

BOOK SEVEN CHAPTER 5 SHILLI NAMIBIA

Learning his parents had been kidnaped because of the work he was doing, Shilli crumbled. Now, with his mother and father safely home, he faced a decision. Understanding his continued involvement with the interspecies internet could endanger those he loved, should he continue or withdraw and concentrate on his medical studies? Before leaving Bhutan, knowing another outage was to come, when and for how long still an unknown, Shilli, Emilie, Julian, Asha and Lapis, a lasting bond now formed between them, had discussed different plans of action. While in Bhutan, their skin colors had been changed, Shilli's now a bright red. The objective, that they each stand out, was successful.

Arriving in Walvis Bay from Bhutan, Shilli took a temporary job at Mangetti National Park, Not certain he could concentrate on anything, including the interspecies corridor, he questioned the current debate whether killing rhinoceroses helps conservation. Spending time with a mother rhinoceros and her calf, the answer was clear. No! After a few months, realizing that his coming to the park was running away, he returned home to begin classes at the University of Namibia Medical School. When the outage began, organizing daily meetings for the residents of Walvis Bay was top of his list. Each gathering would begin with a short message from an animal.

Matheus, Shilli's identical twin, lived and worked at a nearby farm with Elcey (his mother's best friend) and her husband, Henrico. Having been kidnaped and held prisoner in Prague, Matheus always expected the worse. Sound therapy had helped as had handwriting exercises, but he couldn't seem to get pass being suspicious when anything out of the ordinary happened. The first day of the outage, as he was walking back from the barn, he saw a hummingbird circle ahead of him, then turn to sit on the tip of a bird of paradise. "Someone wants to meet you."

A white tabby cat with one blue eye, one gold, walked toward Matheus. "I am not a castaway, I am SALUBRIOUS. A human hurt me, kept me locked up. Every time someone approaches I run away, expecting them to hurt me again.

Knowing how invaluable Escher the cat had been in the healing process for his twin brother Shilli, Matheus looked at the cat, smiling. "Let's stay with each other. A wise dog once told me that laughing is healthy." SALUBRIOUS started to chuckle. Matheus joined in until they were both laughing uncontrollably. The tabby jumped into Matheus arms. "Humans laugh so many different ways, some even sound like other species."

The new friends decided they would send messages to each another using their new secret language of laughter. A low pitched sound meant one thing, high pitch another, the different number of pulses each had a different meaning. Once the outage began, Matheus and Salubrious decided to leave the farm and return to Walvis Bay.

Shilli, Matheus and Neil talked through the night. Neil - "Thanks to Marcus, we know the parts of our brains that process impulse control aren't fully developed." Matheus - "During the last outage, no one got sick. Do you think that will happen again? Is each person's health dependent on something we don't understand?" Shilli - "I don't know." Neil - "I've lived with Progeria longer than any other person on earth. My doctor told me he thinks that epidemics could end up killing far more humans than bombs ever could. I'd never heard the term bio terrorism before. Lots of people think time isn't on the side of the human species. I don't believe that." Matheus - "I don't either. This latest outage will give people a chance to slow down and think, to notice, look inside themselves." Shilli - "Remember what Marcus said. It isn't complicated as many people think. Humans have a responsibility for one another."

Anxious and frightened, hundreds of people gathered on the beach near the promenade and lagoon. Shilli, knowing well what he was about to say about his appearance wasn't true, was the first to speak. This was not the time to explain the past three years, including what had happened in Bhutan. "My name is Shilli Louwrens, My twin brother and I were born here; I'm a medical student. My skin is bright red because of an allergic reaction. This isn't the first outage. We don't know how long it will last. Do you think it's a good idea for all of us to meet here every day?" The answer was a resounding "Yes."

Before Shilli could continue, a light gray bird with a short white tale and black wings, a Nutcracker, flew to sit on his shoulder. I am DeLaROCHA. “Nature is harmony. Nature is the best architect on this planet. Now it’s up to humans to do their part. Each of you has a hundred trillion living cells in your body, more than the number of stars in the sky. Time for those cells to go to work and follow nature’s example. Behavior toward one another is the answer, time spent with others. Cats, dogs, monkeys, fish, birds, horses, all join you in suffering, physical and mental, feeling anxiety and fear. Humans will begin to expand their understanding of communication. Bees will teach you waggle dancing, no words necessary. Pulse, scent and color are just a few of the natural world’s many languages. Every Spring I hide up to thirty thousand pine nuts. When Winter comes, I remember where each one is. If any of you would like me to teach you how to do this, it would be my pleasure. Just let me know.”

DeLaROCHA. flew over the crowd, circling not once, but three times. With each person wondering if they were the only one who’d understood the communication of a bird, no one spoke. A young boy ran to Shilli. “That bird just talked to us and I understood what he said . . . did you?” Shilli answered. “Yes. I did. Why don’t you ask everyone here.” The boy turned toward the crowd. “Did you all understand?” Another resounding “Yes.” Shilli addressed the crowd. “If you need a place to stay or food, please come with me. I’ll be here tomorrow morning.”

Shilli dearly loved Escher. Wherever he went, the blue gray cat followed, walks on the beach, hikes on the dunes, he was constant, always listening, there to help. In the past, facing one frightening event after another. Shilli’s behavior had been to withdraw his emotions, stop feeling. He remembered the moment he’d asked Escher - “I don’t know how to erase everything that’s happened.” Escher - “It’s not simple. I’ll be with you.”

As Escher and Salubrious were getting to know one another, Shilli and Matheus caught up with everything that had happened since they were last together, remembering the steps and turns of their individual journeys. One of Marcus’ lessons came to mind. “Many people will attack you where they think you are strongest.” For the first time in both of their lives, Shilli and Matheus weren’t afraid. They would speak up for what they believed, ready for whatever lay ahead.

Word spread quickly. The following morning's meeting was three times the size. Flamingos, pelicans and gulls stood quietly near the water's edge as people of all ages crowded the beachfront. Someone had erected a small platform with stairs. Although Shilli's skin color was bright red, it was obvious he and Matheus were twins. Shilli - "In the past, we found it was a good idea to have someone write down what we discuss. Is there anyone who can do that?" Matheus - "Youngsters sometimes prefer to have their own meetings." A man standing mid way in the crowd yelled out "We all have questions!" Shilli - That's why we're here." Matheus left the platform.

For the next hour, Shilli did his best to respond to every question, many of the answers not easily accepted. "Is the outage why I can suddenly understand what animals are saying?" "How long will this last?" "Will things ever return to where they were before?" "What can I do to help?" "Is this happening all over the world or just here?" A young boy walked to the front of the crowd. "A dog and cat have lived with us for five years; they are members of our family. Why did they just now start talking?" Shilli- "There is someone on your shoe who would like to answer." The boy looked down and saw a tiny snail, picked it up, holding it gently in the palm of his hand.

SNAIL "I am UBIQUITOUS. I can sleep for three years. Humans have been communicating for some time. Perhaps you haven't been listening. Your species has been moving very fast; fast is not always better. In many human professions, patience is now a liability. When words can't wait for thoughts, it's time to slow down." As the boy carefully placed the snail on a nearby rock, two bees flew to sit on each of Shilli's shoulders, one a brilliant blue, the other a bright iridescent green.

The blue bee delivered his message. "My name is RULE. I don't sting but keep busy transferring pollen from one plant to another so you can enjoy vegetables, fruits and nuts." The second bee - "I am EXCEPTION. My friend RULE forgot to mention how we both love wild flowers." RULE - "I also forgot to mention how honey not only tastes good but also destroys bacteria, helps heal your skin's wounds." As the bees took flight, Matheus returned to the platform. Everyone was shocked and frightened to see a horned snout black rhinoceros walking alongside.

Matheus - "I met MEMORY and her calf ANNIKA at Mangetti National Park, She has a message. MEMORY - "I am not a trophy. *Human* conservation is what is now at stake." As the gathering ended, the plan was to continue daily morning meetings. Leaving the beach area, anyone who lived alone was approached by a dog, cat, bird, lizard or hamster, who asked the simple question. "Would you like me to stay with you for a while?"

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. The following morning, Chloe at his side, Shilli was not surprised that the number of people arriving had doubled from the day before. A note, with children's drawings of bees and snails had been taped to the platform stairs. "We're having our own meeting down the beach." Having seen the note, Neil had already left.

With children of all ages gathering on the sand, it was obvious someone had to step up. "My name is Neil Augula. Shilli and Matheis are my cousins." "Is Shilli the one with the red skin?" Neil - "Yes." "Why do *you* look so funny?" "Because I have Progeria." "What's that?" "It's a genetic disease that speeds up the aging process. As I grew up I lost my hair, my skin got rough and my eyes really big. I agree with you. I laugh every time I look in a mirror and see an old man." A young boy standing close to Neil - "You look fine to me. Do you know what's going to happen next?" Neil - "No, but I can tell you what my cousin told me."

Neil described how, four years earlier, five young people from Namibia, Denmark, India, the United States and Lebanon had met at the Olympics in Australia, each of them had the same dream. *Wait for a pat on the cheek*. When Snug, a three legged cat at their hotel, did just that, they knew their coming together was meant to be. Youri the Kelpie and Snug taught them how to communicate with animals. A temporary outage at the games' closing ceremony caught everyone off guard, except the five youngsters. Julian and Asha walked to the stage. Julian - "The animals and the natural world have asked us to tell you something. We all need to listen, we need to change." Asha - "Humans aren't superior, just different." Julian - "We fear what we don't know."

Neil continued to a rapt audience. “A year later, coincidentally, the five friends were all in Prague with their families when another outage struck. Marcus, a dark yellow Labrador, communicated with them every morning. Those meetings would change their lives. A chimpanzee and orangutan, Victoria and Ayres, got the world’s attention by bringing a legal action against humanity. My cousin Shilli and his new friends Emilie, Asha, Julian and Lapis were all defendants. A young girl, speaking English haltingly, asked “I don’t understand. What does that mean?” Neil - “They agreed to defend the human race in court, each promising to devote their life to make things better.” “What did they promise?” Neil - “To make changes in global education, the environment and climate, equal rights for women, and reforms in the field of medicine. Lapis, who has Synesthesia, is working on using tone and color to communicate.” “What’s ... I can’t pronounce what you just said?” “Synesthesia is when notes, tones and melodies come into your head as colors. You hear colors.” “Is he here? I want to meet him!” “He’s in Russia now. He lives in Denmark with his wife and son.”

“What happened next?” Neil - “Ayres the orangutan and Victoria the chimpanzee won the Nobel Peace Prize.” A girl shouted - “I know about that! My grandmother lives in Norway. It was the first time they gave the prize to someone that wasn’t human!” Neil - “Exactly! After the trial, everyone was invited to visit Bhutan.” “Where’s that?” “It’s a Himalayan Kingdom in the mountains north of India.” Neil, purposefully, said nothing about the interspecies corridor.

Question after question. “Where is Marcus now?” “What does *Fight or Flight* mean?” “You said Samuel died. . . how?” “Why did everyone go to Bhutan to meet the Council?” “What’s the Council?” Every question answered, Neil asked if the children would like to meet every day after school. The answer was unanimous. For the rest of the afternoon, one imaginative idea followed another. “Let’s come up with a motto.” “How about *Listen to Nature!*” “People are scared. We could start a band and play for everyone.” “My mother told me singing can help people relax. It works. We could write songs about what happened.” “Dancing works too. Let’s create a dance called The Outage.”

The children, hoping to organize a street painting festival, asked for Neil's help. Not a contest but an opportunity for people of any age to express themselves. Different areas in Walvis Bay would be the canvas, chalk would be provided. Neil had recently learned that using chalk on pavement had been a tradition in Italy since the 16th century. Remembering how excited he was, after visiting a factory in Prague, to be able to make a pencil, Neil would now, with the youngsters' help, take on the project of making chalk. The process was complicated, limestone to be crushed, pulverized, washed and cleaned, then heated, the putty rolled into cylinders, then into a fine powder, adding pigment for different colors.

Late in the afternoon, one of the children asked Neil, "Can you help us make music boxes? The sound is different than anything else I've ever heard." Others wanted to paint pictures, but didn't have any paint. A flock of birds flew overhead with an odd message. "We will poop different colors for you. It will be hygienically clean with no smell. We'll start with yellow poop, then change to orange and red. Hope that helps."

Neil loved to play backgammon. After he taught several of the children, they began making their own backgammon boards, each with a unique design, carving pieces from different colored woods. There wasn't a day when several matches weren't in progress.

One group of young people was discussing how to build habitable structures underground, another was designing a Nature flag, deciding on colors and a simple symbol.

With so many youngsters depending on being connected electronically, Neil, Shilli and Matheus wondered if the outage would increase loneliness. In Walvis Bay, exactly the opposite proved to be true. After school, children rushed to the beach area to meet one another and work on difference projects. Neil remembered his doctor telling him the importance of repetition, repeating something over and over and over again before it will register on a human's awareness. In the weeks ahead, residents gathered every night for a performance. Theater, music, poetry, singing and dancing would play a major part in the building sense of community and trust.

Every twilight, Shilli, Matheus and Neil took a walk across the dunes. Neil - "This is where Trevor and Parker saved my life." Smiling, "We're a lot alike, large bald heads, oversized eyes, wrinkled skin. I've often wondered what it would be like to be a gopher." Trevor and Parker suddenly appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, standing on their hind legs, long tails behind. "Do you want to switch with one of us for a few minutes?" Neil - "Could we do that?" "Trevor - "Yes." Neil - "When we change back, will everything will be exactly as it was before?" Parker - "Once you understand, nothing will ever be the same. Trevor will switch places and I'll stay with you." Neil - "How do we start?" "We already have." Suddenly, Parker at his side, Neil, with his big teeth, was tunneling, moving huge amounts of sand. Parker - "You don't want to get the sand in your mouth. Remember to close your lips behind your teeth to keep the dirt out." Parker was right. After the experience, Neil would never be the same.

As the three walked home, a Pelican walked by. "You are exploring space and other planets yet your nearest frontier, earth's oceans, have yet to be explored. Underwater cities? Start small, ask others to help with their ideas." Shilli - "Why would anyone want to be underwater when everything is so beautiful above?" Pelican - "Your species seems interested in learning about hundreds of billions of other galaxies, but only five percent of your planet's oceans have been explored. Is this why you're poisoning the oceans, because you know so little about them?"

Having financial problems, Neil's parents had moved in (temporarily) with the Louwrens family. Neil's mother, Celie, was Shilli and Matheus' mother's sister. Thrilled with the extending family living together, no one could imagine anything different, rousing nightly discussions at dinner one of many joys. Salubrious the cat jumped up on the dining room table. Salubrious - "Why do humans have religions? What are they trying to explain?" Celie - "Religions have different beliefs about the origin and meaning of life and the afterlife." Escher scurried to sit in Celie's lap. "Does that mean one religion says something is right, and another says the same thing is wrong?" "Yes." Neil - "I believe in good. My religion is Nature." Matheus - "Religions seem to be one of the causes of human violence." Shilli - "One of several catalysts, nationalism, greed, fights for territory and power."

Shilli, Matheus and Neil were talking about the word *sapiens*. Matheus - "Isn't it from the Latin...meaning wise?" The three said in unison "Homo sapiens" and started laughing. Shilli got up, abruptly, from the table. "I completely forgot the seeds they gave me in Bhutan. Has anyone checked the garden?" Going outside, Shilli, Matheus and Neil stared at the flowers growing under the palm tree. What from a distance looked like a clump of daisies, flowers with a round yellow disc surrounded by all white petals, these were different. Each petal was not only a different color but had distinctive oval shape with a black dotted circle in the middle that resembled an eye. As Neil bent down to look more closely, did he imagine one of the petals blinked at him?

Shilli - "You remember my telling you about my dream *Wait for a pat on the cheek..* ." Neil - "Yes, when you first met Snug." Shilli - "I don't know why but I think more dreams are coming. As Shilli was about to continue, a white crow flying overhead, landed several feet away, his head bobbing as he slowly approached. White Crow - "I am McCay. One wakes up more quickly from a nightmare than from an ordinary dream." As he flew away, Shilli, Matheus and Neil all had the same thought.

At the children's meeting the following morning, Neil had a suggestion. "Would you like to start by sitting quietly for a few minutes, not saying anything?" "You mean meditate?" "Yes." The teenager stood up and walked over to Neil. "We do this at home, I guess everyone here already knows our brains aren't yet fully developed. I often do things without thinking them through. Being still, having an uncluttered mind really helps." After a few minutes of silence, Neil began speaking about Marcus.

"I once knew a dog who taught me many things. He told me as I learned to feel compassion for the natural world, I'd understand there was no reason to be afraid. Rather than trying to be tougher, I'd be stronger by understanding tenderness toward all things." "What else did he teach you?" "Neil - "That we learn more from our failures than we do from our successes. For me, dealing with the practical instead of the idealistic wasn't easy. He believed that children and animals should mentor adults."

“Marcus taught us that just because everyone does it, doesn’t make it right.” A young boy stood up. “I did something that’s against the law.” A chorus of voices followed, “So did I.” “Me too.” “I didn’t get caught, but some of my friends went to jail.” Neil - “What we learn from our mistakes is the key. We each have our own unique strengths and weaknesses. Marcus taught me not to get involved with anyone else’s business. . . unless they ask me. When I have an important decision to make, I take my time, stay still and listen.”

“Where do we start?” “What can we each do to help?” A butterfly with multi colors of blue, an oval design on the top of both forewings and hindwings, lands on the shoulder of the girl asking the question. “I am HENNING. Last year, one of my four wings was broken. A girl about your age saw me struggling to fly and picked me up. very gently, took me inside her house, and put me in a small box filled with what you call cotton. I died later that day. I’m back now. That’s how you can each start. A simple kindness.” Neil - “Does anyone know what the word *comity* means?” No one answered. “It’s a word we must all remember. To treat one another with politeness, courtesy and consideration.”

A boy walked from the back of the group and reached into his pocket, bringing out a hamster with caramel colored fur. “My name is Christopher. This is FINESSE. He’s my best friend. We talk all the time. During the day, he sleeps in my pocket. In the future, when humans don’t have the time, for example, to read the works of Shakespeare, we were wondering if they could they have a chip implanted so the information could be circuited to their brain?” Neil - “An interesting idea. Do you think a human could receive more implants than their brain could handle?” Christopher - “Maybe old information could be put into a brain library.”

A loggerhead turtle, with a massive head, methodically made his way to the front of the crowd. “I am FORMIDABLE, just stopped by to say *Hello*. I travel for thousands of miles, year after year. If any of you want to come with me on an adventure, hop on. I’m going to the United States, then returning to Walvis Bay.” HENNING, the blue butterfly circled overhead before landing on the turtle’s back.

After Australia, Chloe had traveled to Prague, Lebanon, then appeared outside of Shilli and Matheus' house in Namibia where she was surprised to see another sloth named NIMBLE. While in Prague, Chloe had learned how to be more sloth like. It was now Nimble's turn to learn to do things differently, sit upright and walk quickly. Meeting Chloe, Shilli, Matheus and Neil all felt they recognized something in her, as if they had met before.

Though comfortable in her own skin, Chloe wanted to experience what other sloths did. Explaining how hanging upside down gives one fresh insight about everything, topsy turvy, but a view not many can offer, Nimble was there to teach Chloe how she could be true, not only to her original self, but also to new and different behaviors. Chloe meditated daily. Resting only three hours each night, she needed to learn how to relax completely. Learning how to sleep longer not only offered a wonderful regenerative quality, but gave her new insights. Dreaming offered life changing possibilities.

As has happened for the last week, people gathering on the beach for the morning meeting were met with an unusual sight. Three dolphins would approach and beach themselves where, at the the water's edge. five cats were waiting. They would stay together for several minutes communicating, after which the cats would slowly walk away, the dolphins swimming back to sea.

Chloe jumped onto the platform then another jump to the nearby palm tree and hung upside down. "There is much for you to learn from the natural world. Watch this." A light rain started. "You don't want to get wet? All right" The rain suddenly stopped. A voice shouted from the crowd. "You can manipulate the weather?" Chloe - "Manipulate isn't the correct word. There is a great deal you don't yet understand about the natural world. Let's empty our minds and be still for just a few minutes." "Do we close our eyes or keep them open?" "Chloe - It doesn't matter." Little did Chloe know that the morning meditation started at the Walvis Bay waterfront would slowly spread to surrounding neighborhoods, engaging, over time, many in Namibia.

After five minutes of silence, Chloe and Shilli stood on the platform as five large dogs of different breeds, bounded up the stairs and sat down. A black Labrador stepped forward. "I am SAM of Blaircourt. If any of you want to send a message to anyone in the country, no matter the distance, please write the message and address and we will deliver it." The dogs followed Sam down the stairs.

Next to climb to the platform were two aquatic flightless birds, an African Penguin, with a black back and spots on his white chest, a pink gland above his eyes, followed by an Emperor Penguin, shimmering black tail and wings, a noticeable golden strip on his neck. As Shilli stepped forward to introduce the two, a man in the front row spoke out. "Am I losing my mind? Am I the only one finding it hard to believe that I understood what a dog said? I've studied a little about animal behavior and this isn't what I learned." Shilli - "If we're all losing our minds, we better find them quickly." The man's frustration quickly turned to anger. "One of those birds doesn't belong here!" Shilli - "If you have a question, why don't you ask it directly?"

The man looked at the Emperor Penguin. "You live in Antarctica. What are you doing here?" The penguin walked to the edge of the platform to be nearer the man. "I am AURELIUS. Nothing and no one is where they belong any longer. That is where learning will begin." As he stepped back, the African Penguin took his place. "I am ECCENTRIC. A man named Boniface Mwangi said "There are two most powerful days in your life, The day you are born, and the day you discover why." Each of you can make a difference. Did you know there are fifteen hundred different same sex species? Homophobia exists only in humans. The two penguins walked down the stairs heading toward the center of town.

Chloe jumped into Shilli's arms, the two of them walking to the front of the platform. Chloe - "We all have biases we don't even know we have. Think about your own. It's time to question what we believe." A woman stepped forward. "Dolphins can be playful, but also aggressive and violent. They can stay awake for five days and nights, with no loss of mental ability. Do you know what the dolphins and the cats talk about on the beach here every day?" Chloe - "No."

Shilli took over. “Approaching what you don’t like, what you are afraid of, won’t be easy. People normally choose to be around like minded people. Think about beginning an unlikely friendship. Spend time with someone different than you, get to know who they are, give them your undivided attention. Working with others you have little in common with, disagreements will be normal. Cultural challenges will be the hardest. Chloe, hanging upside down on Shilli’s left outstretched arm, “It’s very easy to misunderstand one another. Did you know that blue and green are the same word in some languages? We’ve all done and said things that were hurtful to others, and been disappointed in ourselves afterwards.”

As Chloe continued talking, a large Malinois with a mahogany colored coat, jumped from the sand onto the platform. There was an elegance about how the dog stood, his head alert, his brown almond shaped expressive eyes looking directly at Shilli, nudging him to lean over. “Please come with me.” Shilli and the dog left the platform, Shilli breaking into a run, doing his best to keep up.

Three hundred yards down the beach, someone was lying face down in the sand. As the Malinois sat down next to the body, a man slowly lifted his head, turning to the right. Struggling to stand, he took a hand grenade from his pants pocket and handed it to Shilli. “I’ve been coming to the meetings. Because you were doing something to my mind, confusing my brain, I planned to kill one of the dolphins that swim onto the beach every morning. Last night I had a dream. It was the most horrible thing I’ve ever experienced.” Gasping for breath, he began to cry. Shilli took the grenade, gave it to the Malinois who ran off. Shilli - “Let’s sit down.”

“I was an elephant. Our family communicated with each other using a frequency humans can’t hear.” Shilli - “Infrasound.” “I’d been shot but was still alive while they were sawing off my tusks. My children were being slaughtered in front of me, their faces cut off. Watching the massacre, I woke up screaming. I was that elephant. We have to save the elephants. We have to save them!” As he continued to sob, McCay, the white crow who was in Shilli and Matheus’s garden, landed at the man’s feet. “One wakes up more quickly from a nightmare than from an ordinary dream.”

Shilli - "What is your name?" "Horace Blair." "Are you comfortable telling others about your dream?" Hesitating. . . "I was going to kill a dolphin." "Shilli - "But you didn't." Horace - "I arrived in Namibia the day before the outage struck. In one day, everything changed, because of a dream. I know now what I'm here to do." "Shilli - Please come home with me, meet my family, stay for dinner. We can talk about your speaking at tomorrow's meeting." As the two men walked arm in arm down the beach, Shilli remembered talking with Marcus the Labrador years ago about where dreams came from, our subconscious minds, a collective unconscious? "Are dreams sent to help people understand compassion and empathy over revenge and retaliation, especially when they're afraid?" Marcus' answer was "Wait and see."

As they continued the walk, Shilli told Horace a little about Emilie, Asha, Julian and Lapis, explaining how they'd been told that plant species in each of their countries would begin to make changes when the outage began, primarily to get peoples' attention. As Horace looked at Shilli and his deep red skin, Shilli answered the unasked question. "Yes, our skin colors were changed for the same reason." Knowing the affection Horace had for the Malinois, Shilli explained how Marcus the Labrador had changed so many lives. "He was the best teacher I ever had. He told me when I was wrong. He asked us if material success is more important than character, courage, integrity, kindness and compassion? He reminded us that, whenever we were faced with what seemed like insurmountable constraints and challenges. that we could do what needed to be done. "You can do this!" Those were his words. "You can do this!"

"Marcus met with us every morning. I learned more in the short time I knew and loved him than any time since. Facts, and all the difficulties that could accompany them, were important to Marcus. He explained how many people, by stating things as facts that are, in truth, unsupported, are purposefully using a strategy to confuse and appeal to peoples' fears, leading them to draw false conclusions."

Passing the area where Neil met with the children every morning, Shilli and Horace listened as a Wire Fox Terrier was communicating with a young boy and girl, everyone else having left for the day. "I am RESTLESS. I have to learn to be more tolerant and patient with children."

The oldest boy began. "We'll help. Your breed has had some extraordinary people as guardians: Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, Charles Schulz." RESTLESS - "I'm hoping with computers and phones not working, things will slow down, youngsters will begin to spend more time with the elderly, their experience and wisdom is an invaluable resource. Will you both tell your friends to bring an animal and an old person to school?" "Yes!" "Let's start with ecotherapy and go swimming." The Fox Terrier ran toward the ocean, two children at his side.

Matheus remembered every detail of his own kidnaping. Shilli had no memory of his own abduction years later. Walking home with Neil and Horace, Shilli noticed a man walking in the same direction, several yards ahead. Something, the back of his head, his posture, sparked a far away memory. Believing his kidnapper was in jail, Shilli ran past the man turning around to look back. The man smiled as he approached and walked on. Shilli was terrified.

At dinner that night, with Shilli, Matheus, their parents, Neil and his parents, Horace Blair (the Malinois never leaving his side), cats Escher and Salubrious, both the menu and the conversation were the example of the cliché *everything from soup to nuts*.

While Shilli and Horace were talking about people's different beliefs (seeing a black crow means someone is going to die versus a sign of impending wisdom and good luck, a black cat is lucky in one country, unlucky in another). Neil's mother was discussing memory with Matheus and Neil. Celie - "Since all humans misremember, trusting our memories could be tricky." Neil - "What about preconceptions? How do I know which to hold on to, which to let go?" When the conversation turned to genetically modified organisms, GMOs, Horace jumped in. "Some people think it interferes with the purity of nature, others that it's the answer to solving world hunger. Just recently, when fields were flooded for weeks on end, normal rice wouldn't grow but genetically engineered rice grew normally."

Salubrious the cat jumped onto Matheus' lap. "One day in the future, African farmland might feed the entire planet. Companies are now beginning to buy all the land they can, leaving current residents who live there with no food. Why? To make money!"

Shilli's cat, Escher, jumped onto the table. "Of all species, humans are the only ones who cook their food. Could the answer to world hunger also be with the planet's oceans?" Neil looked puzzled. "I don't know. Ever since animals and I have been communicating, I eat less meat." Shilli - "Me too. I ask what things are made of. Did a living being have to be sacrificed for me to carry a wallet?" Horace - "What about plants?" Shilli - "Plants are living things, so are flowers. Is there some understanding, agreement, a balance and harmony, between humans and plants?" Matheus- "Do you think a plant feels, knowing it's keeping humans alive?" Shilli - "I don't know. In the future, the word consciousness may have to be redefined, it's far more complex than we thought." Horace - "The outage has everyone's attention. I wonder how many are beginning now to recognize the power of Nature, pent up seismic pressure just one of many things to consider."

Neil went daily to the prison to help those who were interested do handwriting exercises. When the outage began, he decided to talk to the head of the facility, asking if it would be possible to release some of the men and women, each with a companion dog, to talk to school children about what they had learned.

When Neil arrived at the beach the next morning for the youngsters' meeting, no one was there. Walking back toward the pier where the adult meeting was already in progress, he thought he heard singing.

Matheus had taken Shilli's place to introduce a giraffe to the gathered adults. "I am ELUISIVE. The hubris of the your species, in the face of the natural world, is astounding. It's easy for humans to believe what they want to believe. False assumptions about cause and effect and reality, as you define them, will soon be brought to light. When your babies are born with neither XX or XY chromosomes, how do humans determine gender? Current thinking must be questioned. clashing cultural beliefs and stereotypes discussed. Because humans don't yet understand the function of half of their twenty one thousand genes, the genetic makeup of each of your species will soon have a newly added ingredient. What you call spindle cells go in more than one direction, affecting animal species as well as your own, Deadly viruses causing illness and disease don't respect what you call borders."

“Things are about to change. A contagious and positive virus will soon be released into the air, infecting every human, affecting a part of their brains never before used. It’s often difficult for humans to see their own mistakes. They will now be obvious and without judgment.” The Giraffe nodded to Matheus and walked slowly down the beach.

Climbing the stairs onto the platform with Shilli and the two beloved cats, Escher and Salubrious, Neil was intrigued by what appeared to be an approaching parade. Horace Blair, walking alongside the Malinois, was followed by an elephant, a giraffe (Chloe clinging to his neck holding a sign *Help Us We’re Disappearing*), a zebra (a communal nest of spiders on his back), a kangaroo and five boys playing trumpets. Waving hand made banners and drawings of animals, the children were singing the heartfelt lyrics Shilli, Matheus and Neil knew well, from Lapis’ song *Changes Free the Hearts of you and Me*.

Holy is the man free	Holy is the heart gone
Holy let the man be	Holy is the road long
Will you let the blind see	Holy are the gone’d wrong
Make it on their own	Looking for a way
Holy are the hard blows	Holy is the home ground
Holy how the time goes	Holy is the peace found
Changes free the hearts of you and me.	Changes free the hearts of you and me.

Horses, dogs, sheep and cats joined hundreds of birds flying overhead. all moving to the music. Stopping in front of the platform, Horace’s smile was serene and beaming. Nodding to Shilli, “You know ARAGON the Malinois. He found me. He saved me. We’ve talked about it; the children agree. Doing nothing is too great a risk. We need to have a measurable impact. Instead of meeting every morning, we want to spread the word from Walvis Bay to Sandwich Harbour. Our animal and cetacean friends are going to help us on our journey with food and shelter. That the children in the parade group hadn’t told their parents about their plans was obvious from the audible gasps.

Horace smiled at Shilli, Matheus and Neil. “Experiencing music rituals helps people of various cultures understand one another, showing, without language, how we each see the world, offering encouragement to respect our differences rather than react to them.

“Shilli, you told me last night how, above all else, music has the ability to revive memories for you.” Shilli - “I’ve never thought about music’s ability to teach us. . . without words.” Horace - “Marcus the Labrador changed your life, you never could have imagined the degree of his loyalty and attachment to those he loved. He taught you the importance of trust in relationships, to have reverence for evidence and brutal honesty. ARAGON, his loving interaction with me, the purity of his concern for the human species, has changed my life. He has agreed to be my mentor. Fear is contagious, so is enthusiasm, optimism and action.” Turning to the crowd below. “We’re at the threshold. Please listen to a few of my new friends and then decide. We’d like you to join us.”

ARAGON leaped onto the platform. “Nature has humanity at a disadvantage. A major cause of human depression is a separation from Nature. Identify and acknowledge your unconscious perceptions and biases, begin to get to know yourself. Approach the person most unlike you to ask if they would like a friend. If you are old, get to know a young mind. If you are young, get to know an old mind.” As ARAGON jumped down to stand next to Horace Blair, a twenty foot long oarfish moved slowly across the sand from the ocean. “I am TABULA RASA. Love will always prevail over cowardice.”

As the giant fish moved back to the sea, a dark green crocodile with a cream colored belly, a grey plover sitting on his back was next. The crocodile began. “I am SYMBI. I keep my mouth wide open hour after hour to stay cool. It works.” Plover - I am OTIC I like to wade in sandy lagoons. I visit my crocodile friend and feed on the tiny bits of food stuck between his teeth. It’s good for him and good for me. Symbiotic.” When an octopus, hidden under the platform, suddenly appeared on the sand, Shilli jumped down, picked him up, holding him carefully (not to disturb the suckers on his arms) and climbed carefully up the platform stairs. “I am CLOSEHOLD. My brain is totally different than yours. My neurons are not only in my brain but also in my arms. As my emotions change, so does my color. When you touch me, I can taste you with my whole body, even my eyelids. Please be careful of words. The same word, symbiotic, can also describe a relationship that is only some of the time, but not always, beneficial to both parties. When ARAGON put his paw gently on CLOSEHOLD’S head, the octopus turned white, showing he was both comfortable and relaxed.

Two hummingbirds landed on Shilli's shoulder, directing their communication to CLOSEHOLD the octopus. "I am SYNERGY." "I am DICHOTOMY. Can we talk with you when you're finished here?" "Certainly."

CLOSEHOLD continued. "The natural world is doing everything to educate and help the human species. Since the outage began, every young child without a parent now has an animal with them. Humans are just beginning to understand canine cognition. Did you know a cat's brain has one thousand times more data storage space than your human iPad, and works a million times faster?"

After placing four of his eight arms over Shilli's shoulders, the extraordinary invertebrate paused. "Although it's normal for bats and whales, echolocation has already helped many of your species. Inspired by lobsters, humans have now constructed X-rays that can see through concrete and steel." Shilli climbed slowly down the stairs, putting CLOSEHOLD on the sand. OTIC the plower, the two hummingbirds SYNERGY and DICHOTOMY. joined the octopus to move onto the crocodile's back. SYMBI proceeded slowly toward the ocean.

Would the adults join the children's march? The spontaneity of that decision challenged many, especially those for whom the word *spontaneous* went against their nature. After a hour of thoughtful discussion, it was agreed. The time had come to concentrate on what humanity could learn in the future from nature and animals, not what had been disregarded in the past. Every day's march would begin with a short quiet time.

All that is loves and feels love. From that day forward, marchers would talk about different approaches to shelter/housing, food, safe water supply, sanitation, health care, education, infrastructure, living and working conditions. A change in worldwide economies. No one could know that a small local parade would grow to spread its message across borders into Angola, Zambia, Botswana and South Africa. The motto's recognition was growing. AOU. All of us.

For Shilli, Emilie, Asha, Julian and Lapis, there had been one specific moment after which they knew they would not falter, regardless of what was to come. They would make mistakes, stumble but would never quit. Each had been tested and had agreed to step up and engage, committing their lives to the specific changes they had first championed in court.

Though not able to communicate with each other electronically, men, women and children, innovative minds in every field worldwide, were working to figure out how to end the outage. They were unsuccessful. The change needed to come from humanity, not technology.

More and more humans were now open to listening to others' beliefs. Who wanted to stop a communication corridor between animals and humans? Was money involved? Would certain business entities become obsolete? How would different cultures, regional politics and international diplomacy be affected?

An unorthodox way of accelerating change had been the choice of the natural world. As the months passed, it became obvious that humans' ability to communicate with other species, not through word of mouth but word of thought, was the norm, not isolated incidents. The interspecies *internet* was developing not, as the word implied via a connection on computers, phones, tablets, or watches, but with telepathic frequencies, needing no technology. Communication was gradual, the majority of humans initially trying to convince themselves they had not just understood what an animal had communicated. Gradually, slowly, they came to understand.

Criminal acts were dealt with quickly and easily. Those who believed the outage was an opportunity to cheat, steal, or take advantage of the situation for their own sake learned very quickly - dogs, lions, cheetahs and birds mysteriously appeared at the scenes of their crimes.

This growing reverence for all life, not just human life, was changing the way people interacted with each other. A torrent of positive ideas and solutions was infecting different cultures, highlighting the human species' relationship to its own habitat.

Many humans had never for one moment thought about the fact that animals have feelings and emotions, questioning animals' cognition, souls and consciousness. Now, embracing irrationality, people were no longer concerned about right and wrong answers. What needed to be experienced, changed, mended and healed was being addressed without judgment. The tone was contagious, a critical awakening, a shared sense of hard work, accepting differences, confidence, strength and responsibility. Changes of mind. Changes of heart. JASLEMS. Julian, Asha, Shilli, Lapis, Emilie, Marcus and Samuel.

As the months passed, a turning point now a tipping point, being able to understand non verbal signals, one to another, animal to humans, humans to one another, became second nature. Understanding that hurdles teach us the most, that *all* was the priority over *self*, hadn't presented the difficulty many had imagined. Those who now regularly communicated with animals, though often faced with both private and public ridicule, proceeded to question and face the challenge that anger, pain, and frustration can be channeled into patience and kindness.

Could an image change the way people think and feel? Millions of people around the globe would not forget the fire rainbow in the sky. Neither fire nor rainbow, the brightly colored ice halo (circum horizontal arc) in the clouds had nothing to do with race, gender, ethnicity, religion, geography, or age. A shared sense of being human. JASLEMS.