



Flight from Big Tangle Anita Daher

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The Story

Kaylee used to love to fly. With two pilots for parents, how could she not? But ever since her father and his plane disappeared in the Caribbean, Kaylee has been afraid to fly. She is haunted by fear whenever her mother goes up to fight fires in a water bomber. Kaylee escapes her fear and her grief on long treks with her dog through the forest, the Big Tangle, near her home in northern Saskatchewan. One day, fire follows her into the forest and events conspire against her until her only escape is resting on pontoons at the dock on Booker Bay. Will Kaylee be able to overcome her fear and fly herself and her dog to safety?

The Author

Anita Daher has been writing fire-related columns and articles for the last three years, ever since her family and their dog, Copper, aka Sausage, had to be evacuated when a forest fire in northern Saskatchewan, almost took their home. Aviation goes way back in her family. Her grandfather was a navigator during the Second World War, while she herself has worked as a radio operator in small airports. Copper is a Bassett Hound, just like Sausage in *Flight from Big Tangle*. Like Kaylee, Anita still gets knots in her stomach when she has to fly.

The Ideas

- Invite someone from a search and rescue team to come speak in your school, or go on a hike as a class in the wilderness, making sure that you take all the appropriate precautions. Have a search and rescue person meet you before or after to talk with you about safety and about what it's like to search for someone who is lost.
- Invite a qualified presenter—the RCMP in Canada—to talk about the Hug a Tree Program. Talk about the mistakes Kaylee made when she lost her way.
- Research the types of airplanes used to fight fires in your area, and/or other

areas of the world. Do fires ever threaten towns? How do fire fighters keep fires away from people?

- Imagine that Mrs. Morrison writes letters to Jack, Kaylee, Kaylee's mom, the mayor or someone else after the fire. Does she thank them? Describe what it was like to be flown to safety by Kaylee? Tell them about her cat? About a past experience with a fire? Write the letters.
- Kaylee has two homes—one in Canada and one in St. Lucia. Many islands in the Caribbean have fascinating histories, each different from the other. Break into groups. Have each group choose an island, and prepare a presentation about it.
- Different groups use different types of maps and charts for a variety of purposes. A pilot uses an aviation map emphasizing air routes – sort of like a road map for the sky. A ground search and rescue team uses a topographical map, emphasizing detailed description of a portion of land. A hiker uses a map highlighting trails, bathroom facilities and points of interest. Look at examples of each, and create your own imaginary map for a pilot, a search and rescue group, or a hiker. What do boaters use?
- Remember a time you were very afraid. Write down what caused your fear, how you felt—remembering each of your senses—and how you reacted.
- Play a 'name game' like Mrs. Morrison does. Here's a fun one. Take your name and rhyme it using the following first consonants: (your name) nick-a (N____) come a (F____) bubber (drop first consonant_____). Here's an example using Sausage: Sausage nick-a Nausage come a Fausage bubber Ausage. Try it—it's fun!
- Write about finding an injured animal in the woods. What kind of animal? What kind of injury? What would you do?
- Sometimes injured animals behave unpredictably. Invite a veterinarian to visit your class and talk about animal behavior and first aid.
- If you had to suddenly evacuate your home, what five personal items—other than family and pets—would you bring? Why?

- Discuss the science that explains how expanding heat could cause a building—or another container—to explode.
- The boreal forest, or taiga, is a nearly continuous belt of coniferous trees stretching across North America and Eurasia. On a map of the world, show where this belt of vegetation exists. Research the types of plants and animals found in the boreal forest.
- Can forest fires be good? Research the fire cycle of a forest; the role fire plays in keeping a forest healthy.

A Few Words from the Author

Dear Readers,

Like Kaylee, I come from a family of flying nuts. My mother and father were both with the Canadian Air force, and then worked for Transport Canada's Aviation division. My father is also a pilot. My grandfather was a navigator with the Canadian Air force (On a World War Two Bomber...but that's another story). Like Kaylee's dad, I've always lived near airports.

When I grew up I became a radio operator for Transport Canada. I talked to pilots over a two-way radio and gave them important details about runways, weather conditions, and other airplanes in the air nearby. Sometimes they had to fly in dangerous situations, and the information I gave them became especially important.

In May of 1999, I lived in a small lakeside community in northern Saskatchewan. One night, a violent thunderstorm ripped through the area. Lightning struck a tree six kilometers west of the community, leaving embers smoldering in the muskeg. One blistering hot day, the embers burst into flames. Because the wind was strong, it quickly became a wildfire that almost destroyed our town. Firefighters called it "The Mallard Fire." I worked as a fire radio operator, helping to coordinate movements of helicopters, water bombers and ground crews as they moved in to "attack" the fire.

Just outside the community there was a small resort bay off the main lake – just like Booker Bay. It had a lodge and 12 houses. The houses were incinerated – including a beautiful log home owned by my best friend. The

fire was so hot that when her home started to burn, so much hot air gathered inside that it blew the roof right off. Just like Kaylee and her mom, I didn't know that could happen. But it did.

I'll bet if you do a little work on the Internet, you could find out what community I lived in when the fire that inspired *Flight From Big Tangle* happened. (Hint—Keywords: Mallard Fire 1999)

One more thing I'd like to share with you is that Sausage is the spitting image of our own basset hound, Copper. Copper also has extra long legs, loves to hike, loves food even more, and will go out of his way to avoid getting his feet wet.

You can find out more about me and my work, or contact me, through my website at www.anitadaher.com

Sincerely,

Anita Daher

A Few Facts

Common Fire Suppression Aircraft in Canada

- Water Bomber: An amphibious aircraft used to scoop and drop water.
 1. The Canadair CL-215 amphibian aircraft was developed in Canada and first flew in October, 1967. In ten seconds it can scoop a belly full of water—1410 US gallons—from the surface of a lake or ocean and store it to drop on a fire.
 2. The Canadair CL-415 amphibian aircraft was developed in Canada and first flew in December, 1993. It looks very much the same as the CL-215 but is faster, quieter and can carry more water—1621 US gallons.
- Bird Dog: A “Bird Dog” is a lighter, faster aircraft of non-specific type used to scout forested areas where the fire risk is high, alert the fire base operator to fire sightings and coordinate bomber attacks. Although it doesn't scoop and carry water, it will sometimes carry a chemical fire retardant.

- **Air Tanker:** A freight aircraft used to carry and drop chemical fire retardant—Grumman s-2 Tracker, Douglas DC-6 and DC-7, Lockheed C-130 Hercules, and L-188 Electra
- **Helicopter:** A rotary aircraft used to work with ground crews, slinging buckets of water and baskets of equipment.

How Fire Suppression Groups Find and Fight Fires

Research

- Fire operation centers collect weather and lightning strike information from stations and equipment placed throughout large forested areas.
- Information about the health of a forest is recorded, including age, height, type of trees and how close together they are growing.

Spotting Fires

- Staff in fire towers watch for fires.
- Spotting aircraft, or bird dogs, patrol forests looking for fires.
- Helicopters with fire crews and water buckets patrol forests when there is a high risk of fires, spotting fires and attacking them when they are still small.
- A 1-800 number is usually available for civilian reports.

Fighting Fires

- Ground crews are trained in various forested communities to use machinery and hand equipment in fighting fires.
- Water bombers and tankers drop water and chemical retardants.
- Helicopters bucket water and carry a fire crew and equipment.
- Water bombers, tankers, helicopters, bird dog aircraft, and ground crews are coordinated through fire operation centers to bring forest fires quickly and effectively under control.

Resources

Non-fiction

Kindersley, Dorling. *The Visual Dictionary of Flight*. 1992. ISBN 1-56458-101-2.
10 and up.

Jennings, Terry. *How Things Work: Planes, Gliders, Helicopters*. Kingfisher Books, 1993. ISBN 1-85697-870-2.
Examines in text, diagrams, and illustrations, how airplanes and other flying machines work and what they do. Includes hands-on projects and experiments particularly appealing for readers new to flight concepts.

Thompson, Luke. *Forest Fires: Natural Disasters*. ISBN 0-51623-570-2.
Fact-filled book for ages 9-12 that explains how and why forest fires occur.

Nobisso, Josephine. *Forest Fires...Run for Your Life!* Mondo Publishing, ISBN 1572558024.
Explores the “to let burn or not to let burn” question for middle grades.

Fiction

Paulson, Gary. *Escape from Fire Mountain*. Yearling Books. ISBN 0-44041-025-8.
Thirteen-year-old Nikki Roberts tries to help two children trapped by a forest fire while being chased by poachers.

Wells, Rosemary. *Wingwalker*. Illustrated by Brian Selznick. Hyperion Press. ISBN 0-78682-347-X.
During the Depression, a young boy who is terrified of heights and flying must come to terms with his airplane-mad father becoming a wing-walker (someone who stands on the wing of a stunt plane as it circles a crowd of spectators).