

CHAPTER EIGHT SAMUEL LEBANON

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

Arriving in Lebanon from Prague, Samuel knew that everything had changed. His decision not to enter the church had nothing to do with his faith, everything to do with church politics. When he'd contemplated entering the Seminary, he thought a great deal about human behavior. How can humans treat one another so badly? He found his answer. Many people were afraid. It was all about fear.

Samuel felt he was responsible for Marcus' murder. He knew something was wrong with the man who claimed he was an animal activist. When the subject had come up in the morning meeting, all he said was "I usually follow my instincts." Now, he had to deal with his guilt, despair and anguish. He didn't know how.

He had made a promise to be as good as his word. When he had important words to say, he'd said nothing. Returning home, he was numb, incapable of feeling anything, asking himself over and over, "Why didn't I speak up?"

It seemed to Samuel that the intelligent and perceptive animals he'd spent time with enjoyed their lives far more than many humans. Talking with Lapis about Synesthesia, he decided he would become a teacher.

One day, on his morning walk through the vineyards, he remembered something. Over a year and a half ago, he'd been reading in the library of the Albemarle Inn when, Snug, the three legged cat, jumped into his lap. "No matter how scared, or tired, or ill you are, no matter how lost, or confused, or desperate you become, no matter how lonely, depressed or cranky you feel, just do what you can with what you have, from right where you are, it will always be enough."

Seeing smoke in the distance, he started running. A house, roof, windows and doors, was totally engulfed in flames, a young boy standing outside screaming. "Help me! Somebody, help me! My dog, Argos, is inside. He can't get out!" Samuel ran into the house, the dense smoke making it impossible to see, difficult to breathe. Through the intensity of the flames he started yelling "Argos, where are you?" He heard a whimpering in the distance. Samuel took off his shirt, picked Argos up to cover him, then turned to find a way out. At the moment the roof began to collapse, Argos jumped from his arms.

Samuel died before he arrived at the hospital. The news of his death spread as quickly as the fire that had killed him. Everyone heard but no one believed. His funeral would be in five days.

In Denmark, Emilie went to the local airport to talk to the pilots who worked for Vestas Wind Systems. If her friends could get to a central European location, would Vestas fly them to Lebanon in time for the funeral? They would. For the past several weeks, Emilie had been speaking with Vestas about the upcoming trial, asking their advice about Denmark's environmental hopes for the future.

Samuel's family had graciously arranged for everyone to stay at their house. Emilie, Asha and Lapis had never been to a funeral. With no pews in the Cathedral, everyone stood. Magnificent paintings of the Saints covered the walls. As the Bishop, dressed in a white mantle, began the solemn service in Arabic, prayers, chants and incense, Argos, the golden retriever, walked slowly up the aisle, lying down next to the casket.

There was a short memorial service at the grave site. "May his memory be eternal." When a white crow flew overhead, dropping what he carried in his beak, no one could believe what they saw. It was the lucky piece Samuel had left at Marcus' grave.

Everyone returned to Samuel's parents house for the Mercy meal. On the drive from the cemetery, Shilli spoke first. "When Matheus and I were little, we used to put coins on the train tracks and hide in the bushes to wait for the train. It was the flattened coins that first gave me the idea to carve wooden lucky pieces." Julian - "Do you remember. . . at the end of Marcus' funeral a white crow flew in, picked up one of the pieces and flew away?" Asha - "I remember. Shilli, did you carve our lucky pieces so they'd all fit together to make a design?" Shilli - "No. When the puppies knocked over the pieces at the funeral, I had no idea when joined together, they'd create Marcus' silhouette." Lapis - "Samuel told me he often knew about things before they happened. Do you think he knew?" Neil - "Samuel had premonitions all the time. He didn't know what to do with the information so he kept it to himself."

Arriving back at the house, Julian asked Samuel's parents if he might play the piano. Everyone sat quietly in the living room as he played *The Moonlight Sonata*. When he finished, Lapis sang, actually whispered, *Holy is the Man Free*. No one could hold back their tears.

At the Mercy meal, everyone talked about their love for Samuel. His favorite expression was "From your mouth to God's ear." His wonderful laugh. Shilli - "He told me once that laughing is good for our health, our hearts, our immune system, laughing helps when we're in pain or stressed. Julian - "We can all follow Samuel's example. Be as good as our word and laugh every day."

Afterward, everyone sat in the kitchen talking. Neil - "Last year, when I said to Samuel 'I'll die before you' he told me 'Don't be so sure.'" Shilli - "When I thought my brother was dead, I started talking to him. All I had to do was listen." Emilie - "I wonder if he knew what would happen. Remember Marcus explaining how our cells have memories, how things that hurt us in the past can reappear when new things happen that are similar?"

Asha - "When Marcus was killed, Samuel blamed himself. He wrote me that sometimes he couldn't feel anything, he was just numb." Emilie turns to Shilli. "When we first met and got to know each other, you told me how you blamed yourself for your brother's death." Shilli - "I remember. You blamed yourself for your father's death. We told each other the same thing. "It wasn't your fault." Maybe, if we'd shared our stories with Samuel, it would have helped. If only we'd known how he felt."

Neil - "Samuel told me he'd done something awful when he was little, he didn't know how to forget it." Emilie - "Samuel would never do anything awful." Neil - "Someone he thought was a friend had, on purpose, told him something that wasn't true. When Samuel repeated what he'd been told to some other people, something terrible happened. He never told me what it was."

A knock on the kitchen door. The four attorneys had all been at the funeral and grave site. Jane Green - "May we come in?" Mark Osprey - "We never met Samuel. The love surrounding him says everything." Raoul Lapin - "We'd like to ask your opinion. Samuel was to be named in the lawsuit. Would you like Lapis to take his place?" Lapis stood up, shouting angrily - "NOBODY can take Samuel's place!" "I'm sorry. Of course." "Emilie - "Can we talk about it and tell you tomorrow?" Jane Green - "Certainly. Good night."

Shilli- "Lapis, what do you think?" Lapis - "I don't know. It's not always a good idea to make important decisions so quickly. My temper's caused me to do things I regretted later." Asha - "If Marcus were here, I think he'd say to be true to ourselves, whatever our opinion." Shilli - "He also say we all have to agree."

Lapis, shaking his head. "Absurdities are everywhere. If we're talking about what needs to be different, how about changing the impossible and have non-profit oil companies, weapon manufacturers and pharmaceutical companies? Samuel and I talked about everything. He sang before he could talk. We both thought that music probably predated language. The brain receives information faster through music than with words. Samuel was fascinated by my Synesthesia. We spent one night laughing about which evokes the most memories, smell or sound. He told me he wanted to be a teacher."

Nicholas was sitting quietly. It was a very different Nicholas than anyone remembered. Having repressed the memory of witnessing his parents' death in an automobile accident, he was healing, slowly becoming more confident and outgoing. Like Lapis, he had Synesthesia. Living in Prague with his Aunt and Uncle, he wanted to do whatever he could to help his new friends. Having spent time with Irina, Ayres and Victoria had opened his eyes. And, he was smitten.

Nicholas - "So, have any of you decided?" Emilie - "Climate and environment." Julian - "Global education, literacy. Education should be free." Asha - "Women's rights." Shilli - "Frequencies. Changes in medicine."

Matheus - "What about violence? Biological and cyber warfare? The abolition of nuclear weapons? The possibility of nuclear famine? Shelter and housing?" Emilie - "Slow down! Remember what Marcus told us. We have to take things one step at a time. What needs to be changed will happen, over and over again, each time with higher pain and suffering, until it's finally addressed with a solution. All we each can do is our best."

Neil speaks up. I'm not involved with the trial, neither is Matheus, Wayne, Irina or Nicholas. Like you, we want to do everything we can to change things. I'm going to work with graphotherapeutics, handwriting exercises." Wayne - "I'd like to try to engage the elderly around the world. It's important we pass on their wisdom to future generations." Matheus - "For me, it's hunger. If you don't eat you die." Nicholas - "Where's Irina?" Emilie - "She went to talk to the lawyers."

Nicholas - "What about the lawyer's question. What do you think, Lapis?" Before he could answer, Emilie interrupted. "We've all done stupid things, taken risks, not thinking about the consequences. Now our ideas will be challenged. If we're going to defend the human race, we have to grow up, fast! Be responsible for our decisions. Playing it safe is over!" Looking at Lapis. "Remember when you stole that car? That was reckless." Lapis, angrily - "Yes, I tried to be sorry, but I wasn't. You should talk. You think taking off in a plane with no training wasn't reckless?" Emilie - "It was, but look at the consequences. We now have people on our side to help and advise us, represent us in court." Lapis - "You're lucky the consequences were good." Emilie - "It wasn't luck. It was meant to be." Asha - "They're just five of us. We can't fight strength on strength. With ingenuity, I know we can outsmart any opponent."

Lapis - "I've heard how you all talk about animals and the natural world. No animal has ever communicated with me. If you all agree, I'll like to join you at the trial."

As Lapis finished his sentence, Argos walked into the kitchen, sat down in front of him, looking him directly in the eyes.

