Once, long ago, there lived a frog who desperately wanted to be a human. He wanted to live a life of glory and marry a beautiful woman, and only then would he be happy. He had heard stories that the cranes living in the river could transform in this way, and that they had been granted the power of the gods. He set out to find them and ask for their secrets.

When he arrived, the cranes told them the secret of their power. They were granted the gift by the spirits, the crane told him, and they transform so they can be servants to the gods. “We cannot help you on your quest,” the crane told him. “But perhaps the fox can lend you the power you seek. She lives deep in the forest. But be warned, young traveler, that this gift may come at a price.”

The frog ventured deep into the forest to find the fox spirit. “I can grant you this power,” she told the frog, “but it comes with a price. One day, you will need to repay a debt that can never be repaid. Only then will you become a man, so that you may best express your gratitude and devotion.” The frog agreed to the price, and accepted the fox’s blessing. “If any human is to discover your true identity, you must return to your true form, never to see them again,” the fox warned. “Humans cannot know of the true power of the spirits.”

For many years, the frog lived his life, waiting for the fox’s prophecy to be fulfilled. One day, while walking through the woods, the frog was attacked by a vicious snake. The snake overpowered him, poisoning him with it’s venom, and the frog believed that this would be his end. And the last moment, however, the snake was driven away by a caring maiden. She cured the frog’s poison using medicine from her pouch, and returned the frog to the lake, safe and sound.

The frog knew that this was the debt that must be repaid. He owed his life to the maiden’s unwavering kindness, and he felt a strong desire to express his gratitude. That night, the frog turned into a strong young man, and followed the trail out of the woods to the woman’s house. He presented himself to her as a traveler seeking refuge, and she opened her arms to him. He helped her tend to her crops through the spring, and one day asked to be her husband, to which she delightfully agreed.

But he saw her immense poverty, and knew that he must do more. Every evening, he returned to his true form and dove to the bottom of the lake, returning with beautiful jewels and pearls, which she sold at the market. As their wealth grew, the frog warned his wife to never question where he found these gems when he left in the night, as he knew the cost of her discovering his true identity.

However, her curiosity grew, and one day she spied into his chambers and watched his transformation. Heartbroken, the frog told his wife the story of his undying gratitude to her. He wept at the thought of losing this beloved wife, but he knew that he had made a promise to the fox, and that the power of the spirits should never be revealed to humans. Saddened, the frog disappeared into the forest, never to become human again.