

BOOK SIX CHAPTER 7 SHILLI NAMIBIA

When Cellie, Matheus and Neil saw Shilli get off the plane at the Walvis Bay Airport, his skin a deep red, they didn't know what to think. As his mother's sister embraced him, he lowered his head and started to sob. Arriving at the car, when a snail on the ground communicated "Did you know what glitter was before we showed you?" Shilli, uncharacteristically, lifted his right foot and smashed the cone shaped shell. Arriving home, seeing Escher waiting, Shilli picked up a small stick, throwing it at him. The cat dodged it and ran away.

The attorneys had been in touch with the local authorities, successful in keeping what had happened from both the local and national high profile press.

For the next week, Shilli, Matheus and Neil were inseparable, discussing every detail of what had happened in Bhutan. The explanation of Shilli's red skin would be "a temporary allergic reaction." No one was surprised to learn that Emilie, Julian, Asha and Lapis' skin colors had also changed. Neil - "What did you write on the back of the wall panel?" Shilli - "What Marcus always told us. If it is not right, do not do it; if it is not true, do not say it."

Shilli stared at his twin. "I can't imagine what you went through with the kidnaping. I'm scared and don't care about appearing weak. I'm a coward." Neil reminded everyone to concentrate on Caesura's message. "Your parents will be all right." Escher ran into the room, jumping into Shilli's lap. "Trust Caesura."

Returning from a hike on the dunes, Matheus and Neil helped Shilli plant the seeds he'd been given, choosing a spot under the palm tree in the front garden.

Not certain he could concentrate on anything, including the Interspecies Corridor, with classes about to begin at the University of Namibia Medical School, Shilli had a decision to make.

The next afternoon, on his way home from his daily walk along the docks, talking to himself as usual, his crossed hands with fingers entwined held behind him, he met two old friends from high school. When they invited him to their place, he didn't think twice. Cellie and Neil were more than concerned when Shilli didn't come back that night. Matheus had left in the late afternoon for the nearby farm where he lived and worked with Elcey (his mother's best friend) and her husband, Henrico.

The next morning, arriving home both disheveled and woozy, Shilli was on the defensive. "Everyone I know drinks, what's wrong with that? All I wanted was to get away from the pain" Cellie, compassionate as always, hugged her nephew. "Paul Osprey asked you to phone him." After a long conversation, Shilli asked if it was possible he begin classes at medical school the following semester. Paul Osprey said he would make the arrangements.

Shilli began to wonder about his ability to feel. In the past, one thing after another after another happening in rapid succession, his behavior was to withdraw his emotions, stop feeling in order to deal with what had to be done. When he started to pick at himself again, pulling small scabs on this leg until they bled, Escher, was there to help. "Stop that. Expressing your emotions is good but not that way." Shilli - "It's getting to me. I don't understand why Matheus doesn't feel the same. We're twins. After all the time I've been so lucky to talk with animals, it's Matheus who isn't afraid now. After so many awful things happening to him, he's fine. I don't know how to erase everything." Escher - "It's not simple. I'll be with you."

Shilli dearly loved Escher the cat. Never before had he depended on him as he did now. Wherever Shilli went, Escher followed, walks on the beach, hikes on the dunes, he was constant, always listening. "Escher - "You made a mistake. Do what you can to make things right. Cats know how to hide our pain. That night, cuddling up to Shilli, Escher reminded him to read the grant proposals. "Others are depending on you to keep your promise."

Wayne and the elderly people and animals he lived with had narrowed the list to ten, five under fifteen years of age, five over seventy five years. The two winners would not only do extensive research but also work together to invent a game to spread awareness about the interspecies interface. After reading the applications, Shilli made his decision.

As long as he could remember, when facing any doubt or problem, Shilli was drawn to the harbor. Whether in the cool morning fog, or the late afternoon sun sparkling on the water, walking on the beach calmed his mind.

It was at the waterfront, one particular stretch of beach, where it all began. As a young boy, walking on the sand, he heard his twin Matheus' voice (who he believed was dead) "Do what you love." Picking up a piece of driftwood, he took it home and began carving. People had come from miles away to buy his unique printing blocks. It was on the same stretch of beach, years later, that a white pelican landed directly in his path. "We need your help. Learn about frequencies." He remembered the moment well. In an instant he had gone from a logical thinker to an idealist.

Walking past the main dock where his father worked, he clearly heard his parents' voices. "Don't be afraid. We're all right." A large pelican flying overhead communicated "Mangretti."

Having heard the current debate about whether killing rhinoceroses helps conservation, he knew he needed a change of scene. Shilli took a temporary job at Mangetti National Park.