya, stares at her. She notices after a moment, and then gives him a quizzical, "what? Why are you staring at me?" look.)*

DANIEL

Maybe we should give her some privacy.

TONYA

You never croaked.

DANIEL

*(Un-froglike...)*

Ribbit.

TONYA

That...

*(Daniel gives her a look.)*

That...

DANIEL

Yes?

TONYA

That was the worst toad sound I've ever heard.

*(Daniel starts to walk away from the pond. Tonya remains, watching him. After a couple of steps he realizes she hasn't moved. He walks back, picks up the sketchbook and hands it to her. He then takes her by the hand, and they start to walk off.)*

DANIEL

Can I see what you were sketching?

TONYA

*(Suddenly blushing, if at all possible.)*

Not a chance.

*(Daniel nods understandingly, not at all surprised, as the lights fade out.)*