

CHAPTER FIVE BAOBAB FOREST



There was to be a Council. The natural world knew.

A forest of interlacing trees, chestnut, poplar, maple, birch, sycamore, adler, cedar, beech, spruce, fir, oak and elm, surrounds a cascading waterfall. At the bottom pool is a semi circle of majestic Baobab trees, roots in the air. A tiger, elk, turkey, slender loris, deer, panda, brown bear, antelope, zebra, kangaroo, butterfly, and blue sheep stand quietly. A giraffe, lynx, hedgehog, sloth, mink, snow leopard, rooster, caterpillar, opossum, cuckoo and cat stand apart. Twin armadillos, cats, sheep, ferrets and deer stand under a large oak. Two quails, a hawk, swallow, falcon and Arabian babbler sit side by side on a tree branch.

The waterfall freezes and speaks.

WATER

“I am WATER, SNOW, RAIN AND ICE. No organism lives alone. Large or small, simple or complex, we depend on others. At any one time, every living thing is a piece of the puzzle. Moment to moment it changes.”

As the ice melts, the waterfall begins to flow.

BAOBAB TREES . . . in unison.

“We are MUIR. We are SIMPLE.

We each store 31,000 gallons of water. If humans would listen, we could teach them a great deal.”

HAWK

“I am PASTREADY.

Simple doesn’t mean easy.”

CEDAR TREE

“I am EXUPERY.

Do they understand the Earth needs the wisdom of the old of all species?”

An orange tabby cat walks to the edge of the pool and lies down, extending his paws, placing one on top of the other.

CAT

“I am GBL.

We are what we are, not always what we do, think, intend or communicate. We’re here to listen. Listening is not agreeing.”

ZEBRA

“I am ARC.

Humans put me in a cage. I hear them tell each other “You have to lie.” I don’t know what that means. I’d like to help.”

KANGAROO

“I am DREYFUS.

A lie is something a human says to gain advantage over another human, a technique to fool and deceive.”

OPOSSUM

“I am LOPEZ.

Do they lie to themselves? Doesn’t the truth always have the advantage? If a lie isn’t questioned, does it become the truth?”

QUAIL

“I am ZOLA.

The truth can be uncomfortable and make humans angry. Being willing to reappraise, challenge one’s thoughts and beliefs isn’t easy.”

QUAIL

“I am DRED.

“Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts.”

CUCKOO

“I am DIDEROT.

Too much information!”

ELK

“I am LISTER.

Their species seems to classify, categorize and label everything. They talk about different races. Is there more than one human race? ”

PANDA

“I am PING.

They’re conditioned by their geography, culture, language, concepts and experiences. They have difficulty respecting differences.”

TIBETAN ANTELOPE

“I am TERESA.

For some of their species, females are regarded as property, they are not educated and are punished for learning.”

BROWN BEAR

“I am SHOUMATOFF.

Do they enjoy their lives? Do they see beauty in the wind?”

CATERPILLAR

“I am McGUIRE.

Once I become a pupae, it takes nearly a year to become a butterfly, who will live less than a month.”

BUTTERFLY

“I am LORRAINE.

I’ll help. Listen deeply. Do humans believe some form of energy leaves their bodies when they die...that they continue?”

MINK

“I am TUBMAN.

Perhaps they think they can do and say anything without consequence. I believe they are changing slowly, but they are changing.”

HEDGEHOG

“I am HESSE.

The territory where I live was the first to put animal rights in what humans call a Constitution.”

ROOSTER

“I am LE NOTRE.

Where I come from, animals are recognized as protected property, living and sentient beings.”

GIRAFFE

“I am O’KEEFFE.

They may be changing but I’m not sure a human would be comfortable in an equal position to a non-human.”

TIGER

“I am BLAKE.

We’re all changing, When I found a young antelope next to his dead mother, I cared for the young one. Normally, I’d have killed it.”

SNOW LEOPARD

“I am MICHIO.

Humans think they are superior.”

Twin armadillos, cats, sheep, ferrets and deer stand together. The Armadillo speaks.

ARMADILLO

“I am PRIVATE.

They named stars in the heavens after us. We want to help.”

BLUE SHEEP

“I am DGUTS.

In our natural habitats we are free of disease. Are humans disease free?”

TURKEY

“I am DOBBS.

Why do they think they’re the only species who thinks, feels and suffers?”

SWALLOW

“I am PYTHAGORAS.

There’s hope for a better future. I’ll help.”

FALCON

“I am GERTRUDE.

We don’t possess the level of cruelty humans do. Their species is ripe for growth and change.”

DEER

“I am MATEO.

Many don’t notice things, aren’t even aware of the obvious.”

SLOTH

“I am ALBERT.

We are each unique. My head swivels two hundred and seventy degrees. Do humans believe kindness is a weakness or a strength?”

SLENDER LORIS

“I am SALINGER.

Being the center of attention is very important to many humans. For some, negative attention is better than no attention at all.”

ARABIAN BABBLER

“I am AHIMSA.

For many years, we had an agreement - animals would be killed, but with gratitude and thanks. There was a balance in the natural world.”

LYNX

“I am HUXLEY.

Each year, humans kill over fifty billion different animals for food. There are other choices and options to “Survival of the Fittest.”

CAT GBL

“We’re different than humans, not less. It’s time for us to decide.”