

BOOK FIVE CHAPTER 11 THE COUNCIL



Five young adults were about to make one of the most important decisions in their lives.

Having been told that a patent had been filed in their names for an interspecies forum, they had endless questions for the four attorneys (from France, England, the United States and Switzerland), they now considered friends.

A spirited, but diplomatic, breakfast conversation had carried over into lunch when a messenger arrived at the Guesthouse. “I’m from India House. Is Asha Esim here? A note was left at the Embassy Compound.” After showing her passport, Asha was given a piece of paper with two words. “Taktsang. Guardian.”

Jane Green - “Taktsang is an extraordinary Buddhist Monastery, one of many wonders of this magnificent country.” Everyone agreed it was time to take a break. After a short drive to Paro, an invigorating hike was a perfect way to clear their heads.

After climbing for three hours from the riverbed, it appeared. Built into the side of a mountain, perched on a steep cliff was The Tiger’s Nest. Leaving the others to visit the lower, middle and upper temples, Asha approached a monk at the entrance stairs, handing him the note she’d been given. He motioned for her to follow. At the end of a small corridor stood a Raven. The monk pointed to the word “Guardian” on the paper, then to the Raven, and walked away.

The national bird of Bhutan stood quietly, majestic and serene. Over two feet tall, his large wings and feet, triangle shaped tail and curved beak all radiated a feeling of peace. Asha approached slowly. Looking into the birds' eyes, she whispered "I'm listening." "I've lived for many years and value solitude and privacy. Please remember **all of us**. As Asha walked away, the Raven bowed his head.

During both the climb down the mountain and the drive back to the Thimphu no one spoke. What everyone had experienced during their time at the monastery was beyond words. The meteor shower that night was the liveliest in Bhutan's history.

The next day, after a visit to Clock Tower Square and the Library, conversation with the lawyers continued during and after dinner. Emilie - "The name JASLEMS is perfect." Julian - "We'd like the interspecies forum to be a non profit organization." Shilli - "Defending the human race in court, we were passionate about the changes we talked about. Now, we don't know if we should work separately on our own issues, or together on the forum?" Emilie - "Shilli, didn't you already decide when you turned down your scholarship? Lapis lost his when he left Russia." The Admiral walks in, then turns to leave, "Sorry, didn't mean to interrupt." Everyone implores "Please stay!"

Julian - "We need people we trust to advise and guide us, like Marcus, Snug and Youri did. Would you be willing to do that, promise to always tell us your honest opinion?" The four attorneys looked at one another, smiling, answering "Of course." Shilli - Admiral, how about you?" Admiral - "My privilege!"

Lapis - "We're grateful for everything you've already done for us, but don't feel right not paying you in the future." Shilli - "We each have the Nobel Peace Prize money." Paul Osprey - "You'll always have the unofficial family discount." Rene Hibou - "You never know. Years from now, your patent could be worth more than you imagine." Shilli, Emilie, Julian, Asha and Lapis began to chuckle, thinking of Samuel, saying in perfect unison, "From your mouth to God's ear."

Jane Green - “Three of you were accepted at renowned universities. Emilie’s working as an advocate for climate and environment issues, Asha to improve women’s rights in her country. We can advise you, but the final decision will have to be yours.”

Raoul Lapin - “Dealing with other humans isn’t easy, to say nothing of other species. There’s a world of misinformation out there. People from different cultures can be easily offended. Cross cultural decorum is delicate; cross species decorum is unexplored territory.”

Julian - “Physical and digital boundaries keep changing. How can any one person keep up?” “Asha - “When animals communicated with us, we understood. We can ask them to help us find the best way to widen the circle.” Shilli - “We’re taught we are accountable, individually, for our actions. From the perspective of other species, is it time the human species be accountable for their actions?”

Jane Green - “We’ve done everything we could to keep your options open. Shilli, we understand you turned down the scholarship at the University of Namibia Medical School. The University has agreed to reinstate the scholarship when you return.”

Raoul Lapin. “Lapis, when you moved to Denmark, you gave up your scholarship in St. Petersburg. The University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Health Sciences, has offered you the same. They’re interested to work with you, especially concerning your gift of Synesthesia.” Jane Green - “It’s getting late. Tomorrow’s a big day!”

The next morning, Neosha drove Shilli, Emilie, Julian, Asha and Lapis to Tashichho Dzong, one of the country’s most impressive buildings, the seat of Bhutan’s government. Walking up the staircase to the offices of the King was exciting, to say the least. After being told by Security Guards that taking pictures was not allowed, they entered an office and were warmly greeted by His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.

The King smiled as he approached the group, speaking with a slight English accent. “Are any of you from Massachusetts? I went to high school there.” Julian answered - “I’m from San Francisco. I also went to high school in Massachusetts.” The king paused. “Education will transform your lives! We understand you’re working on a project that involves the natural world.” Handing everyone brilliantly colored silk scarves picturing animals and birds, what he next said left everyone speechless. “As our gift, Bhutan would like to offer you a place to live and do your work, one month each year for the next five years.”

What happened next, talking about happiness with a charming King, the thank yous and departure from his office, the trip from the Palace to the Guesthouse, no one would remember. Shilli, Emilie, Julian, Asha and Lapis were each in their own world, realizing they’d just been given a gift of a lifetime. Instead of having to choose one path over another, they could now travel both. Thinking to themselves: Shilli - “I could go to medical school and still work on the Forum.” Emilie - “Baby Samuel would love Bhutan. Climate issues and the natural world are a perfect fit.” Julian - “Slow but sure wins the race. A month working on the Interface would be ideal.” Asha - “I could work for woman’s rights and the Interspecies Interface. Rukmini could do his work with animal neurotransmitters.” Lapis - “Perfect! Medical school and the Corridor.”

Snug, Youri, Chopper, and Silas were waiting when their friends returned from the Palace. “You haven’t yet fully understood why you’re here. Meet us after dinner.” At last light, following the Tabby cat, Kelpie, Labrador and Bulldog through the courtyard, everyone was startled when the Admiral stepped out of the dark. “Didn’t mean to frighten you. My nightly constitutional.”

After a half hour walk along the banks of the Thimphu Chuu River, the animals walked through a large grove of trees, arriving at an open space. The purple blossoms of jacarandas had created a canopy over a clearing, different sized Himalayan mushrooms arranged in a circle. Behind each one was a large translucent mother of pearl oyster shell, attached by lichens to a vertical tree branch placed in the ground. Because the mushroom seats swivelled, when speaking to one another, everyone would be facing their own reflection. There were nineteen mushrooms, the number of destiny.

A blue poppy, gazelle, crane, heron, cat, ant, rabbit, carp, takin and white crow approached the circle, each taking a seat appropriate to their size. Youri, Silas and Chopper did the same. As three legged Snug tried to jump onto the mushroom, he fell backward. Emilie ran to help, lifting him gently, motioning to the others to take their places.

MECONOPSIS BETANICIFOLIA

“I am BLUEPOPPY.

Welcome. Thank you for listening.” We sent you each a dream. A change in the point of view of the human species has begun. Two guests would like to speak.”

A Bonobo appeared from the forest, walking to the center of the circle, his long legs and parted hair projecting a sense of gentle confidence.

BONOBO

“I am RUBICON PHI.

Finish what you start. It’s the obstacles, roadblocks, frustrations, anxieties, hurdles, the unexpected hills to climb before reaching your goals that will teach you the most. How you respond to challenges along the way is the heart of creativity. Doubting, thinking and feeling “I’m not sure, I don’t know what to do” is a good thing. Not knowing is the birthplace of wonderful outcomes. The initiative you take, staying grounded, open minded, vulnerable and empathetic, honorable in the face of crisis, struggle and conflict, how you conduct yourselves when things fall apart, will determine what lies ahead. Please remember. All of us.”

When a large zebra fish, his bluish black and silvery gold horizontal stripes shining, entered the clearing, he projected harmony, balance and absolute good.

ZEBRA FISH

“I am HAPPY.

Bhutan is my home. Humans use many of us for their medical research. After an injury I can regenerate my heart and my brain. Some of us are mutants; lacking the hormone needed to regulate stress, we are prone to serious depression. Please remember. All of us.”

When RUBICON PHI, and HAPPY left the clearing something had changed.

GAZELLE

“I am KUBLER-ROSS.

One bad decision does not define a person’s character. The human species is only one hundred and seventy five thousand years old. They are young and evolving.”

BLACK NECKED CRANE

“I am PEMA.

Fear, awe and listening are all part of learning.”

Suddenly, there was a sound no one had ever heard, a keening, projecting an almost unbearable sadness. DORJI was in mourning. KAZANTZAKIS, the PORCUPINE, had died. Everyone felt what DORJI felt.

WHITE BELLIED HERON

“I am DORJI.

Telling others about your values means nothing unless you apply those values to yourself. It’s not what happens to you, it’s what you feel and do afterwards that is important.”

ANT

“I am HARRIET.

Do humans understand *they* might be the endangered species? Of all animals, it is only the human brain that atrophies as the years advance. Unconscious humans are resting. The human species has much to learn about their brain’s sleep cycles.”

RABBIT

“I am BETTELHEIM.

You have declared a long overdue necessity. Do not look outside yourself for the leader.”

CARP

“I am WHEREIBELONG.

Know what you are feeling. People without dreams are easy to control.”

TAKIN

“I am BENTO.

The human brain can send signals. You just don’t yet know how.”

RABBIT (BETTELHEIM)

“Keep your promises.”

WHITE CROW

“I am McCAY.

You have taken the first step, understanding every living thing is interconnected.
Interspecies Forum.

BLACK NECKED CRANE (PEMA)

“Do you remember the voice you heard the last day of your trial?”

ANT (HARRIET)

“We are here to learn and work together, to offer one another assistance.”

TAKIN (BENTO)

“You are beginning to see what you haven’t seen before.”

ORANGE TABBY CAT

“I am PENTACLES.

Inter galaxy Interface. Those who have been waiting will contact you. There is much you don’t know, much to learn. Be ready. Don’t be afraid. When you need us, we will always be there.”

At the precise moment the Tabby cat stopped speaking, a tone filled the clearing, the exact distant fog horn sound everyone had heard during the trial. This time the noise was deafening. As five young people approached, everyone gasped, watching as replicas of Shilli, Emilie, Julian, Asha and Lapis, dressed in the clothing each young person was wearing, walked slowly to the center of the circle.

SHILLI

“We appear this way to make things easier for you for our first meeting. The unknown can be frightening. We understand different aspects of reality, as do many animals and others in the natural world. Because of your courage in standing for what you believe, especially in the face of great obstacles, because you overcame a fear of failure with your will and determination to succeed, finding the strength at more than one critical moment, you have shown us you are ready to help. Until now, your species seemed unable to conceive of the idea of All. Our *religion* is all of us.”

EMILIE

“Your commitment to and communications with the natural world have told us who you are. In your mind, silently, ask a question for which only you know the answer.”

The answer to each person’s question, in addition to an image, immediately came to five minds.

JULIAN

“There has been a fifty percent increase in your planet’s population in the last thirty years. You do not fully understand personal responsibility, time and space, the systems of planets and stars, the wisdom of the animal world. It is the young and old of your species we are interested in.”

ASHA

“Each of you has unique gifts Your species believes it is superior, yet you harm each other and your living space, choosing self as a priority over love and imagination. Your bias to favor the self, to be with others like yourselves, allows you to conduct experiments on animals and other living beings, in the name of science and education. You have not paid attention to many teachers. What you call *religion* is both beneficial and harmful. We believe *All* is a priority over Self.”

LAPIS

“When you return to your countries, we will contact you. We trust you.”

As the five left the clearing, walking slowly in single file, the same thought came to Shilli, Emilie, Julian, Asha and Lapis.

“All of us.
Though uncharted, the gap is bridgeable.”