

CHAPTER THREE MARCUS

Walking back to the hotel at twilight, Julian and Wayne pass carts on the streets, children standing in line for free ice cream. Julian - "I can't believe this is happening." Wayne, "It's just begun."

Arriving at the Halcyon, going immediately to the conference room, Julian and Wayne join Asha, Emilie, Shilli, Neil and Samuel. White Crow and Mal'akh stand on top of the large oval table. Marcus sits by the door.

White Crow - "Mal'akh and I are leaving. Ayres the Orangutan and Victoria the Chimpanzee will be nearby in the Chuchle Forest. Marcus will meet with you every morning. Listen to him." Turning to Julian, "Did you send the message?" "Yes." Asha - "The people in charge know where we are." Mal'akh - "Have you told your parents what happened last year?" Everyone shakes their head *No*. "Tell them now. Ask them to come to the dining room. Marcus will be there." White Crow and Mal'akh walk through the lobby to the hotel's front entrance. Fly away.

Everyone's happy to be together again, shouting and laughing, "*We're all here!*" Emilie - "Shhh, Memo, Cool, Plato, where's Lapis, I mean Candid?" Shilli - "He's here. I saw him at the Opera House. This is my cousin, Neil. We were at a rehearsal when it happened." Asha - "Hi, Neil. I heard your birthday's on Independence Day, so's mine." Shilli - "We better talk to our parents right away." Samuel - "They're going to think we're crazy!" Emilie - "We are! Haven't you heard? Our brains aren't fully developed, why we do the wonderfully risky and reckless things we do." A butterfly flies into the room, landing on Neil's right shoulder.

An hour later, in the dining room, Shilli, Neil, Shilli's Mother and Aunt sit with Asha and her Father, the butterfly still on Neil's shoulder, Julian and his Mother at another table with Wayne and Samuel. Julian's Mother - "Where are you staying, Wayne?" "At a hostel." "Would you like to stay here with us?" Wayne - "Thank you, Mrs. Emerson, I'd like that." "How about you, Samuel?" "I'm staying at the Church with a friend of my Uncle." Emilie, her mother and stepfather share a table with Lapis, his aunt, uncle, cousin Irena, and new friend, Nicholas.

When Marcus walks in, jumping to the large side table, the room is suddenly quiet. “There is no reason to be afraid. We know your children, we have a history with them. Tell them your ideas. We welcome your help. I’d like to speak with them alone now.” Leaving the dining room, everyone starts talking at once, “Did you hear what I did?” “Was a dog communicating with us?”

Once the adults had left, Shilli, Neil, Julian, Wayne, Asha, Samuel, Emilie and Lapis move their chairs to sit around the table. Marcus - “Your meeting each other was not a coincidence. A year ago, we asked each of you for your help.” Pausing, Marcus lies down, before he continues.

“People count on things being predictable. Change can be scary. Start each day by finding a quiet place. Sit and be still for a few minutes. Don’t think of anything. Don’t let new experiences overwhelm you. You’re going to learn things about yourself that might surprise you. The first thing to remember when you’re afraid is to slow down.

You have to have a plan. The people in charge of the territory will have one. Stay together tonight. Talk about what you each do best. Find a need and fill it. We’ll meet in the Conference room every morning.” The next day everyone arrived to see a quotation written on the blackboard. “To thine own self be true, and it shall follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.” William Shakespeare.

Marcus begins - “All of you are strong. You have each other. You’ll discover you have resources and resilience you never knew you had. Pay attention. Listen to what others are saying. Look directly at the person you’re talking with. Many will be frustrated, afraid, even angry. There’s nothing you can’t deal with together.”

Emilie - “Even though Denmark’s small, we use more candles than any other country in the world. My Mother knows a lot about honey bees and their hives, how to make candles from beeswax. She can teach everyone. That’s our plan.”

Lapis - “ My parents aren’t here, I’m visiting my aunt and uncle. They don’t think I should be involved. When all of you hear music, I hear colors; it’s called Synesthesia. I’m hoping some groups here for the Music Festival will be interested to work together on communicating with color.”

Samuel - “For anyone who needs glasses, I’m going to make pinholes, show people how easy they are to make.”

Asha - “My father’s an environmental engineer. He’s going to meet with the Minister of the Environment to exchange ideas, change the gas pressure through aerodynamic tunnels, get the gaslights working. Let’s not forget what White Crow said last year. Acknowledge our mistakes, don’t waste time denying them. We can learn from each other’s mistakes.” Julian starts laughing. “I was supposed to phone a friend in a different state at an exact time. I forgot they were in another time zone. Won’t do that again!” Shilli - “That’s nothing. I thought it was obvious CH meant China. Who knew it means Switzerland?”

Wayne. - “Lots of runners are in Prague for the Marathon. We can take messages outside the city.”

Marcus - “I’ve noticed that humans like to play games. Have you ever played a game where your opponent was a beginner who didn’t know the rules and strategies? When that person made a foolish move, what did you feel knowing you’d probably win the game, not because of your skill, but because the other player didn’t play that well? Everyone’s a beginner now, learning how to think and ask questions, not how to memorize answers. There’s nothing you can’t do!”

Every night, scratching at a different door in the hotel, Marcus curled up on the bed of one of his young friends.