

# Revival

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Dappled sunlight streams through the patchwork of shrubs, crafting dancing shapes on the furled fronds of bracken. Beetles trail idly over moss and fern as the drooping snow gums bend towards the stream, as if thirsty for a drink. Dusky brown shadows descend gracefully down to the sandy banks, dipping their heads like wilting roses, as their hind legs send iridescent sparkles spinning over lavish greenery arranged along the water's edge. Dragonflies zip and glide lazily over the water lilies, their flowers beginning to close as the sun's final rays of golden warmth spill over the horizon. The trees whisper a somber goodbye as the radiant stars begin their reluctant trudge into the sky.

Little dark shapes race across the limp branches, their bright yellow-green stripes illuminating the darkness. Pale moonlight casts eerie shadows across these nocturnal critters darting nimbly from twig to reed. But as the clutch moves on, one little aspect gets left behind. One little aspect weak from hunger, one little aspect ridden with disease and sickness. They leave her behind because she will pass the sickness to her fellow species. The Southern Corroboree Frog, with only less than thirty individuals, could potentially become extinct. The breeze whistles through the dappled snow gums, their trunks a living canvas; of creamy white, soft gray, and vibrant green that blend seamlessly with the occasional splash of pale pink or orange; that changes with the seasons. Sunny gazed longingly at the rest of her clutch as they sped away, swallowed by the untamed wilderness of Kosciuszko National Park. Her dull eyes betrayed her loneliness as she watched the rolling hills engulf her family and all she had ever known. She let out a long sigh, a sigh that tried to expel all her worries. She exhaled, her breath steaming up the cold air. Sprawling down on the dewy moss she closed her eyes until sleep finally took her.

Speckled light flooded her surroundings, the borders of her vision blurring. Sunny blinked. Her dull eyes glancing around warily. She swung her neon striped head from side to side, her small, berry bright eyes glinting in the weak light like black beetles. Then she stiffened. Although she couldn't see it, she sensed the unnerving presence of someone nearby. Somebody who generally wasn't welcome near Southern Corroboree Frogs. Sunny shifted into the sun, feeling her amphibious skin soak up all the warmth. Her striking bands of yellow-green caught the weak light, glaring at the intruder, warning them she was toxic. Bracken fronds trembled fearfully at the edge of the shielded clearing. Sunny whipped around. Snorting, a tawny brown muzzle poked out of the dying fronds, its massive nostrils flaring. A white socked leg stretched out into the checkered sunlight, its clumsy feet looked like huge chunks of weathered stone, strong enough to squash a frog. The animal's swollen belly was enormous. Sunny relaxed. Her colour dulled down to a pale, non alarming yellow. This critter could attack but only accidentally.

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A black curtain drew in front of her, engulfing her eyesight in a blindness that scared Sunny. Instinctively she flared up, bulging to twice her size. Then she heard another sound, a frail sort of squeal. The brumby backed up. Sunny peered past its white socked leg and gasped. A miniature copy of this massive creature was staring back at her with soft amber eyes. This animal had given birth! Impulsively she crept back into the shelter of a patch of young blooming billy buttons. Its prickly stems grazed across her back, a soothing sensation. Then Sunny noticed a strange tickle on her hind legs that wasn't the barbed shoots. She glanced backwards and gulped. Her hind legs! Her beautiful dappled hind legs! She must have picked it up from the chytrid fungus. They were an odd sickly color and her dark luminous amphibious skin was peeling like a paperbark tree!

Sunny howled into the gathering dawn light "Why me?" She croaked, feeling as if there was a giant cluster of ants dancing in her throat. "Why..." her defeated voice trailed off as she glimpsed a pack of tall imposing stick figures silhouetted against the daisy strewn hilltop, and with the rising sun behind them they looked like gods. Sunny crawled back into her sanctuary of mossy ferns and bracken when the ground trembled with an eight point six magnitude earthquake as the mother brumby and her tawny brown foal dashed out of the shadowed clearing. Sunny

shuddered. And as the stick figures approached, Sunny felt a surge of panic mixed with a glimmer of hope. Her heart pounded in her chest, beating louder than a snare drum. Sunny was torn between the instinct to flee and the desperate desire for salvation. The figures loomed closer, and Sunny's breath quickened, her mind racing with uncertainty and fear.

*"Cass right here! I saw one, just then. A southern. Must have been a female. Its vibrant yellow stripes were gleaming."* One stick figure yelled to another. Sunny shut her banded eyes and prayed that she would be left alone. But the stick figures drew nearer, their voices growing clearer. *"Over here! We've found her!"* Sunny felt gentle hands lift her from the ground. *"She's alive, but barely,"* the voice called Cass murmured. As she was placed into a warm, secure nest walled with thick hard mesh, Sunny's fear began to ebb. The figures, now clearly ecologists with pure caring hearts, moved with quiet purpose and care. *"We'll get you to safety,"* one of them promised. Sunny's eyes fluttered open, catching a glimpse of the fiery sun, spreading its light like petals of a glowing golden flower. For the first time in a long while, hope flickered within her. She was being rescued.