

The Trouble with Albert

(Based on True Events)

Hands up if you have a problem. Ah, thank you. Quite a few of you today — though none, I hope, quite as serious and slippery as Albert's.

Albert, as you'll recall, is not just any frog. He is or rather was Albert the Magnificent Frog. Now known simply as Albert — patron of wetlands, knight of the lily pad, and regular guest on Newsnight. For years, he leapt through fountains of fame and fortune with ease — until that unfortunate business with the "Pondstein Papers."

Yes, those papers.

They revealed that Albert's long-time friend, Croker Frog-stein, had been operating what can only be described as a highly inappropriate "tadpole exchange programme."

At first, Albert denied everything. "I barely knew the tadpole!" he croaked on national television, claiming he'd only ever visited Frog-Stein's pond to discuss conservation and the relative merits of dragonfly sushi. Unfortunately, many photographs emerged of Albert in questionable swimwear, waving a cocktail umbrella and flanked by tadpoles who were decidedly not far along the frog cycle.

The Investigation

The police, after intense public pressure and one very loud tadpole rights protest outside Poundingham Palace opened an inquiry. Albert had been living a comfortable life — heated lily pad, personal dragonfly chef, and a huge allowance from the royal algae fund.

When arrested, Albert insisted on being carried into the station in a silver watering can "for health reasons." He attempted to claim diplomatic immunity as "His Majesty's official mascot for frog relations," which his older sister, allegedly, reminded him was not an actual job.

The Court Case

The trial was slimy and unremarkable. Cameras outside Croakminster Magistrates' Court followed every hop. The defence called it a smear campaign by jealous the leftist newts media ; the prosecution produced a damning collection of spa receipts, frequent flier logs, a menu from a frog members only surrey based pizza express, and a report from the world's top herpetologist confirming that frogs do, indeed , sweat.

The judge sighed deeply and asked Albert if he wished to make a statement. To which he replied:

"Your Honour, as a frog of distinction, I may be green, but my conscience is clear. The private pond was purely educational. Any suggestion to the contrary is... ribbit, ribbit, ribbit..."

Laughter rippled through the courtroom.

At one point, Albert tried to prove his innocence by producing a new children's illustrated story book entitled A Frog Misunderstood.

The Verdict

After brief deliberation the jury found Albert guilty of "gross misconduct in public ponds." The judge sentenced him to community service cleaning park ponds in and around Norfolk and attending twelve weeks of ethical leadership courses run by a team of beavers.

Albert still claims the whole thing a set-up. In the last hour he has since announced a new memoir: Leapt Too Close to the Sun, to be published in instalments by the Daily Mail

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