

BOOK SEVEN CHAPTER 8 LAPIS RUSSIA

Growing up in Russia, from a international teenage singing sensation to a husband and father soon to begin work at the Medical Research Center in Copenhagen, Lapis Lishin's journey had many twists and turns. When his best friend, Samuel, died in a house fire saving a Golden Retriever named Argos, Lapis agreed to join Shilli, Asha, Julian and Emilie as a defendant (of the human race) in a trial at the Hague. Lapis had Synesthesia, the union of shared senses. Words were heard as colors. Color is the most important element in non verbal communication. The issue he championed in court was using tone and color to stop violence.

A commitment to the Interspecies Corridor, his new found ability to communicate with animals and others in the natural world, a trip to Bhutan where his skin color was changed to indigo, his marriage to Emilie in Denmark, all was in place to begin a life in Russia. When told his mother and father were killed in a political demonstration in St. Petersburg, everything changed. Emilie's parents offered the newlyweds a place to stay in Denmark, giving them plenty of time, once their baby was born, to decide their future plans. Lapis and Emilie named their son Samuel.

Receiving a phone call from his grandmother in Russia explaining he'd been adopted, his mother having died in childbirth, his biological father now anxious to meet him, Lapis was hesitant to leave his new wife and baby. Emilie gave her blessing for her husband's trip to St. Petersburg, Argos to be at his side. Lapis' Synesthesia, the ability to hear colors, now had an added dimension. The color of his own skin.

On the flight, Marcus the Labrador's last communication came to mind. "I've done what I came to do. Now it's up to you to do what you each came to do." For Shilli, Asha, Emilie and Julian, there had been a specific moment when they knew they would step up and speak out. Though they would make mistakes, stumble and falter, regardless of what was to come, they would never quit. For Lapis, that moment was the birth of his son, Samuel.

An hour after the plane landed at Pulkovo Airport, an outage began. Thousands of squirrels had chewed through lines needed for electronic capability. Argos nudged Lapis to explain - "Will last only twenty four hours. . . next one coming soon." Those closest to his late mother and father had arranged a lunch gathering, his mother's best friend preparing Lapis' favorite dish, a poached egg nesting in an artichoke heart, covered with hollandaise sauce. As one question followed another, Lapis heard an odd sound. "I am TALIA. Time is very short." Five years ago, if anyone had told Lapis he'd be communicating with an artichoke, he'd have walked away laughing. Now, having met the Council in Bhutan, he politely apologized for not staying longer. Aware he was about to meet his biological father, everyone understood.

Knowing it doesn't help, animals don't complain. When things go wrong, they take responsibility. In St. Petersburg, dogs regularly rode the metro in an attempt to get to different locations to find food. After meeting at a local café, Lapis and his father went to his grandmother's apartment where Lapis and Argos would stay during their visit.

Lapis's biological father had been pivotal in organizing, voicing and exposing political corruption in the Soviet Union, now risking his life to do the same for Russia. The current government's use of fear and herd mentality, added to the propaganda of state run television, had been successful in keeping citizens ignorant of world events and opinions, their trusting that presented evidence, which was false. was true. With it becoming more difficult to exchange information with those interested, encouraged by growing support from outside the country, Lapis' father's work had gone underground. In the past few weeks things had deteriorated, efforts to stop any and all anti government sentiment or discussion at an all time high.

Lapis' father told him how he'd outsmarted government officials who constantly followed him. Noticing that tread designs varied shoe to shoe, he would carve a message on his shoe's out sole, easily visible when he walked on a dirt pathway, for those who knew where to look. Hidden in plain sight. Another trick was using antique HTL postcards. When meeting someone in a café, he took the card, begin reading a few sentences, the card's cut out secret message easily read when held to the light.

Lapis' father met regularly with hacktivists, their skills at computer engineering, programming, data structures and algorithms were second nature, as was their ability to use the unpredictable to their advantage. Hackers were regarded by many as negative, others saw them as instruments of positive change. In the past, their efforts to find the vulnerability in a system then fix it had been successful in bypassing the government's shutdown of several internet programs.

Hacked military personnel emails made two things clear. Knowing that invading a neighboring sovereign country was against international law, many soldiers were more afraid of being killed by their own government than by those defined as the enemy. They were not alone. As was happening in other global locations, those in the military joined citizens being intellectually at risk, afraid to say what they were thinking. Lapis - "Here's to humans' capability for cognitive dissonance, believing two thoughts that are contradictory, being able to rationalize irrational behavior."

Knowing that action before thinking wasn't wise, impulse control was something Lapis, with his temper, still needed to practice, remembering Emilie's last comment during a recent argument. "To tell you what you just said is "inartful" is the most diplomatic I can be." As Lapis explained how difficult it had been for him to admit his problem with alcohol, vowing to never drink again, his father understood and empathized, having years before successfully tackled the same issue. When the conversation turned to Synesthesia, Rodion smiled. "Pythagoras, Van Gogh, Mozart, Degas, Lizst, Nobokov, Feynman. You're in very good company." Lapis - "Stravinsky said "My music is best understood by children and animals." When I wrote *Holy is the Man Free*, it was animals who gathered round, returning again and again until the song was finished."

"Will your skin color ever change?" Lapis - "I don't know. Ready for lots of questions when I start medical school in Copenhagen next month. Another outage is coming," Understanding his growing up in Russia contributed to who he was, Lapis knew that knowledge is power, suppressing it, more often than not, the catalyst for change. Animals and the natural world had taken the actions they had, outages and telepathic communication, to help the human species make those changes. Lapis - "Argos and I often talk about the bias we each have from how we were raised. With things changing so fast, keeping up isn't easy."

Leaving in two days to visit Samuel's parents in Lebanon on their trip home to Denmark, Lapis and Argos looked forward to spending their last day at a beach near St. Petersburg. When Lapis woke, his father was sending his daily electronic message and smiling. "Singing in public isn't illegal...yet."

*Russia is an extraordinary country with rich cultural history and traditions,
What our government is telling us
about their actions and our current place in the world is not the truth.
Statements made daily contradict documented evidence.
Russia is our home
Please join us for a musical demonstration
next Wednesday morning in front of the Winter Palace.
Help us create a better society. Be prepared to sing.*

The lyrics from Lapis' song, *Changes Free the Hearts of You and Me*, were among the most recognized in the world, the song having been recorded by several different artists, now playing internationally. The following morning, as Lapis, Rodion and Argos walked to a nearby café for breakfast, a crowd began to follow, recognizing Lapis, joyfully singing *Holy is the Man Free*. One boy, not knowing the words, was singing his own message. "Every country loves fireworks... dust and smoke can be dangerous to our health. . . the chemicals can pollute water sources. . . I'm going to invent new fireworks." On the flight from Denmark, Lapis had written a song, *All of Us*, jotting the lyrics on an index card. He reached into his pocket and gave the card to the young boy.

Once seated inside the café, Lapis was shocked to see a woman wearing a white tunic and navy pants approach the table. "Hello Lapis...or should I call you Indigo?" The two hugged. Lapis stood up and began introductions to his father and Argos. "This is NICOLA. We met in Bhutan." "Will you please join us?" "Thank you." Smiling at Lapis' father, "You are Rodion. I'm on your list, under the name AFFABLE. Being different in Russia isn't easy. As a lesbian, I'm trying to raise awareness about sexual orientation." Turning to Lapis. "Please thank your friend Asha for me. She explained how flower essences can help when I'm dealing with anxiety. I use passion flower, lavender and dried camomile. Far better than any pill." Lapis - "I use them too. Don't know why, but pills negatively affect my synesthesia."

NICOLA - “When you go to Lebanon, Lapis, please remember the word *Taarradhin*. The Arabic language has no word for compromise, coming to an agreement after a struggle. *Taarradhin* is a wonderful word, a positive solution for everyone, a reconciliation where no one loses face, everyone is satisfied.” After a spirited conversation, NICOLA got up to leave, winking at Rodion. “See you at the demonstration.”

Lapis’ father’s fascination with his son’s ability to communicate with animals provoked never ending questions. As NICOLA left, a passive faced slug, meandering more than slithering, moved across the small round café table, crawling onto Rodion’s right hand. “I am PALLIATIVE. Russia is my home. I have four noses. The olfactory nerve which controls your sense of smell, is wired to the part of your brain that is in charge of heart rate, breathing, memory and hormone balance.” When PALLIATIVE turned on his side, a tiny wingless insect appeared. “I am MATTIE the silverfish. I like moisture and can show anyone who’s interested where to find it.” Looking at Rodion. “Did you understand” Lapis’ father smiled ear to ear, nodding “Yes.”

The day at the beach was relaxing, long walks, talking about the future, Argos chasing a tennis ball. Late afternoon, people began pointing to the bay, where two whales were approaching closer to shore. Lapis swam out to meet them. Knowing that the blue whale emits the loudest sound (which humans can’t hear) of any other living being on earth, that sound traveling for two thousand miles, Lapis often asked himself if whales, with their rhythmic clicks and beats, had written the first song. He swam nearer, treading water, asking permission to come closer. As the whales turned and moved slowly back out to sea, Lapis followed.

The sperm whale began. “I am NAST. I have the largest brain on earth. Please. Can anyone help stop the cruelty to marine mammals in captivity? No one knows the extent of the horrible things that are happening in Dolphinariums, one of your newest industries. Profit by corruption. Thank you, Lapis, for your music. You have no idea how its positive influence will continue to grow.”

REGGIO the humpback whale moved toward Lapis, bumping him with his head affectionately. “We dream as you do. Bottlenose dolphins are being purchased illegally, joining beluga whales and orcas, living under unbearable conditions, transported in tiny enclosures with insufficient space to move and swim. Please help us.” Before joining NAST to swim away, REGGIO moved closer. “Thank you, Lapis. for your song *All of Us*. Thank you. . . from all of us.”

After a memorable day at the beach, Lapis and his father were talking, waiting for the metro when gun shots shattered the moment. They were both killed instantly. As Rodion slumped over, a small notebook fell from his shirt pocket. Argos grabbed it with his teeth and ran. A waiting car pulled over, two men exited, lifting the two lifeless bodies into the back seat, then sped away.

The official account of the incident stated a driver had lost control of his car, accidentally killing two people, the driver not named. The same day, print and online news listed the obituary for Lapis’ grandmother, who had died of a heart attack, an hour before her grandson’s *accidental* death. Paying the ultimate price for speaking out against corruption and injustice was becoming a regular occurrence.

Argos ran the twenty five kilometers to the airport. Exhausted, he went hangar to hangar looking for someone from Vestas Wind Systems. It wasn’t long before a pilot recognized him, helping him on board for their flight scheduled to leave within the hour for Copenhagen. There was one other passenger, Chloe the Sloth.

After giving Rodion’s notebook to Chloe, Argos curled up and went to sleep. As the Vestas Wind Systems plane took to the sky, smoke flares and wingtip vortices formed a recognizable image.

When the outage began the following morning, November 22nd, those in power (using fear) would struggle to maintain their position. What would be the result of television, computer, tablet, phone and print media now non existent? Those that believed the outage would soon be corrected faced an unknown future. What had begun was different than anyone had before experienced and would end only when the human species illustrated a profound change in thinking and behavior.

A reverence for all life, not just human life. How people interacted with one another, homo sapiens' treatment of their own habitat, recognition and understanding that animals, other than humans, are intelligent, decision making living beings, with social lives, experiencing joy and pleasure, as well as suffering, fear, pain and anger was the challenge ahead.

Weapons no longer functioned correctly. Carrier pigeons, runners and horseback riders spread the news of what had happened. Many unlikely friendships were about to begin.