

CHAPTER SEVEN ATITLAN



There was to be a Council. The natural world knew.

Surrounded by craggy mountain peaks and volcanos, the lakeshore is overgrown with dogwoods, mimosas, white agapanthus, magnolias, lilacs, rhododendrums and hydrangeas. The purple blossoms of forty foot high jacaranda trees blanket the ground.

A two hundred foot Fir stands near a Toromino tree. A spider, hamster, cat, star nosed mole, ladybug, iguana, skunk, monkey, bat, three dogs, St. Bernard, Golden Retriever and Black Labrador, poison dart frog, rat, chicken, dragonfly, ostrich, stag, nutcracker and cockroach are quiet, some sitting on moss covered rocks covered with flaming honeysuckle. As a snake crawls in and out, an ant and flea sit inside an amethyst cathedral geode; a horse, duck, oxen, pig, elephant, cow, tortoise, mule and camel stand nearby. A beehive hangs from the Toromino tree, a condor, pigeon, cuckoo and owl sit on a branch next to one another. In front of a citrine geode is a Sundew Drosera. A beaver, otter and badger sit together next to a hornet, wasp and moth. Near the shore, a dolphin and swan move side by side. A hippopotamus hides beneath the water.

FIR

“I am NOBLE.

We have our own culture and communication. We can warn others of harm, an approaching fire, a fungus or chemical.”

TOROMINO TREE

“I am PASCUA.

We were in danger. Humans found our seeds and saved us.”

CONDOR

“I am PICCHU.

Their species talks about “evil.” We know love and fear. What is evil?”

SWAN

“I am MANI.

Ignorance is not evil. It is ignorance. If they knew they could not fail, what would their species do?”

BAT

“I am AMORY.

If my species didn't go out to eat for a short while, things would change. Animals have more developed senses than do humans. We understand waves and frequencies, communicate with telepathy, image, design, and echolocation.”

STAR NOSED MOLE

“I am SENDING BLIND.

I'll help.”

COCKROACH

“I am PAINE.

For hundreds of millions of years we've been running, twisting and turning twenty five times a second. Humans don't understand how nerves in our antennae signal our brains. I can run upside down and compress my body size...and live nine days without my head before I starve to death, Why do they think we deserve to be killed? We don't wish them any harm. No matter how violent they are to us, we will never return that violence.”

HAMSTER

“I am NOVALIS.

Many don't know what it feels like to love and be loved.”

PARAKEET

“I am KELLER.

The first time they experience those feelings is with an animal.”

OWL

“I am CHARDAN

Their species needs sources of energy to live. Hopefully, their past choices have shown them there are other options that don't cause harm. From idea to form.”

A HORSE (SENECA) with a PIGEON (KOONTZ) and RAT (ELUSIVE) on his back, BLACK LABRADOR (EXCELSIOR), CAT (COZY), OXEN (PICK), MULE (B&R), CAMEL (SWOPE) and Elephant (ECOUTE) stand together. A DOLPHIN (KINDRED) surfaces at the lake shore. The Camel steps forward, the horse following behind.

CAMEL

“I am SWOPE.

Yes, From idea to form. From education to a passion for learning.”

HORSE

“I am SENECA.

All of us have been involved with their battles. They asked for our help and we gave it. After their wars, they are not the same - many end their lives. We are not the same.”

SKUNK

“I am SUBTLE.

No other life form on this planet knows negativity but humans. Flowers aren't unhappy, trees aren't impatient, birds don't lack confidence, fish don't hate.”

IGUANA

“I am CHOMSKY.

They talk a lot about gods and money. What's gods?”

LADYBUG

“I am AQUINAS.

It's a mystery. To know we do not know.”

PIG

“I am WALKER

What's money?”

DRAGONFLY

“I am PANKHURST.

It's a piece of paper they use to get things, their food, their shelter. They get prizes for using it. Some humans equate the number of pieces of paper they have with their value as a living being. Many think how they are seen in the eyes of others is more important than how they are seen in their own eyes.”

CHICKEN

“I am PLUSCACHANGE.

Over eight billion of us are killed to feed humans every year. Not all humans act in the same way. They can change.”

A BEAVER (BAKEWELL) ,OTTER (HEPBURN) and HONEY BADGER (THAT WAY) stand together, each with a creature on their head. The BEAVER with a **HORNET (ANDERSEN)**, the OTTER with a **TARANTULA HAWK WASP (ELIZABETH)**, the BADGER with a **MOTH (ELEANOR)**.

BEAVER

“I am BAKEWELL.

It’s odd how many years they spend learning what we know naturally.”

POISON DART FROG

“I am COBALT.

Our species uses color as camouflage, to protect ourselves.”

KATYDID

“I am SOJOURNER.

Many of their species use “good” as camouflage, to hide behind when they’re doing things they know are not good.”

VULTURE

“I am SOMERSET.

I do not kill. Hardship is necessary, and temporary.”

MONKEY

“I am CAPUCHIN.

I help many of them who can’t move their arms and legs. I feed them, scratch where they itch, help them with their machines. I enjoy it.”

CAT ORANGE TABBY

“I am SOISSAGE.

Our senses are keener than the human species. Instinctively, we know the balance between gravity and inertia. A human pulled out my claws, amputated the last joint of all of my toes - for their convenience. It’s not my nature to complain and I hid how horribly painful it was to walk, how terrible it was not being able to defend myself and get food. A kind human found me and took care of me. There are those who love and appreciate us. They can help others understand and change.”

DOG ST. BERNARD

“I am HYUN JUNG.

What was done to you is not allowed in many places. When I was small, I was locked up to be killed for food. A human came, telling me no one would hurt me again. I will help.”

DUCK

“I am ANDERSON.

We keep watch by sleeping with one eye open; half of our brain is awake, the other half asleep. Animals communicate far beyond the reach of humans. Non verbal communication is new to their species. They talk to animals but don’t listen. They don’t see us as partners and teachers.”

An ANT and FLEA sit together on a Amethyst Geode.

FLEA

“I am RIDE.

I can jump 350 times my own body length. Does the human species know one half of all plant and animal life may disappear in a hundred years?”

ANT

“I am CLEOPATRA.

We’ve been “multitasking” for 500 million years, trillions of us alive today. We lift many times our own weight. We are a hierarchy, individuals part of a whole. We cooperate with one another. Experts at farming, we use odor to communicate. We hunt, build and care for our homes, neighborhoods and roads. We go to war to defend ourselves.”

AMETHYST GEODE

“I am HERNANDEZ.

Why not help?”

Attracted by the SUNDEW DROSER (HITCHCOCK) and its seductive tentacles, the ANT (CLEOPATRA) approaches and is trapped. The CONDOR (PICCHU) arrives suddenly and approaches HITCHCOCK. “Putting aside our own natures is very hard; this time, will you do it?” HITCHCOCK releases the ANT, who crawls away.

STAG

“I am BESTON.

Animals don’t kill for sport. Do humans believe they have dominion over everything? Is this why they kill for their own pleasure?”

OSTRICH

“I am WOLLSTONECRAFT.

I’ve heard they call their food “junk,” put things into their bodies that can harm and kill them.”

CUCKOO

“I am DIDEROT.

Too much information!”

NUTCRACKER (bird)

“I am DE LA ROCHA.

Every Spring I hide up to thirty thousand pine nuts. In Winter, I remember where each one is. Wouldn’t they like to know how to do this?”

DOG GOLDEN RETRIEVER

“I am CORD.

We sense things differently than their species. We help humans whenever we can: open and close doors, let them know their young are crying, turn lights off and on, warn them of danger, alert them if they are about to have a seizure or attack.”

SPIDER

“I am AESOP.

Looking directly at SUNDEW DROSERA. Do they know the tensile strength of my silk is as strong as their steel?”

ELEPHANT

“I am MAJESTY.

Millions of years ago we didn’t have trunks. We changed. Now we’re killed for our tusks. To stay alive, our young are now born without tusks. Humans have just recently learned what we’ve been practicing for hundreds of years - how to communicate over distance. I don’t know if they want to change.”

COW

“I am FRANCIS.

In some territories, we are treated with love and respect. In others, we are killed. They spend time and energy to save a cat, dog or horse, but wouldn’t think of saving a rat, cockroach or spider. Do they not understand, even with all their tools and weapons, where they’d be today without us?”

HIPPOPOTAMUS

“I am OPEN.

Animals hallowed in one culture are killed in another. We’re killed for our teeth and tusks. Some of their species seem to sense something is wrong. Growing numbers of them are having feelings of malaise. This might be the right time to offer help.”

TORTOISE

“I am IT DOESN’T MATTER.

What do they know of their own nature. Is there a nature of man?”

SNAKE

“I am DARWIN.

It’s not the strongest of the species that survives, it’s the one most adaptable to change.”

“It’s time for us to decide.”