

# The Mysterious Man

"Hey!" I heard a rough, unfamiliar voice yell. "What d'you think you're doing here?" I started to run and stumbled over a tree root. Even though my ankle was throbbing from the stumble, I continued to run. Finally, I stopped, breathing heavily. I hoped I outran the man but I couldn't be sure, so I hid behind a tree just to be safe.

I felt a large hand grab tightly onto my arm. I turned to look at the man. He had a beefy body, bushy eyebrows and wild, tangly hair and beard. I tried to pull myself up but the man's grasp was too tight. "You ain't told me what you're doing here yet. I want an explanation," he growled, his face close to mine.

My mind started racing. What am I doing here? I'm picking berries and setting traps to catch food for my family. My family's poor. We live in nothing more than a little shack that is located in the middle of nowhere. Luckily, my dad, who is sick and can no longer set traps and find berries taught me which berries to eat and how to set traps to catch food. "Picking berries and setting traps to catch food." I replied flatly.

"Who told you that you can go marching around my property picking berries and setting traps?" he questioned.

"I didn't know that this was your property," I stammered.

"Well you do now." he snarled. "I don't tolerate people stomping all over my property, pretending that it's theirs."

I longed to be at my home, as small as it is. "What's the big deal about people walking on your property?" I asked.

"It's, well I don't like to talk about," he said with a surprisingly soft look on his face.

"If you can't tell me then I'll just go." I said.

He took a deep breath, then said, "One day, my daughter decided to go for a walk in the woods. She never came back and nobody ever found her. I was so sad, it was one of the worst times in my life."

"Oh." I said quietly.

"I just don't want anyone to get hurt." he said.

"Oh, well I'm sorry about your daughter." I whispered. "Can I please go home now?"

"Yes, but be careful." he said with a worried look.

"Thank you." I whispered. He loosened his grip and I pulled myself up and started to walk home. "Wait." I said, turning around. "You seem lonely, would you like to come to my home, even though it is small?" I asked him.

I surprised myself when I said that. Here I am asking a stranger who had just yelled at me if he wanted to come to my home.

“Well, I guess I could come, if you don’t mind.” he answered. “Do you want me to bring anything? I have bread and some meat.”

“Yes please.” I said. When we got to my home, my parents and sister were shocked when I told them why there was a complete stranger in our home.

“We’re glad you’re safe but, Julie you need to be careful. If that man had not been trying to protect you...” my mom trailed off. She looked relieved and worried at the same time. I was happy too, happy that the man was only trying to protect me, and that he was happy to help us get food.

With his bread and meat, we had a good dinner and he had some company, and we were all happy.