

## Fight of the Amazonians

Felicity Field (2021)

With a gigantic crack, the tree trunk hit the ground. As leaves flew up in a flurry of green, Lamandra screamed as she heard her mother's name echo through the village.

'Ditto! It's Ditto!' the village folk shouted, distraught.

Lamandra leapt from her den. Her claws dug into the wood as she darted to the village square. Her mother's tree, which many small creatures called home, once stood tall among the forest. It brought tears to Lamandra's eyes when she saw it lying on the ground in front of her. Her mother and the giant fig had stood tall among the Amazonians with many roots to connect and help others in need. Now that her connection with her tree was lost, Ditto would start to die as well.

Lamandra raced up to her sick mother and opened her paws, offering her charred kapok seed. 'Mother, plant this seed before it is too late.' Lamandra had picked up the seed in the Kapok Grove before the machines came.

Ditto clambered to her feet and scrambled over to the edge of the den, where Lamandra had scratched a hole in the moist forest floor. The seed fell to the bottom of the hole as the two desperate Amazonians buried it into the cool soil. Ditto wailed in fear as she collapsed. Lamandra ran to her mother's side, helping her to her bed. It could be too late; only time would tell.

*I have to stop the machines.*

The thought burned in Lamandra's head. If any more trees were cut down the Amazonians would disappear, leaving no one to tend to the forest. They were also running out of the precious seeds, which gave them hope for future.

Lamandra kissed her mother on the cheek and wished her well, before seeking out her friend, Wattle, to ask if she would help with a plan. As Lamandra reached the leafy door of Wattle's den, a nose poked out followed by icy blue eyes.

'Hi Mandy, what's up?' Wattle asked, pondering her friend's appearance.

'Will you help me come up with a plan to stop the machines from hurting us?' Lamandra asked.

Wattle's snout scrunched up at the thought of putting herself in danger. 'I don't know. Come inside and tell me more.'

Lamandra sank into a pile of soft moss in the middle of Wattle's den. 'If we show the humans that we are equals, they will accept us and realise we are the same, and the forest is not theirs to take. You won't get hurt I promise,' said Lamandra.

'What about the machines? If this doesn't go the right way, the bloodthirsty steam rollers will come for us in our sleep and crush us alive,' Wattle said with a whimper.

'Trust me, humans have sympathy just like us animals. If we can act like we're hurt, they'll come running to help us, I'm sure of it,' Lamandra said.

'Good point. I'll do it,' said Wattle. 'But we'd better not get hurt.'

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Lamandra and Wattle packed their rucksacks that afternoon. 'Assassin Bugs?' Lamandra asked.

'Check.'

'Death Vipers?'

'Check.'

'Poisonous Peonies?'

'Check,' Wattle said, comforted by all their weapons.

'Alright, we're all set. Let's go!' Lamandra yelled.

The wet leaves crunched under the two friends' paws as they darted through the forest, not wanting to waste time.

'I think we're close,' Wattle said, hearing the fierce machines rumbling in the background.

The ocelots talked over their plan one more time. Lamandra would act as if she was wounded, and Wattle could run out once they'd caught the person's attention. Then, they would show them that humans and animals were equals, and that the Amazon Forest and other forests are not theirs to take.

'Are you ready?' asked Wattle with a quaver in her voice.

'Of course, I am,' yelled Lamandra, courage filling her eyes.

Lamandra limped into the clearing and, soon enough, someone spotted her and raced out to see what was wrong. As planned, Wattle skittered over to Lamandra, not making any eye contact with the human.

'Hey little guys! What's wrong with your foot, little one?' asked the human.

'Excuse me sir, we need your help. The entire Amazon needs your help,' said Lamandra, expecting the man to run away.

The man stared at Wattle and Lamandra. ‘Ver funny. Good one. Mikey was this your idea?’ asked the man with a foolish look on his face

‘Okay, calm down and we’ll explain everything. Wattle, you tell him,’ Lamandra said, nudging her companion.

‘You humans think that you’re the best, don’t you?’ Wattle asked.

‘No, not really—’ The man was cut off.

‘We animals are just like you, maybe even smarter and yet, here you are cutting down our homes for some stupid thing called money,’ said Wattle. The man nodded, somehow understanding what they were going through. ‘So, *please* stop cutting down our home.’

The man was quiet for a moment as the gravity of the situation sunk in.

‘I understand how angry you are. Lucky for you, I’m the boss of this facility. I swear I will find a way to stop destroying your rainforest.’

‘Thank you! You don’t know how much this means to us,’ Lamandra said.

They trotted back through the rainforest, hearts brimming with joy, crying tears of relief knowing that their beloved village was saved. A gentle wind ruffled their fur as they stood looking down into their village from the road. Lamandra and Wattle looked at each other and laughed as they ran to share the good news.

The villagers cheered and rejoiced and celebrated long into the night, knowing they were safe, forever.