

At the end of summer, forests in upstate New York are dense with greenery. Searching through the thick underbrush of a clearing for the ball, Angel heard something that sounded like snapping twigs behind her. Continuing her search, she called out, "Kalen is that you? Stop messing around and help me find the ball. Besides, I know what you're up to – you throw it in here, intentionally, so you can get a breather."

When she turned to harass her brother a little more, she spotted something that she had never seen before: a little, moving stick, about 3 inches long, with human features.

"AAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!" Angel yelled, falling backwards with surprise, never taking her eyes from the tiny boy-like creature.

At the same time, the stick being, who also had been intent on searching the underbrush, shrieked with just as much enthusiasm, "AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

"W-w-w-what are y-y-you?" stammered Angel all agog. She watched a second, smaller version of the stick-being run out of the underbrush.

"I'm a Knottie, from the Elwood family," the first and larger stick boy replied, cautiously. "My name is Evan." Eying Angel skeptically, he added, "Don't you try to hurt us or to put us in a jar!" As he spoke, he moved to stand protectively in front of the smaller stick boy. He put his hands on his hips, in what he hoped was an aggressive stance. "This is Ethan."

Curiosity overcame her initial shock and Angel slowly kneeled holding out her empty hands. "See, I don't have a jar, and since you haven't tried to sting or bite me, why would I hurt you?"

Both little stick boys started laughing. "Why would a Knottie bite or sting a human? That's hilarious!" said Ethan.

While they chuckled, Angel continued to study them. Both boy sticks had large light brown eyes and brown hair that came to the top of their wooden torsos. Arms and legs sprouted from their wooden bodies allowing them full movement. They looked like surfers because they had bronzed skin, golden highlights in their hair and a smattering of freckles across their little pug noses. Eager to keep them calm and talking, she said, "My name is Angel. Evan and Ethan, right? What are you two doing?"

"We're just looking for something," said the biggest Knottie. His slightly smaller companion cautiously moved to stand beside him.

At that moment, Kalen, who was wondering why his sister was taking so long to find the ball, entered the woods. Seeing his sister's discovery, he called out, "Dude, that is so awesome! You catch them and I will go get a jar. I will be the coolest kid in school when I take them to show-and-tell on the first day!" Again Evan shifted to shield Ethan. No one messed with his little brother except for himself.

Angel quickly said, "No one is putting the Knotties into a jar or taking them to school. I already told them that they wouldn't be hurt." Looking at the little creatures, she continued, "This is my little brother Kalen. We're also looking for something, that is for my brother's baseball. That is *all* we are taking out of the woods."

"Ooohhh...baaaasebawl...What exactly is that?" said Evan excitedly. He loved to learn new words. "It sounds extraordinary and it's our day to bring something to Unusual Circumstances Circle, we call it the UCC."

"Maybe we could take your brother's bawl?" suggested Evan hopefully.

"Orrrrrrrrrr, we could take you. You are definitely unusual," said Ethan with an appraising eye. He quickly added, "It only takes a few minutes. We introduce a topic, talk about where and how we found it, and then answer a few questions from our Kinfolk."

Wide-eyed and with mouth agape, Evan turned to see if Ethan had lost his mind. “Do you really think that is a good idea? Talk about breaking all of the rules. I can just see Ethel turning all stinkweed if we stroll into The UCC with two humans,” whispered Evan rather loudly. “In her eyes, they’re a vile enemy only a little better than The Pests!”

“She’s not been attending lately, besides we’re supposed to bring something unique and interesting, and they *definitely* fit that description,” Ethan whispered just as loudly back.

While Kalen and Angel watched this exchange, another Knottie entered the clearing pushing the lost baseball. This stick creature was a little girl with unruly reddish-orange hair and a ton of energy.