

When the Admiral arrived unexpectedly, he was surrounded with affectionate hugs. Who could have imagined that what had begun at the Albemarle Inn in Australia, would continue at the Halcyon in the Czech Republic, now to become an internationally watched trial in the Netherlands?

Tomorrow, Julian was to testify. To lighten the mood, one of the staff at the U.S. Embassy gave him a tour. The first stop was a closet on the main floor, coats hanging from the rod, several boxes on the floor. “Notice anything unusual?” Julian - “Looks like a normal closet to me.” When the man moved the boxes, there was a metal hook recessed into the floor. The closet floor was actually a trap door that, when lifted, led to a staircase to the basement below. Julian - “Have you ever had to hide anyone?” “Yes.” A seven foot tall French antique grandfather clock in the entrance hall was next on the tour. The clock’s base had a door which, no longer filled with the original workings, (the clock now running on batteries), was a perfect hiding place. Hidden in plain sight. Did all embassies have secrets?

As Julian entered the courtroom, a boy he’d met somewhere, he didn’t remember where, approached him. He *did* remember he hadn’t liked something about him. “My father’s an attorney. When you testify, don’t say you can communicate with animals. If you do, you’ll lose your case. Everyone will laugh at you.” As Julian walked to meet his attorney, Silas the Labrador, sitting in an aisle seat, nudged him. “Be true to yourself.”

Renowned for his unusual T shirts, Julian, knowing well a suit and tie was now appropriate, didn’t disappoint. His white necktie had the word “torpor” crossed out with a large X.

Paul Osprey - “What is your name?” “Julian Emerson.” “Do you know why you’re here?” “Yes. To express my commitment to make changes in global education.” “Do you communicate with animals?” “Yes.” The boy who’d told Julian to lie got up, abruptly, and left the courtroom. Julian continued. “We are working now on interspecies communication.”

Julian - “Many of my generation are learning things that will help us to make the changes we think are important: clear thought and action, self confidence, finishing what we start, having a positive spirit when the going gets rough, teamwork, initiative, tenacity and compassion. I’ve contacted many people my age. We understand different cultures have different perspectives and prejudices. Valuing innovation, the power of new ideas, caring for each other, we’ve all committed to work together. “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

The night before she was to testify, Emilie met with her attorney, Raoul Lapin, at the Danish embassy. As they began to talk, she started to cry. “What’s wrong?” “Someone just gave me a note. It said my cat ran away and was killed.” Raoul Lapin - “I’ll be back in a moment.”

Emilie sat quietly. Returning to Denmark from Prague, she was sad beyond words to hear that her eighteen year old cat, Hygge, had died, peacefully, in his sleep. The following month, visiting the local shelter, she saw a Turkish Angora cat, one blue eye, one amber, looking directly at her. That, like Hygge and Snug, he had an abnormally small stomach and had to eat small meals throughout the day, she took as a sign. She named him Mattheissen. How she regretted not having brought him with her to the Netherlands.

Raoul Lapin knew well the clever, cruel and dirty tricks often used in a legal action. This particular trial had already had its share, a bomb threat and a kidnaping of one of the defendants. He phoned a friend in Denmark. While waiting for a response, he thought about what he’d just been told. People all over the world had registered hundreds of different domain names relating to the trial. Although most were legitimate, others were fraudulent, pretending to be charities raising funds for animals.

In less than an hour, Emilie heard the truth. “Your cat is alive, he’s being cared for by your neighbor. Someone was trying to rattle you before your testimony tomorrow. Mattheissen is fine. He misses you.”

The following morning Emilie was ready. Raoul Lapin. “Will you please state your name?” “Emilie Larsen.” As the questions continued, everyone was stunned, not only at her knowledge of the environment and climate, but her ability to explain extremely detailed and complicated concepts so anyone could understand. Having already established a relationship with many young people who shared her passion, Emilie outlined in detail the changes she would pursue in the future, not just in Denmark but worldwide. From rising carbon dioxide to the melting of the arctic ice sheet, weather patterns to sea levels, she handled her cross examination well. She hadn’t yet told any of her friends she was pregnant.

The next day, when Asha took the stand, Raoul Lapin, posed the first question. “What is your name?” “Asha Singh.” “Do you understand why you are here?” It’s my privilege to defend the human race.”

Asha, as always a flower in her hair, looked directed at the judges. Describing the recent riots in India, the rape and death of a young girl, she explained how she’d contacted every school in her district. Everyone she spoke with was willing to commit to work with her to make changes. “I am to be married and will soon have children of my own. I will devote my life to ensure that my daughter will have the same rights as my son. The editor of the Times of India, a woman, has agreed to meet with me to discuss how we can begin to engage every female in India.”

The day before the closing arguments, Paul Osprey, had some questions for Julian and Asha. Something was wrong. Instead of his normal friendly and helpful personality, Mr. Osprey was irritable, impatient, solicitous, repeatedly cutting them both off as they answered his questions. When he left, brusquely, “I won’t be in court tomorrow. Mr. Lapin will take my place.”

Silas the Labrador explained. “If I tell you, you must not tell anyone. This morning, there was an assassination threat against his two daughters. He was told if he continued with the trial, they would be killed. It was an attempt to throw him off his case, to distract him. No one but the International Police knows this, no one will ever know. They’re protecting his children, I assure you, the people responsible will be caught.”

Every night Jane went to visit with Ayres and Victoria. Each had a separate room, a loving person always with them. Finding Ayres' room empty, her instinct was instant. Contact the police. The power of the uniform. Someone had stolen an embassy guard's uniform from a local cleaning establishment, allowing them to enter the building without arousing suspicion.

Hearing the news, Shilli, Lapis, Asha and Emilie rushed to the U.S. embassy, Julian - "Anyone have any ideas?" Shilli - "Marcus taught us to ask for help." As everyone sat quietly, an embassy guard walked into the room with an English bulldog. "This is Arnaldo." Shilli - "Named after the cartographer?" "Yes." Arnaldo walked to where everyone was sitting, rolled over on his right side, paws stretched forward, showing his unique belly markings, staying still as a statue.

Suddenly, Asha yelled, "Look at Arnaldo. Look at him!" Everyone looked and saw nothing unusual. A classic English bulldog, a red fawn coat with white patches, a wrinkled face and fold over his nose. "Don't you see it? Look at the markings. It's a map, the white patch shaped like a circle. That's where Ayres is!" The guard left immediately. Asha turned to Julian, "Hidden in plain sight." Thinking the same thing, everyone started talking at once. Was it normal for so many terrible things to happen during a trial?

Ayres was found, unharmed. The kidnaper was arrested. It was the woman Nicholas had seen the first day of the trial. She'd phoned-in the fictitious bomb threat and left the note for Emilie. Her goal was accomplished. Attorneys would now, finally, have to deal with her. In her mind, negative attention was better than no attention at all.

For the defendants, after hours of direct examination, it was finally over. The closing arguments of the prosecution and defense would be pivotal.