

BOOK SIX CHAPTER ONE EQUINOX

It was twilight as the Vestas Wind Systems plane approached the airfield in Paro. Having arrived the day before, Paul Osprey, Jane Green, and Raoul Lapin were anxiously waiting to greet their young friends. In twenty four hours the day of silent thanks would begin, celebrating and strengthening humanity's connection to the natural world. The Kingdom of Bhutan, one of the safest places on Earth for that world, where gross national happiness was more important than gross national product, was a perfect place to be.

Aware that his guests had already spent time in the country's capital, Thimphu, King Wangchuck had graciously arranged for everyone to stay at a traditional two story wooden house a short walk from Paro's main street. As was normal in this magical kingdom, the house's woodwork was intricately painted with designs of animals, flower and birds. A large family room and kitchen were on the main floor, the bedrooms upstairs.

Less than an hour after arriving, walking into town to watch the Dance of the Black Hats, elaborately costumed dancers with reverberating drums driving out all negative forces, Shilli, Emilie, Julian, Asha and Lapis never imagined how powerfully they'd be impacted.

The day of silent thanks for the natural world was a time few would ever forget. Whatever a person's circumstances, for twenty four hours there was no pain and no fear, only gratitude and hope.

The following morning, sitting outside in the garden exchanging memories of Rene Hibou, his sudden death still raw, no one was startled when a Rock Eagle Owl began circling overhead, hibou the French word for owl. The bird's large penetrating eyes, a circle of feathers surrounding each eye, delivered two messages. Not only was he watching over them, but reminding them of their promise to accomplish the changes they believed necessary. What the five of them had experienced in the past few years had changed the way they looked at the world, touching them, profoundly, in markedly different ways, the timing of joy and healing unique for each person. Humans, like snowflakes, no two alike.

When the young woman she was meeting to discuss watching over baby Samuel introduced herself, Emilie couldn't speak. Finally, after several seconds - "I'm Emilie Larsen," purposefully using her maiden, not married, name.

When she was seven, having seen an advertisement in a magazine, Emilie began sending her monthly allowance to an organization that helped children in need. When she received a picture of a young Greek girl, Adrasteia Nicolo, she wrote her a letter. Disappointed with no response, she continued to send help (and some of her favorite books) for the next seven years. Taking a few moments to catch her breath, Adrasteia, on the verge of tears, whispered "If it weren't for you, I might not be here today. Thank you." Lapis immediately stepped in to put everyone at ease. "I'm Samuel's father. What a beautiful name you have." Adrasteia - "In Greek mythology, Adrasteia was a nymph who cared for the infant Zeus."

The three attorneys, Jane Green, Paul Osprey and Raoul Lapin, in Bhutan for their annual working vacation, were not only advocates, but also friends and advisers. That night, during their first dinner together, what Paul Osprey said was yet another totally unexpected shock. "We've been approached by someone who wants to buy your interspecies patent." Shilli - "Who?" "They've chosen to remain anonymous." Asha - "How did anyone even know about it?" Jane - "Patents are public record." Julian - "Didn't you file the papers just a few months ago? It's why we're here, to work on the corridor, portal, network, whatever we're going to call it." Emilie - "Isn't JASLEMS a non profit?" Raoul - "That doesn't stop someone from making an offer to purchase your patent." Paul - "Is anyone interested to know what the offer was?" All five shake their heads, "No." Shilli was in disbelief. "We were up all night talking about this last year. The animals chose us. We agreed, gave our word." Julian - "The patent isn't about profit; it's not just about humans."

Emilie - “So many awful things happened during the trial. Do you think the same thing will start now?” Jane - “What you’re doing is extraordinarily complicated, they’ll be serious challenges, the innovation you’re talking about won’t happen overnight, it’ll take many years. You’ll be judged by what you are doing, criticism and opposition will be part of the process. Witnessing how animals communicate and collaborate intimately with one another changed how we each think everything works. Remember, it’s possible you’ll make some bad choices, we all do. Embrace the complexity of what you are doing and the opportunity of crisis. Welcome failure. It’s a great teacher. Many times it’s our mistakes that lead to wonderful discoveries.”

Paul - “You’re certainly not reinforcing what people already believe; some accept change easier than others. We’ll always be here to support and help you any way we can. You have the personal information for everyone who has contacted us since the trial, they all want to help and lend a hand. You can trust them.”

Raoul - “When we asked if you wanted us to invest your Nobel Peace Prize money, you all said “Yes.” Lapis - “Money makes money.” Emilie - “When I was little, I picked vegetables from the garden for our dinner. My grandfather asked me what happened if there were more ripe vegetables than we needed that night? When I told him I took them to the neighbors, he smiled. “Never forget, Emilie, like vegetables, money is a form of energy. Once you’ve figured out what you need, share the rest. Don’t keep increasing what you think you need.”

Raoul - “Here are the most recent statements of your investments.” Paul - “Jane, Rene, Raoul and I have been friends for many years, been through a lot together, often finding ourselves on opposite sides in court. Nothing has ever seriously tested our friendship. The five of you will probably be working as a team years from now. Time to get some sleep.”

For the next few weeks, work would begin after breakfast, continue until dinner with a two hour break for lunch and a hike. Rukmini would watch after baby Sana, Adrasteia Nicolo would care for baby Samuel.

As they had during the trial in the Hague, Shilli, Emilie, Julian, Asha and Lapis, began each work session with a short meditation.

The first issue. After their experience in the forest, was the priority inter species or inter galaxy? Unanimous - the focus would be the interspecies corridor. An interplanetary system was already in place. Choosing a Board of Directors for JALEMS was easy: Paul Osprey, Jane Green, Raoul Lapin and the Admiral.

When Shilli put a picture of Marcus, the beloved yellow Labrador, on the conference table, everyone was instantly lost in thought. Shilli - "Marcus' unwavering ethics are our inspiration. Remember one of the last things he told us? "There'll come a time when you'll put into action every skill you've ever learned to begin working as a team." Asha, wearing her signature white cotton pants and flower in her hair, left the table to go to the kitchen.

Julian - "Marcus liked the expression "being comfortable in your own skin," I remember him saying "I've seen how often you express what others are thinking but hesitate to say. You're going to do daring and innovative things!" Emilie - "Thanks to him we know there are other options when faced with false choices."

Asha returned with a large pot of ginger cinnamon tea. "The joy Marcus radiated was contagious. He ignited each of our unique passions, long before we even knew ourselves." Shilli - "Where do we start?" Lapis - "Let's each explain our ideas. Julian - "That worked before. All our disconnected facts somehow fit together. Who wants to go first?"

Shilli got up from the table, walked to the open window, a morning mist revealing the landscape's unique colors - "I'm ready." Shilli had changed. With all he and his twin, Matheus, had been through, instead of edgy, he was confident, self assured, and loved to laugh, the Shilli everyone remembered meeting in Australia.

Shilli - "Probably obvious, but doesn't it make sense to start with the data already collected, about dolphins, whales, apes, elephants? Humans consider some species more intelligent than others. Lapis - "That could change."

Emilie - "Just thinking about what we're doing, finding a way to bridge the gap, so they can communicate in their own way, is amazingly energizing."

Shilli - "It wasn't until reading the file on dolphin's cognition and communication that I learned dolphins have been granted personhood, figuring out the right voice to protect them is the next step." Lapis - "Maybe they'll tell us themselves."

Julian - "At least there's now a precedent, lawyers can represent them." Shilli - "Dolphins and whales have a complex and very sophisticated language of frequencies. Their chatter, voice prints, signifiers, are far above human hearing. Scientists are giving words to certain sounds, trying to find out the meaning."

Lapis - "Whales use frequencies to communicate for hundreds of miles. The shipping industry not only pollutes above the water, but also, using the same frequencies as whales, is doing it underwater. Acoustic pollution."

Smiling, looking directly at Julian, Shilli continued. "My learning how sound waves healed injured horses was a huge help for Matheus after his kidnaping. Certainly wasn't a coincidence. Keeping up with all of this isn't easy."

Julian - "The data analysis is overwhelming, and it's going to get worse. Ultrasonic communication. We can't hear frequencies under a certain level, animals can hear above the range we can. We have no idea how many humans think other species are silent, when the opposite is true. Rats, mice, torrent frogs, hummingbirds, warblers are all communicating, we just can't hear them. Why don't we divide up the files? Each of us can work on a specific issue until we're together again."

After a productive day of work, discussing one idea after another, finishing each other's sentences now the norm, having skipped lunch, everyone was ready for dinner and relaxation. Shilli - "Am I the only one who loves Bhutan's chilli cheese?" Over the past year, Julian had grown so fast, he towered over everyone in the room. Going into the kitchen and coming back with five spoons, Asha asks - "Are you going to do a magic trick?" Julian - "No, you are! I learned about this at school. It's nothing new. Many people through history have talked about it, miners trapped underground to explorers in the Arctic to..." Emilie interrupts - "to five people in Bhutan finding a way to talk with animals." Everyone laughs. Julian - "It's called the Ganzfeld Effect."

Julian - "We have a while before dinner. Lie on your back on the carpet and put the spoons over your eyes. Stay quiet and be patient. Keep your eyes open. You're giving your brain a vacation, your visual cortex will slowly start to search for stimuli. Don't worry, doing this won't harm you or your brain in any way. You'll be amazed at what you see."

After forty five minutes, the conversation at dinner was heated. "Lapis - I know about sensory deprivation, but had no idea. Nothing scary about it. I saw things I've never seen before, patterns whizzing by." Shilli - "Floating colors and shapes." Asha - "With the images coming from our brains, it's no surprise we each saw different things." Julian - "Like snowflakes and spider webs, no two alike."

For the first two days after arriving in Paro, their meals had been very heavily spiced with red chilli peppers, normal for Bhutan. After asking if it was possible to cut back a bit on the peppers, the next day everything was too bland, Tonight's dinner the perfect balance. Asha and Rukmini's favorite dish was, no surprise, the Indian Curry, Shilli the nutty tasting red rice with a salad, Emilie rice noodles, chicken with tomatoes, Julian and Shilli - the cheese spiced with chilli, the spicier the better.

Asha - "Have any of you told any of your friends what we're doing?" Emilie - "Just my parents." Julian - "Same with me, my parents. and Wayne, my best friend." Shilli - Probably best to keep it that way. Even though people seem to be ready for anything these days, all the changes in technology and globalization, I'm not sure people are ready for what we're doing. . ." Lapis interrupts "The difference between fantasy and reality is getting a little thin."

