

Willa-Lee

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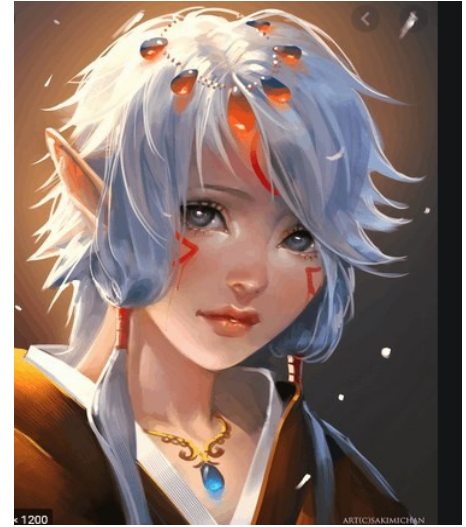
*Salamander*



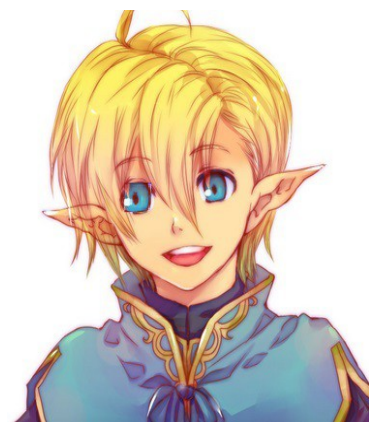
Once upon a time, there was a little elf-girl named Willa-Lee. She lived in a cozy elf-house with her Mom, A-liza,



and her Dad, Dan-i-el. She had a little brother named Ar-lolo. A-liza was a



Master Harper and Dancer. Dan-i-el was Forest Keeper for the forests, meadows, ponds, rivers, and lakes where Willa-Lee lived.



Most Elves have special gifts



that people think are "magic". Willa-Lee could talk to many of the animals living in the forest. There wasn't anything magic about that – she just paid attention to how animals talk to each other and did the same thing. She loved learning about things. She knew the names of the birds, the animals, even the frogs and lizards. She knew about rocks and trees and flowers too.

One day Willa-Lee and her Dad went for a hike to see part of the forest that had burned in a fire. It had been very dry and some people had left their camp



fire burning. The fire burned many trees and many animals had been burned too. It was very sad.

Willa-Lee felt like crying. Willa-Lee and her Dad walked through the burned forest. Some places the ground was still hot from the fire. There were no birds. There were no animals.

Then Willa-Lee saw something moving. It looked like a black lizard with yellow spots. She showed it to her Dad.



"Look!" she said. "There is a lizard that did not get burned up!" Her Dad looked, and then told her, "That is not a lizard – that is a Salamander".

Willa-Lee was amazed. "What is a salamander? How did it live in the fire?" she asked her Dad. "Well", her Dad told her, "Salamanders are cousins of frogs. They live where it is wet, so if a fire

comes, they crawl into a puddle and stay safe."

Then Willa-Lee said, "Can I pick it up and take it where the trees are not burned up?" Her Dad smiled at her. "You have a very loving heart, Willa-Lee, but Salamanders are Look but don't Touch!"

"Why can't I touch it?" Willa-Lee asked.

"It would feel a little like you burned your hand," her Dad said. "Their skin is bitter and toxic so that they don't get eaten – or picked up. That is why there are old stories about Salamanders being Fire Creatures.



People saw that they could live through a bad fire, and if you touched one it would feel like you burned your hand. So, they made up stories about



Salamanders being made of fire. People were afraid of salamanders because they thought a salamander might burst into flames if it got angry."

Willa-Lee thought that was silly. "I think the truth is much better", she said. Her Dad agreed.

Then Willa-Lee had an idea. "Do you think I could help the salamander find the good forest we hiked through?" Her Dad said, "Maybe the salamander understands Frog language. "



Willa-Lee pretended she was a frog. "Ribbb-te-tet rib-ed-det re-er-i-bi-de-vet" she said to the salamander, which means "This way to the pond" in Frog talk. The salamander looked up, then began

crawling to her. Willa-Lee and her Dad started walking back towards the wet part of the forest.

"Look!" Willa-Lee said. "The salamander is following us!"



And it did, and

soon they were all back where it was soft and green.

Willa-Lee decided to learn all about Salamanders.

She learned that there are many kinds. There are red salamanders that live mostly in very muddy places near the



ocean. There are gold salamanders that live in colder places where they dig deep into the mud in a

lake and can stay alive even if the lake freezes!

But the strangest thing she learned is that Salamander babies are Solar Powered!



"What does Solar Powered mean?" Willa-Lee asked her Dad. Her Dad said that would be a good question to ask Grandpa Elf. So Willa-Lee said she would the next time she saw him.

Then it was time to eat supper, which was a delicious stew her dad made from rabbit meat, carrots, potatoes, onions, and other good things. After supper, Willa-Lee went to bed, thinking about salamanders and all there is to learn.