

To be loved

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One morning, in a jungle far, far away, Frog, Zebra, Bunny and Squirrel gather at the pond where Frog lives. They became friends because they are all a bit different to everyone else in their families.

You see, unlike the other zebras, Zebra was born with polka dots. Squirrel was born with albinism, making him a rare grey colour. Bunny is reminded every day that she is much too tall to be a bunny. And Frog? Well, he looks like most other frogs, but he feels sad every day and the other frogs don't want to be his friend. All Frog wants, is to be loved.

Soon the four friends are sitting under their favourite tree, passing the time with funny stories and laughter.

PUFF! All of a sudden their special friend, Puffy, appears. "You didn't think I'd miss out on the fun," says Puffy. Puffy is a cumulus cloud that has been watching over the pond for years. Puffy brought the four friends together two years ago.

"*Ke summertime, ke summertime, ke summertime,*" they all sing, happily dancing around the tree. The friends never know when to expect Puffy, but when Puffy appears, they always have a magical time.

"What perfect timing, Puffy. I was just about to ask what game we should play," says Zebra.

"Hide-and-seek! Hide-and-seek!" Frog shouts, jumping up and down with excitement.

"Well, this is going to be the best day ever!" Bunny exclaims.

"Not if you lose," Squirrel replies cheekily.

Puffy says, "Remember friends, there's only one rule ..."

“Stay beneath the mountain tops, besides the river bank and never between touching trees,” the four friends finish Puffy’s sentence together.

Then Bunny begins counting back from ten and before she gets to five, her friends are nowhere to be seen. “Three, two, one! Ready or not, here I come,” shouts Bunny as she opens her eyes.

“I know that Puffy is the best at hiding, so I’ll look for her last,” Bunny says as she hops off to look for her friends.

A few steps from the pond, she hears a familiar sound. Bunny walks quietly towards the sound and what does she see? Her friend Zebra munching away at the wet grass. “Mmm, you’re lucky I can’t keep my mouth off this goodness,” Zebra says, giggling sheepishly.

Bunny and Zebra continue along the path between the pond and the trees, hoping to find Frog hiding under some plants. But suddenly, a nut drops onto Bunny’s head.

She looks up just as Squirrel tries to run away, but he isn’t fast enough. “Looks like we’ll need to invent a food game for you and Zebra,” Bunny says with a smile. “You two wait here while I find Frog. I’m sure he is hiding near the water.” And off she hops.

Bunny hops from one part of the jungle to another, but she can’t find Frog anywhere.

“This has never happened before. Frog is usually very easy to find,” she says as she quickly hops off to tell Zebra and Squirrel.

Zebra and Squirrel are still under the tree where Bunny left them. “I can’t find Frog anywhere,” she says, out of breath. “Could you please help me find him?”

“It will be dark soon,” says Squirrel. “We can’t be out after dark or we will be eaten.”

“Yes,” agrees Zebra. “We must make a plan and find Frog soon. What shall we do?”

“I think we should ask Puffy for help,” suggests Bunny.

“Good idea!” reply Zebra and Squirrel.

Then the three friends hold hands and chant the safety words Puffy taught them, “My friends, my safety. With you, I am loved.”

PUFF! Puffy suddenly appears above them.

“Is everything okay?” Puffy asks.

“I’ve looked everywhere and I can’t find Frog,” Bunny replies, with a panic in her voice.

“Don’t worry,” says Puffy. “I’ll help you find Frog.” And as Puffy floats off to look for Frog, the three friends follow along in her shadow.

After much searching Puffy hears soft snoring coming from amongst the lily pads, and there the friends find Frog fast asleep. Puffy gently wakes Frog, while Zebra, Bunny and Squirrel dance around very happy to see their friend.

As Frog wakes up and sees all his friends, he leaps with joy. “You all came looking for me and you found me!” he says. “I thought you had forgotten about me.”

“We could never forget about you, Frog!” the friends say together.

And then Frog gives the biggest smile. “I am the luckiest frog alive. I have the best friends, and I am loved!”