

CHANGES

Cici Ma & Hal Ames



There is a family that lived in the great forest in a treehouse. Their family lived there for many generations. They made their own clothing and grew their own food. They had never visited the city and they didn't know anyone who lives there.

The family was happy, and the children learned their lessons from their mother. Living in the forest, they didn't need to have a formal education. They learned from nature.

One day, as their father was playing with the children, he noticed something strange. A very old tree that he had played on since he was child was now gone. All he could find was a big stump standing where the tree had once stood. He looked around and noticed that several other large trees were gone. This made him upset. He was angry that the trees were being cut down.

"Who could be doing this?" he thought to himself.

Then he heard a sound he has never heard before. It was loud and it was getting closer. Trees began to fall over and then suddenly a yellow monster appeared in front of him. He ran away afraid for his life.

"Children! Run! We need to get back to the treehouse. A monster is coming!" their father screamed.

They ran as fast as they could back to the safety of their house. The sound of the monster was heard echoing in the forest. It was getting closer and closer.

"What are we to do?" the children asked.

"I don't know. I have no idea what that thing is. If it gets too close, we will have to move," their father tried to explain.

Amelia, the oldest daughter, spoke up, “I don’t want to leave our house. We need to find a solution to this problem. I think I’ll go and find out what that thing is.”

“No, you have to stay here. We’re safe in the house,” their mother was not happy with Amelia’s idea.

Amelia didn’t listen and she headed down the ladder to the ground. Her parents tried to stop her, but she was too fast.

She ran through the woods towards the sound of the monster. Then she saw the trees falling and heard the sound of other machines doing the same thing.

Watching the machines do their work, Amelia hid behind a large tree and counted the number of machines. There were six of them. They moved forward slowly as if they were doing the work themselves.

Behind them, she saw other machines picking up the fallen trees and moving them to a pile. After that, another large machine was cutting off the branches. The forest was getting smaller and smaller.

Moving around the machines were mechanical robots. Some were driving the machines and others were cleaning. Two of them were in front to make sure that the path to the trees was okay.

Amelia tried to hide, but one of the robots saw her. It walked up to where she is hiding and asks her a question.

“What are you doing here?” he questions her.

“I want to see what you are doing to my forest,” she responds.

“Your forest?” the robot replies.

“Yes, my forest. I have lived here my whole life and now you are destroying it. Why are you doing this?” she asks.

“My code told me to do this. It is my job to do this. We have the permits and the contract to cut these trees. You do not own this land,” the robot answers.

“You’re wrong. This is our forest. We have lived here for many generations and no one has ever come here before,” Amelia explains.

“What is your name?” the robot inquires.

“I’m Amelia Foster. My dad is John Foster,” Amelia answers.

The robot stops and thinks for a moment, and then replies, “I checked, and your name is not listed as the owners of the forest.”

“Yes, we are. We have a house in the tall tree in the middle of forest and we have lived there for a very long time. You cannot say this is not our forest,” Amelia is now getting angry.

“You will have to come with me to the city if you want to prove your ownership of this land,” the robot informs her.

Amelia has never been to the city before, in fact she has never heard about the city. She doesn’t want to go, but the robot makes her. He grabs her arm and leads her out of the forest to a car that is parked close by.

Once Amelia is strapped in the car, it lifts off the ground and flies away toward the city in the distance.

Amelia is frightened and can’t speak. She looks out the window and sees tall buildings everywhere. She can’t see any trees or grass, only building after building.

The car slows down and drops to the ground. The robot tells her to get out.

She slowly gets out and looks around. She has never seen anything like it before. The buildings are gray. There are no colors there. She misses the bright colors of the forest.

The robot leads her to the door of one of the buildings and tells her to go inside. She follows him and the inside of the building is the same as the outside. No colors, just gray everywhere.

Across from the entrance is a large door. Written on the door is ‘Checking Office’.

“Go inside and wait. Someone will speak to you soon,” the robot says to her.

Amelia sat down on a bench along the wall. There isn’t anyone else in the room. She is alone.

After a long wait, a robot comes out of another office and instructs her to follow her. She has a friendly voice, which is different from the first robot.

The robot takes her to a back office and tells her to sit down.

“The administrator will be with you shortly,” the robot says.

This room is the same as all the others except there is a window that looks over the

courtyard where the car is waiting.

A door opens at the other end of the room and another robot walks in.

“Hello, my name is Lucy. I am the administrator. The woodcutting foreman says that you think the forest belongs to your family. Is that correct?” the new robot asks.

“Yes. My family has lived in the forest for many generations. No one has ever come there before. Now you are cutting down our trees. It is not right!” Amelia shows that she is not afraid.

Lucy sits down behind her desk.

“I think we have a problem here. The forest does not belong to anyone. Another problem is your family is not on the list of the population of the people of the Earth. According to this, you do not exist. Therefore, you cannot own the land. Do you understand?” Lucy shows her the records.

“That is wrong! I exist and so does my family. You can see that I exist!” Amelia is getting angry. “How can you say we don’t exist?”

“I can only go by the records. Your family has never registered. Therefore, as I said before, you do not exist,” Lucy explains the situation.

“How do we register?” Amelia shoots back at her.

“I’m afraid it is too late,” Lucy responds calmly.

“Too late? How can it be too late?” Amelia is now getting confused.

“The deadline to register is over and the records cannot be changed. The humans who created this list do not want any additions or subtractions. They do not have children and with modern technology, they will never die. We serve them. We must do what they tell us to do,” Lucy explains. “No one ever expected to find a family in the woods.”

“Well, we do exist, and we do live in the forest. You cannot deny that. If we live in the forest, then we own it and you must leave. You cannot take our trees!” Amelia stands up and leans forward toward the robot. “Who is your boss?”

“I don’t have a boss. I am controlled by the programming input into my circuits when I was created. There can be no changes to my programming except by my creators. The data in the list cannot be changed,” Lucy continues to try to convince Amelia there are no options.

Amelia does not agree.

“Who are your creators? I want to meet them,” she demands.

Just then a door opens to the room and in walks a man in a white suit. He does not look happy.

“Why are you talking to my robot like this? She is just doing her job,” he says to Amelia.

“She says we do not exist, but as you can see, I do exist. I am here in front of you. Your robots are ruining our forest and I want them to stop!” Amelia is forceful in her words.

“We can’t help that. We need the lumber to build houses and the other forests are empty. No one is registered on that land, so we have every right to harvest the trees,” the man responds.

“Our home is there. If you cut down all the trees, our house will be destroyed. You can’t do that!” Amelia defends herself.

“You don’t count as humans, so if we keep cutting trees, then we are not taking your personal property. We won’t be breaking law. If you were registered and the land was yours, then you are right. But, since you are not registered, you cannot claim anything,” he answers with the facts, but it does not satisfy Amelia.

“How can we not count as humans? You can see me. My family is in the forest and you can meet them. We are alive, and you must admit it,” she counters with an argument of her own.

“I can only go by what I see on the computer and the numbers that are listed there. Whether or not you are in front of me does not matter. The computer is the only source of true data,” the man in the white suit responds again calmly. “I’m sure you understand our position.

“No, I don’t. I want to talk to your supervisor. I am sure we can find a way to save our home if someone would just listen to me. You are just like Lucy. Don’t you have any feelings at all?” Amelia was getting frustrated.

The she realizes that the man in the white suit is a robot himself, only more humanlike.

“Are there really any humans left? Are all of you robots?” Amelia is now getting worried.

“Our creators are living their lives. They are enjoying life while we do the work for them. There is no need for humans to do work anymore. We take care of everything for them,” the white robot answered.

“I’m human. Why don’t you want to take care of me?” Amelia puts the question to him.

The robot stops and thinks for a moment.

“Hmmm.... That is an interesting question. I will have to get back with you with an answer. I don’t have one right now. I am a bit confused,” the robot seems to be unsure of what to say next.

After few minutes he returns.

“You are not on the list. Therefore, I do not have to take care of you. You are not human,” he gives her the bad news.

“Yes, I am! You can see that I’m a human. Just because I’m not on your list does not change the facts,” Amelia defends herself.

Now the robot is very confused again.

“I will have to talk to my creator. You have said something that does not make sense to me,” the robot tells her.

“Fine! Let me talk to him!” she answers.

The robot left Amelia sitting in the office for a long time. She almost falls asleep.

“Are you Amelia?” a female voice asks.

Amelia jumps from being startled and turns around to see a lady in a long white dress behind her.

“Yes, I’m Amelia,” she responds.

The lady goes behind the desk and sits down.

“I guess we need to talk. My robot tells me that you live in the forest and you want us to stop cutting down the trees. Is this correct?” the lady asks.

“Who are you?” Amelia is a bit rude.

“I’m the director of the crew that is cutting the trees. We have permits and documents that give us permission to do this. My name is Ms. Rands, but you can call me Leah.

“How long have you lived in the forest and why aren’t you registered?” she inquires.

“We have lived in the forest since my great-grandfather built our tree house. We have never bothered anyone until you and your robots decided to cut down our trees,” she answers, while leaning forward.

“Well, that is very interesting, but it does not change the fact that we own the land and we

can cut as many trees as we want. Our society is running out of lumber and the number of forests are almost gone. We have no other choice than to harvest timber from the forest you say is yours. Since you are not registered, you are not considered human. Since you are not human, you have no rights. Since you have no rights, you cannot claim the forest. Therefore, you are wasting my time,” Lea is getting annoyed at Amelia.

“My suggestion is for your family to leave the forest and live in the city. We will take care of all your needs. We will have to make an exception for you.,” Lea offers.

“But how can we do that? We aren’t registered. But anyways, we love the forest. We love working and finding our own food. We don’t want to be taken care of. Just give us our forest!” Amelia demands.

“That is not up to me,” Lea responds.

“Who is it up to then? I need to talk to your superior!” Amelia is getting bolder.

“We will have to make an exception. It is up to our registry. If you and your family come to the city, we will get you on our registry and then you will live here. You have no other choice,” Lea explained.

“I will have to talk to my family and let them know what you said,” Amelia sits back in her chair.

“I will arrange for transportation to take you back to the forest. Talk to your family and when you are ready to return, let one of the workers know and they will make sure you have a safe way to the city. I look forward to seeing you again,” Lea stands up and walks with Amelia to the door.

The trip back to the forest goes quickly. When she gets there, more of the trees are missing. The forest is shrinking quickly.

She runs to her treehouse and goes up the ladder to talk to her family.

At first, they did not agree with the proposal, but when they look out the window, and see the robots coming closer and closer, they realize it is the only way to survive.

It doesn’t take long to pack their things. They don’t have much to take with them. It is hard leaving the treehouse behind. They stand under the tree for a long time. Amelia cries.

“It was a good house, but times are changing. We have to do the best we can for our

family,” father tells them.

Amelia shows them the way to the shuttle that will take them to the city.

Only Amelia has ever been out of the forest, so she has to explain what she had seen and heard while they flew over the trees.

“Look at the forest! The trees are almost gone!” exclaims her little brother.

They look out the windows and see the machines working removing trees down to the valley below.

The shuttle lands in the center of the city. When the door opens, to Amelia’s surprise is Lea. She has come to greet them.

She leads them to house that looks a little like a treehouse, but it isn’t.

“We tried to make your house here similar to your old one so you would feel like this is your home,” Lea explains.

“It is nothing like our old house,” says John.

“I will come back later and get you registered so you can receive all the services of our staff. If there is anything you need, just ask,” she tells them as she leaves.

The children are not happy. They do not like the new house. Their parents try to make them feel better telling them it is an exciting new adventure.

Amelia looks out the window and everything is gray. She misses the colors of the forest, but she realizes that moving to the city is the only way they will survive.

The End

VOCABULARY: (*Match the word to its definition*)

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1. generations _____ | a. step by step to climb |
| 2. monster _____ | b. hesitant, uncertain |
| 3. ladder _____ | c. has possession of, mine |
| 4. contract _____ | d. family tree |
| 5. ownership _____ | e. number of people in an area |
| 6. administrator _____ | f. humanity, culture, civilization |
| 7. population _____ | g. freak, scary beings, giants |
| 8. programming _____ | h. signed agreement, document |
| 9. unsure _____ | i. one who controls a group in a company |
| 10. society _____ | j. written code that controls something |

TRUE / FALSE:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Amelia's family lived in a treehouse. | T / F |
| 2. The robots were cutting down corn. | T / F |
| 3. The family had lived in the forest for generations. | T / F |
| 4. The administrator was a robot. | T / F |
| 5. A lady in a long blue dress spoke to Amelia. | T / F |
| 6. The city had bright colors everywhere. | T / F |
| 7. Amelia rode in a shuttle. | T / F |
| 8. The robots were going to cut down the treehouse. | T / F |
| 9. Amelia and her family moved to the city. | T / F |
| 10. Amelia's family was not registered. | T / F |

MULTIPLE CHOICE:

1. Who owned the forest? _____
 - a) Amelia's family
 - b) the robots
 - c) the society
 - d) the registry

2. What was the name of the Administrator? _____
 - a) Louis
 - b) Lulu
 - c) Lea
 - d) Luke

3. Why was the family not considered human? _____
 - a) they lived in the forest
 - b) their grandfather was a criminal
 - c) the robots ruled the Earth
 - d) they were not registered

4. What made Amelia upset? _____
 - a) the robots were cutting the trees
 - b) her family was not registered
 - c) the city was gray
 - d) all the above

COMPREHENSION: (*Write a complete sentence to answer the question.*)

1. What scared the family?

2. Who went to talk to the woodcutters?

3. How did Amelia get to the city?

4. What did the first robot in the office tell Amelia about her family?

5. Who did Amelia ask to talk to?

6. What color is the city and its buildings?

7. What color was the dress of the administrator?

8. What did the family do after Amelia came home?

9. How many generations of Amelia's family had lived in the forest?

10. What did the family see as they flew to the city?
