

Anna & Otto - Copyright 2004, Melanie Villines

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Chapter 1

Narrator:

The girl sat on the hard ground and stared at the dark forest. She couldn't remember how long she'd been sitting there. In fact, she couldn't remember anything – not her name, how old she was, what she looked like, or where she had come from.

Anna:

If only I had a pool of water, she thought, I could look at my reflection. Perhaps seeing my own image would help me remember who I am.

Narrator:

But there was no water nearby – just the grass beneath her and the forest in front of her.

Anna:

I wonder what is behind me.

Narrator:

So she turned, but what was behind her looked just the same as what was in front of her.

Anna:

I will turn around and face the other way. Then what was once behind me will be before me, and what was once before me will be behind me.

Narrator:

So she did this and felt quite clever for a while, but then remembered she had forgotten who she was – and felt she should really do something about it.

Anna:

Perhaps I should examine myself for clues.

Narrator:

She began with her shoes – little black slippers that looked like those worn by ballet dancers.

Anna:

Perhaps I am a dancer.

Narrator:

The girl stood up and twirled around a few times, until she felt dizzy. She tried to balance on her toes, the way she believed ballet dancers did – but her feet collapsed under her, and she fell to the ground.

Anna:

Perhaps my socks hold some clues.

Narrator:

She pulled off her shoes and looked at her white socks, which came just above her ankles. She ran her hand over the socks and noted their smooth, silky feel.

Then she rested her left foot on her right knee and looked at the bottom of her sock. She saw some words written there, and felt her heart thump in anticipation.

Anna:

Perhaps the words on the bottom of my sock will tell me who I am.

Narrator:

She bent down until her head was close to the tiny words on her sock.

Anna:

"Dry Clean Only?"

Am I really the kind of impractical person who wears socks that must be dry-cleaned? Socks should be washed each time you wear them – and if I wear socks that must be dry-cleaned, this means I would have to send seven pairs of socks to the dry cleaners each week. This sounds highly expensive – and really a bother besides. Why couldn't I be the type of person who wears cotton socks that can be easily washed and hung out to dry?

Narrator:

Rather than wonder any more about this, she decided to see if something were written on the bottom of her right sock – so she rested her right foot on her left knee. Again, she saw words written there – and she got excited thinking the words could offer a valuable clue about her identity.

She leaned down until she could read what was written on her right sock.

Anna:

RIGHT SOCK.

Narrator:

The girl wondered why she had to be reminded where to put her right sock. Then she remembered that socks fit on either foot.

The girl sat and puzzled over the words "right sock" on the bottom of her right sock. Then a thought struck her. She remembered that the word "right" had several meanings.

Anna:

It can mean a direction, such as "turn right" or a location, such as "the house on the right." But the word also meant "correct," as in "the right answer."

Narrator:

She thought of the words "right foot" as meaning "correct foot."

Anna:

If this were the meaning of the words, then what did they mean? Correct foot in what way?

Perhaps this foot will lead me on the right path, so I can find out who I really am.

Narrator:

Next, the girl examined her clothes. She was wearing a loose-fitting sort of jumpsuit – all of one piece made up of black and white diamond patches. The suit had

long sleeves with black ruffles at the wrists. She looked down at her collar and saw a big white ruffle around her neck.

Anna:

This, I think, is a clown's outfit.

Narrator:

She reached up to see whether she was wearing a hat, but she felt only hair. She held out her hair to see its color. At first she thought her hair was black, but then she held out another strand and saw that it was white. Perhaps my head is striped like a zebra, she thought.

Anna:

I am all in black and white. I have no bright colors. Perhaps this is because I don't remember who I am.

Narrator:

The girl had to admit she felt drab.

Anna:

Perhaps if I could see my face, I would discover that my eyes are green or blue. That would certainly brighten things up. Oh, what I wouldn't give for a mirror!

Narrator:

Just then, the girl heard scratching coming from the ground next to her. She saw the grass moving around – like a small green pond tossed by the wind.

She wondered if an earthquake were happening right next to her. She figured she'd better move away from the spot – but before she could stand up, a dog's head popped out of the ground, followed soon after by the dog's entire body.

The small brown terrier shook the earth from his coat, then flopped down, panting and exhausted.

Otto:

"That was unexpected,"

Narrator:

The dog said, giving the girl a sideward glance.

Anna:

A talking dog. I must be dreaming. Perhaps that's why I can't remember who I am.

Otto:

You're not dreaming. That's what people always think when they hear a talking dog, people are so predictable."

Narrator:

The dog stood up and again shook himself until the clumps of earth flew from his fur.

When he was finished, he bowed his head and said:

Otto:

"Allow me to introduce myself. I am Otto. My name is spelled the same both backwards and forwards – so it doesn't matter if I'm coming or going."

Anna:

"That *is* convenient,"

Otto:

"And what are you called?"

Narrator:

This question brought back all the sadness the girl felt about not remembering who she was. She held her lips tight so she wouldn't start to cry.

Otto sat down and waited for the girl to answer his question. The dog thought she might not have heard him or had forgotten what he'd said, so he repeated the question in different words.

Otto:

"What is your name?"

Narrator:

The girl shook her head back and forth

Anna:

"I don't know."

Otto:

"Well everyone, man or beast, should have a name."

Anna:

"Exactly my thought".

Otto:

"So then give yourself a name,"

Anna:

"Better still," "why don't you give me a name?"

Otto:

"I have heard of people naming dogs, but I have never heard of a dog naming a person."

Anna:

"So you will be the first."

Otto:

"I think I shall call you Anna."

Anna:

I have a name, and it is Anna.

Otto:

Like my name, Otto, Anna is the same either backwards or forwards."

Anna:

"Sort of like this place,"

Narrator:

Anna said, pointing at the trees before her and the trees behind her.

Otto:

"Where are we?"

Anna:

"I was hoping you could tell me."

Otto:

"You're barking up the wrong tree,"

Anna:

"I never bark," Anna told him.

Otto:

It was a way of saying that I have no idea where we are. One moment I was digging under a fence. I hit a

bone, and thought there might be more. So I kept digging and digging, deeper and deeper. The next thing I knew, I fell into the ground, traveled through the earth, scratched my way out, and found myself here.

Anna:

"Well at least you know how you got here,"

Otto:

"And you don't?"

Anna:

"I have no clue," "In fact, I don't even know who I am."

Otto:

"You are Anna,"

Anna:

"But who is Anna? I don't remember anything about myself."

Otto:

"Then we should try to find out."

Narrator:

He trotted a few steps toward the forest in front of them.

Anna:

"Are you sure we should go this way."

Otto:

"No, I'm not sure," "But we have to go either forwards or backwards, and I prefer to move ahead."

Anna:

"But what if we were turned the other way? Then that way would seem like the forward path."

Otto:

"Yes, everything depends on your point of view."

Anna:

"Well, if you put it that way it doesn't matter which path we choose."

Otto:

"It matters, but you can never know about a path until you start down it."

Narrator:

So with that, the girl and the dog set off toward the forest in front of them.