

## CHAPTER TEN SORROW

The quotation on the blackboard.

**Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks about changing himself. Leo Tolstoy**

Everyone is talking about the lawsuit. Neil - "Aren't we a part of nature, aren't we animals too?" Lapis - "My cousin, Irena, has been working with other law students from the University . . ." Shilli interrupts - "Neil and I went to the Chuchle Forest with her to meet Ayres and Victoria, an Orangutan and Chimpanzee. It was wonderful; using sign language, we understood each other."

When Marcus walks in, everyone immediately notices something different about him. Sadness. "You each played a role in why you were chosen to be here. There will be times when you'll be at a place where there are no signposts. No one will be there to help you decide the right thing to do. All you can do is your best. Tell the truth. Have the courage to speak up about things that are not right. But, when you do, know there will be consequences. Fear is a weapon many use for dominance and control. When you're afraid, it's hard to make good decisions, you do things you'd never do otherwise, and might regret later.

Don't underestimate yourselves. Remember what it feels like to love, to be home, to be strong. Consider other people's feelings. People who are mean, unkind, and selfish are that way because they're afraid. Sometimes it hurts to feel. Telling each other how you feel can be hard. If you're angry with someone, tell them. If you love someone, tell them. I love you all."

After a long pause, Marcus says something that surprises everyone. "Competition for power is at the heart of violence. Be prepared for the unexpected."

The man who said he loved animals suddenly comes into the room. Pulling a gun from his pocket, he shoots Marcus, turns and walks out.

At the center of a large clearing in the forest is a giant, gnarled Prometheus stump. A whistling flock of mourning doves swoops in, creating a closed circle around the tree. As far as an eye can see, the forest is crowded with animals, tree branches filled with birds. Three horses stand, neighing. A large white crow sits, cawing, on a high branch. Shilli, Neil, Emilie, Julian, Wayne, Asha, Samuel, Lapis and Irena stand together, Vaclev, Lebuse, Marc, Ayres the Orangutan and Victoria the Chimpanzee in the background.

As Shilli walks toward the circle, doves move to open an entrance. He walks to the tree trunk, placing a carved wooden piece in the center. Crying, "I never thanked you. I heard everything you said. I promise to find out who I am. You taught me how to play. I love you, Marcus." Emilie, trying not to cry, isn't succeeding. She walks to Shilli, taking his hand. "I never thanked you. I loved being with you, Marcus. I promise to speak up for myself." She places her lucky piece on the stump.

Samuel is overwhelmed with emotion. "I love you, Marcus. I never thanked you. I promise to be as good as my word." He adds his lucky carving. The always mischievous Neil, shaking his head left to right, is sobbing. "No. . . No. . ." his vulnerability obvious to everyone. "Marcus, I never thanked you. I promise to find out what I stand for. You listened, you were always gentle and sweet. I love you." When Neil isn't able to move, Shilli goes to him, putting a protective arm around his shoulder as they walk to the side.

Asha is crying. "You are the best teacher I ever had. I promise to always do my best. I love you." She walks away, remembers and turns back, putting her lucky piece with the others. Julian, putting down his lucky piece, "Thank you, Marcus. I will remember everything. I love you."

Lapis - "I never thanked you. I promise not to take myself too seriously. I love you." Irena - "I promise to remember. Slow and steady wins the race. Thank you, Marcus." Wayne walks quietly to the tree stump, adding his lucky piece.

When two puppies (a yellow Labrador and an English Bulldog) run into the clearing, both jumping onto the Prometheus stump, the carved pieces all fall to the ground, fitting together in a shape everyone instantly recognizes. A white crow swoops down, picks up one of the pieces in his beak, and flies away.