

Alexander Von-Biscuit Toad
And
The Perfect Hug

By Oren Lavie

Alexander Von-Biscuit Toad lived alone in a small apartment with a very large mirror on the wall, so he could see himself from every corner of the room. The toad enjoyed talking to himself in the mirror and found himself to be truly a fascinating conversationalist in a variety of excellent topics such as the weather, toad fashion and what's served for breakfast. He kept his bed right next to the mirror, so at nights he could watch himself sleep.

One morning Von-Biscuit sprang out of bed with his hands up in the air.

“I dreamed the perfect hug,” he cried out. “It was exactly *this* size, and it was the loveliest hug I’ve ever felt!”

The Toad began to pace excitedly around the room, “Did you hear me?” (he was talking to his geranium pot), “If only I could find the *second half* of this hug I’d be forever happy!”

And with the special grace of a toad he cried: “no time to waste!” and stormed out the door!

That is how Alexander Von-Biscuit’s famous quest for the perfect hug had begun.

(Illustration note: from this point onward, throughout the book, the Toad is always seen holding his hands in the air in the shape of a hug.)

First he went to see his good friend Georgette the Giraffe.

“Georgette dear,” he said, “There’s no time to explain. Simply, let’s hug!”

“But of course,” said Georgette, who was always up for a surprise hug.

Georgette was a good hugger, but her neck was very long, and the Toad slipped all the way down.

“This isn’t right!” Von-Biscuit said.

“It felt good to me,” said Georgette.

“Good perhaps. But not perfect!” the Toad screamed and ran out.

Next he went to see his other friend, Geri the Goldfish.

“Hi Geri.”

“Hi Von-Biscuit.”

“Let’s hug!”

“Why not.”

Geri’s hug was wet and slippery.

“Did you like it?” Geri asked.

“Hand me a towel, Geri dear, for I just hugged a puddle.”

“You’re a funny toad,” Geri laughed.

“This is no laughing matter!” Alexander Von-Biscuit said and stormed down the stairs.

After that he spent the rest of the day hugging.

Some hugs were very soft.

(He disappears into the meaty breast of a large cow)

Some weren't soft enough.

(He is hugging a turtle)

Some hugs were too close.

(A Python snake is wrapped around him)

Some hardly close enough.

(Trying to hug a stork, but can't reach beyond the beak)

Some hugs were wild.

(He is wresting a hug out of a tiger, all beaten up)

Some were too gentle.

(Trying to restore a squashed worm back to its original shape)

Some hugs were too much to handle.

(He is lost inside the eight arms of an octopus)

Some hugs just felt wrong.

(He is hung upside down, hugging a bat.)

There were hugs that made him laugh.

(Ticked by a very furry animal)

And there were hugs that brought him to tears.

(Tears of pain hugging a porcupine)

Some hugs were difficult to hold on to.

(Hugging a hopping Kangaroo)

Some were hard to get out of.

(He is caught in a huge spider's nest next to a bunch of terrified flies. The spider hugs him.)

There were those who didn't like to be hugged.

(An angry rhino is chasing him.)

And there were those who wouldn't let go.

(He is dragging a poodle that won't let go of his foot.)

Back in his bedroom at the end of a long day Alexander Toad was feeling gloomy something awful. He shared his feelings with his Geranium.

“Am I really asking for too much??”

The Geranium said nothing, which is why the Toad enjoyed their conversations so much.

Suddenly the Toad’s eyes lit up and he sprang into the air.

On the following morning an ad was placed in the local newspaper:

A friendly Toad is looking for the second half of a perfect hug!

If you are not too tall, too slippery, too sharp, not dangerous, if you do not bite or sting or generally spend your time upside down - please come meet me this Saturday in the neighborhood park for some casual hugging.

Yours,

Alexander Von-Biscuit

Come Saturday the park was brimming with excitement. A long line of excited animals had formed. Von-Biscuit himself looked very thoughtful in his brown tweed suit and his hands in the air.

“Let the hugging begin!” he said. And so, the hugging began.

“Thank you,” he said after each hug, and added, “Not nearly prefect.”

It seemed like hugging was contagious because pretty soon everybody in the park began to hug; Parents hugged their children, friends hugged their friends, even complete strangers hugged their complete strangers.

But as the sun began to set Alexander Toad was starting to feel gloomier and gloomier.

“Mr. Toad,” a voice came from behind him. It was a reporter from the local TV station. “Have you found the perfect hug? Please speak to the microphone.”

Everybody in the park turned to him curiously.

The Toad looked at all the hugging animals. He felt very lonely and tired. “Not at all!” he cried out. “I am not happy! I am the stiffest, bitterest, most boring Toad that ever lived.”

Everybody’s jaw dropped.

Von-Biscuit *finally* let go of his hands and, with the self-pity of a disappointed Toad, dropped himself on the ground.

But he landed on something soft. It was...

a hug.

“Oh dear, lucky I caught you,” said the TV reporter.

“Thank you,” The Toad whispered.

Then he felt another something soft... and another one...

Everybody in the park was running to hug him, one after the other and in groups. They squeezed him good from every direction and the Toad closed his eyes and let himself be hugged.

“Thank you,” he mumbled, “This is quite pleasant,” he even cried a little.

You see, this was said to be the biggest hug in the history of all hugs! And *that* is how Alexander Von-Biscuit Toad learned that hugging wasn't about holding tight but really about *letting go!*

(Illustration: Alexander Toad is squeezed inside a huge group hug and he is happy!)

AFTERWORD

Alexander Von-Biscuit Toad's story became famous worldwide and his name became synonymous with a hug. "Give me a Von-Biscuit," young couples would say to each other.

His first memoir (he wrote fifty-nine), "**The Art of The Hug**" became an international best seller. Its sequel, "**The Toad Hugs Again**," was made into a blockbuster romantic thriller.

He wrote the revolutionary cookbook, "**Embrace Your Artichoke: The Complete Guide To Hugged Vegetables.**"

His archeological Novel, "**Prehistoric Hugs: The Spooning Habits Of Dinosaurs**," won him, of course, a Nobel Prize.

But perhaps most famously, The Toad was the founder of the **Love Olympics**, for competitive naptime cuddling.

And whenever he was asked to sign one of his books he would always inscribe:

**Don't dream it,
hug it!**

-THE END -

(Illustration: Alexander Toad is dressed all in white like a Zen monk, his hair tied to his head in a ponytail. He is practicing Hug Meditation.)