

CHAPTER FIVE EMILIE DENMARK

There was to be a trial. Emilie would defend the human race.

Emilie's experience in Prague and Dresden had altered how she saw the world. It was obvious to everyone how much she'd changed. At the same time she'd become more serious, she also laughed more. A shy young girl transformed into a confident alpha female. Now, when she saw what she wanted, she went after it.

All her new friends were in constant touch. Knowing a trial could be years away, everyone sent the same messages. "I miss you all." "When will we all be together again?" On Christmas Eve in Prague, Gentil had whispered in her ear, "You will defend the human race. We will help you." She didn't begin to understand the enormity of what was about to begin.

In Prague, Marcus, the Labrador, had chosen a different room in the hotel every night to sleep. Whenever he came to her room, Emilie loved to brush his coat, always putting the hairs from the brush into her pocket. Arriving home in Denmark, when she found Marcus' hairs in all of her pockets. she put them into a small pillow. When she was little, she'd never had a favorite blanket or doll to take to bed, but now, almost eighteen years old, when going to sleep, she hugged the pillow. She knew she'd always carry Marcus within her, she'd never forget everything he'd taught her. This way, at least for a little while, she felt closer to him. Marcus' devotion was something neither Shilli, Julian, Asha nor Samuel had ever known or felt before from an animal.

Gentil and Chopper, the two puppies who had mysteriously appeared at Marcus' funeral, never left Emilie's side. Prague to Dresden to Denmark. In the months after arriving at their new home, Chopper grew, almost doubling his weight, while Gentil stayed the same. The veterinarian had no explanation, except to say "He's perfectly healthy." That evening Gentil jumped onto Emilie's bed, whispering to her. "It's my choice. I like being a puppy."

Emilie was aware she was getting more and more meticulous about things. She promised herself to concentrate on making some changes: not interrupting when other people were talking, learning to be more patient. Neither would be easy. Interrupting was a terrible habit, rude and selfish. Her efforts to convince herself that, since she already knew how the person she was talking with would finish their sentence, why not interrupt and save everyone time, fell flat. Patience. Time moved very slowly for Emilie. Sitting in a park, she was sure she'd been there for an hour when, in fact, only fifteen minutes had passed.

If she was to defend the human race, of all the things that needed to be changed in the world, which was the most important for her? She thought about it every day. After a few months, she was no closer to an answer.

Leaving school one day, an orange tabby cat stood by the gate. There was nothing random about this, they had found one another. Emilie asked “Are you all right?” “My name is Penny. May I come home with you?”

Emilie was the favorite baby sitter in her neighborhood. The children loved to play games with her, listen to her stories. She was aware that, for a child to deal with the world was far bigger and more oppressive than for an adult. Her next door neighbor’s son, Thorben, was her favorite. One evening when she arrived, he was crying “I won’t eat trees!” It seems he didn’t like broccoli. Laughing to herself, Emilie remembered the first time (five years old) she’d been to a restaurant. When she was served hearts of palm, she’d told her parents “I refuse to eat a tree’s heart!” The waiter quickly brought a replacement, something she’d never before seen. Star Fruit.

The following week, another neighbor asked her to babysit, not for her child, but for her mother who wasn’t feeling well. When Emilie arrived, her neighbor was in a hurry to leave, “I’m going to a lecture on how to take care of some one who’s ill, be back around 10 o’clock.” Emilie took a deep breath. Marcus’s advice came to mind. “Speak up when you think something is not right.” Speak up she did. “Your mother’s not feeling well. She’s right here. Why don’t you take care of her instead of going to a lecture?” The woman looked at her as if she was crazy, shook her head and left. After that, Emilie chose not to take any more babysitting jobs from this neighbor.

The trial was always on Emilie’s mind. One night, as she was finishing her school work, Chopper ran (actually pranced) into her room, followed by Gentil the Labrador puppy and Penny the cat. Chopper started to pull at her shoelaces. “I come from a long line of champions. Like you, I’m amiable but stubborn, resolute and tenacious. Be courageous. Ask for help!” Gentil and Penny nodded.

A few weeks later, Emilie, preparing dinner, put the muffins into the oven, then started to clean the strawberries for dessert (cutting off the top leaf, scooping out the small round center spot that was sour) when the phone rang. It was her friend from school. They talked and talked. When she went back to the kitchen, the muffins had burned. Luckily, the local bakery was still open. As she left, Penny the cat stood directly in her path at the front door. “Ask for help!”

As Emilie entered the bakery, one of the clerks shouted “Pickup for gbl.” Those were her father’s initials, Gamel Berg Larsen. She asked the cashier. “Why did you just say GBL?” “Someone just ordered a ginger bread lego - gbl.” Legos, one of the most popular toys in the world, were made in Denmark. One week a year, the bakery would make custom order ginger bread legos in various shapes. Emilie bought some bread for dinner and left the shop, thinking about her father, a pilot who died in a plane crash when she was seven.

The noise of a jet flying overhead caught her attention. Leaving a straight line contrail in the sky, it then circled back, leaving another contrail making the point of an arrow.

Directly below the arrow was parked a Vestas Wind System truck. The ultimate sign! One which she hadn’t even asked for. This would be her issue in court. The environment and climate change had to be addressed, carbon reduced in the atmosphere. From that day forward, Emilie was far more comfortable asking for help, understanding it wasn’t a weakness.

Denmark was a pioneer in developing commercial wind power. Nearly fifty percent of the wind turbines around the world were produced by Denmark. In 2008, wind power provided nineteen percent of electricity production in Denmark. The Danish government hoped to increase that to fifty percent by the year 2020.

Emilie thought about the many conversations she and Shilli had about their different countries. Emilie knew nothing about Namibia. Shilli - “My country is very new. We won independence from South Africa in 1990. We’re one of the first nations in the world to include protection for the environment in our constitution.” As Shilli was of Namibia, Emilie was proud of Denmark, the first country in the world to legalize same sex marriage. Emilie couldn’t wait to tell Shilli what she’d decided, to ask him if he’d made his decision yet.

Since she was little, Emilie had no sense of direction. To remedy this, she began asking for signs to guide her. Never once had she not received an answer. As she grew older, the signs she asked for were not only related to direction. “What’s the best thing for me to do?” “Which should I chose?” “What have I not allowed myself to hear?”

She marveled at the different ways an answer would appear: a license plate, a street name with meaning, a song playing over the phone when she was put on hold, a playhouse advertisement (The Postman Cometh) - a letter received that day with her answer.

Emilie sent a message to her new friend Julian, telling him what had happened that day, asking what he thought it meant. That morning, iridescent markings left by snails on her window sill spelled out *Samuel*. That afternoon, Penny the cat jumped on her computer’s keypad - the word *Samuel* appeared on the monitor.

She ended her note, “Like you, Julian, I no longer believe in coincidences!”