

Amalia's Woodland Adventure

Cassandra Lewis

Dramatic

AMALIA: 10

ELWOOD THE TREE: any age

AMALIA is 10 years old. She's taking her puppy for a walk by herself for the first time. He runs into the forest when she lets him wander without a leash. She decides to venture into the forest after him and meets a talking tree.

AMALIA: Bandit! Bandit! Where are you?

ELWOOD THE TREE: You should have kept him on a leash.

AMALIA: Who said that?

ELWOOD THE TREE: I did.

[AMALIA looks around but doesn't notice the tree.]

ELWOOD THE TREE: Over here. I don't see how you can miss me. I'm one of the biggest trees in the forest.

AMALIA: A talking tree?

ELWOOD THE TREE: Yes, of course. Why shouldn't trees talk? We drink water, create oxygen for people and animals to breathe, and provide food and shelter to wildlife.

AMALIA: Sorry. I didn't know.

ELWOOD THE TREE: You thought we were just here for decoration or to hold up your swing.

AMALIA: I know that wood from trees makes up a lot of things, like my house, our furniture, the paper I use for homework and art, and the books I read.

ELWOOD THE TREE: But you never bothered to think about our purpose before we're cut down to make things. It's okay, it's not your fault. Kids your age don't spend as much time outdoors as they used to. You're too busy playing video games and watching TV.

AMALIA: I take walks in the forest all the time. But usually I go with my mom or dad. This is my first time walking Bandit by myself. Have you seen him? He's a small black and white puppy.

ELWOOD THE TREE: Ah yes, Bandit the puppy. Short hair with a large pink tongue and a drooling problem? Yes, I've seen him. He's quite fast, even though he's still learning how to run with those big feet of his that he hasn't grown into yet. It must be like when you try on a pair of your mother's shoes and try to walk in them.

AMALIA: Did you see which way he went?

ELWOOD THE TREE: *[Pointing.]* He went that way. Into the forest.

AMALIA: Oh no!

ELWOOD THE TREE: Relax. He'll come back. You should go back inside and tell your parents.

AMALIA: No, I can't. This is my first time taking him on a walk by myself. If I go back inside without him, they'll never let me walk him again.

ELWOOD THE TREE: Well, you can't go into the forest by yourself.

AMALIA: Why not?

ELWOOD THE TREE: It's not safe. You don't know your way around.

AMALIA: How hard can it be?

ELWOOD THE TREE: The forest is vast and full of interesting characters. Some may be helpful and others may deliberately mislead you. How will you be able to know the difference? Besides, it will be dark soon.

AMALIA: I'm almost ten. I've been hiking and camping and I even know how to swim. I'll be fine.

ELWOOD THE TREE: No, Amalia, I'm telling you. You shouldn't venture into the forest by yourself.

AMALIA: How do you know my name?

ELWOOD THE TREE: I know everything.

AMALIA: Oh, yeah. What's the capital of Ethiopia?

ELWOOD THE TREE: Addis Ababa.

AMALIA: How many keys are on a piano?

ELWOOD THE TREE: Eighty-eight.

AMALIA: That's impressive. How about something more personal? What is my favorite food?

ELWOOD THE TREE: That's easy. Succotash.

AMALIA: Wow. You really do know everything.

ELWOOD THE TREE: Everyone knows that's your favorite food, Amalia. Most people ask more challenging questions, like how to achieve world peace.

AMALIA: Okay, if you're so smart. Where exactly is my puppy?

ELWOOD THE TREE: In the forest, not far from Naaman's Creek. Right now he's chatting with Boris the Beaver. He's telling him some silly jokes that he stole from some Popsicle sticks, like, Why did the policeman arrest the baseball player?

AMALIA: Why?

ELWOOD THE TREE: He stole second base. And, how does thread get to school?

AMALIA: How?

ELWOOD THE TREE: A spool bus.

AMALIA: Those aren't very funny.

ELWOOD THE TREE: Well, your puppy thinks they're hilarious. I guess he's still developing his sense of humor.

See, Bandit seems to be making friends. He'll be fine and he'll come home when he starts getting hungry. But next time, you really should put him on a leash.

AMALIA: You know why I didn't put him on a leash? I wanted to teach him how to follow instructions. He already learned his name, so I figured the next step would be to teach him to come back to me when I call his name. Everyone makes mistakes when they're learning. That's how we remember how to do it correctly the next time. That's how we learn. If I didn't give him the chance to try, then he'd never learn anything. And if you don't learn, you just end up doing the same boring things over and over. Who wants that?

People are like this too, you know. My grandfather didn't speak a word of English or know anyone when he moved here as a teenager. It was summertime and especially hot. He just stayed at home with his mother, my great-grandmother, afraid to go anywhere because he thought people would make fun of him for being different.

She offered to take him to the pool so he could cool off and meet other kids. He said no. She offered to send him to summer camp where he would learn interesting things about nature and science. But again he said no. All summer he did nothing but stay inside and worry about all the mean things the kids might say to him when he started at school in the fall. He missed an entire summer because all he could do was worry.

Then September came and it was time to start school. He felt sick to his stomach and told his mother he didn't want

to go. She almost let him stay home, but then she wondered when it would end. She thought, if I let him stay home one day then he'll want to stay home another and soon he'll never start school and he'll just sit around doing nothing but worry just like he did all summer. So she took his temperature, just to make sure he wasn't really sick, and when she saw that he had no fever, she made him go to school. He begged her to let him stay, but she insisted he go.

He was terrified. But when he got on the bus the other kids smiled and said hello. He said hello back and got to school without anything terrible happening. That wasn't so bad, he thought. It's not even eight o'clock and I've already learned how to take the bus. When the bus arrived at school, a teacher welcomed him and walked him to the classroom and showed him where to sit and introduced him to another student who would be his buddy and help him learn his way around. After the first bell rang, the teacher started class by asking everyone, the whole class, to introduce themselves. When it got to my grandfather's turn, he realized that this was the first day of school for everyone, not just him, and he realized that the other kids may have been just as nervous as he was. And knowing this made him relax. He realized that each one of us is unique, and even though we are coming from different circumstances, we are all learning something that is new to us. We have this in common.

So, yes, I am walking the dog by myself for the first time and he has run away into the forest. I made a mistake and he made a mistake and we're both learning from it. But I

bet the next time we go for a walk, it will be a different experience than it is today.

ELWOOD THE TREE: Yes, I'm sure it will be. I'll tell him to hurry back to you if he passes this way again.

AMALIA: Which way did you say he went?

ELWOOD THE TREE: [*Pointing.*] That way. But you'd better not go after him.

AMALIA: I'll be fine, especially now that I've been warned about Boris the Beaver and his Popsicle stick jokes.

ELWOOD THE TREE: If you insist on going, stay on the trail beside the creek and turn back before the sun sets. If you start noticing fireflies, then it's time to turn around and head home. Whatever you do don't follow the fireflies. All they do is dance. They're a lot of fun, but they won't be able to help you find your way home. If anything, they'll lead you deeper into the forest.

AMALIA: Thanks. What did you say your name was?

ELWOOD THE TREE: Elwood. Elwood the Tree. I know everyone in the forest, so if you run into trouble, just let it be known that you're a friend of mine. In the meantime, I'll try to spread the word that you're on your way.

AMALIA: Thanks, Elwood. See you again soon.

[*AMALIA ventures into the forest.*]

Annie Jump and the Library of Heaven

Reina Hardy

Seriocomic

KJ: 14

ANNIE: 13

KJ enters, holding a flashlight.

KJ: Pete—yo, P.T.! Can you even believe this shiz? I almost peed. Pete? Where are you?

[*ANNIE, wearing a hard hat with a light on it, stands up, seemingly out of nowhere. She's been fiddling with some electronics.*]

KJ: Who are you?

ANNIE: I'm the electrician.

KJ: Aren't you a girl?

ANNIE: Excuse me?

KJ: No, I mean . . .

ANNIE: What are you, twelve?