

THE CONVERSATION SOCIETY
presents
Dialogue #6: Arnold Lobel and Frog and Toad

(This exchange between the celebrated children's writer Arnold Lobel and his two most famous creations, Frog and Toad, took place in 1985 in Lobel's Manhattan apartment.)

Frog: Toad and I have been re-reading some of the old stories, and we'd like to know why there are no women in our world?

Toad: Yeah, where are all the female toads? Where are all the she-frogs?

Lobel: I don't know. I guess I just never thought to put any in there.

Frog: Is it because you didn't think we would go for it?

Lobel: No. I think I left women out because I didn't want anybody to complicate your friendship.

Frog: Is that why we're the only characters in the stories?

Lobel: That's one explanation.

Toad: We're the only characters in the stories because nobody else wants to be around us.

Lobel: That's not true at all.

Frog: What Toad is trying to say is that we feel...ostracized.

Lobel: Ostracized? For what?

Toad: For being *gay*!

Lobel: Who said you were gay?

Frog: Arnold, please. Like you haven't heard the rumors.

Lobel: No, I haven't. Who is saying you're gay? Children?

Frog: Children, adults, teenagers, librarians.

Toad: They all think we're fags.

Lobel: Why, because you have a natural fondness for each other?

Toad: No, because we don't do manly things.

Lobel: Of course you do. I have you mixed up in all kinds of macho business.

Toad: Gardening, baking cookies, making to-do lists. You call that macho business?

Lobel: If I recall correctly, Toad, I have you *eating* cookies, not baking them.

Toad: No, you have us trying *not* to eat cookies, which is almost as bad as baking them.

Frog: Now that these rumors are out there, Arnold, what do you intend to do to stop them?

Lobel: I don't intend to do anything.

Frog: Well, you have to do something.

Lobel: Like what?

Frog: Toad and I think you should write another collection of stories about us.

Toad: Yeah, and make us do more guy stuff, like chopping wood, and riding motorcycles, and getting into fistfights with other animals.

Lobel: I'm sorry, but I have no plans to write any more Frog and Toad books. That chapter in my life is over.

Frog: If you're not willing to do it, Toad and I will write the stories ourselves.

Lobel: You can't. The Frog and Toad name is my intellectual property.

Frog: Fine. Then we won't call it Frog and Toad. We'll call it...Todd and Froag.

Toad: Yeah, the *Un-queer Adventures of Todd and Froag*.

Lobel: No one will buy that book.

Frog: Why not?

Lobel: Because people like Frog and Toad the way they are.

Frog: But *we* don't like the way they are, and *we're* Frog and Toad. Shouldn't we have some say in how we're represented?

Lobel: I think I've done a fine job representing you.

Toad: As homos.

Lobel: No, as *friends*. That's what makes the books so popular: your friendship. It's a paragon of tolerance and understanding.

Frog: We don't care about that. We just want some women in our world.

Toad: Yeah, even Curious George gets some every now and then.

Lobel: Do you want me to tell you what it feels like to live in a world with women?

Frog: No, we want you to write a story about the two of us finding girlfriends.

Lobel: And do you think that will put the rumors to rest?

Toad: It worked for you, didn't it?