

The recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize is chosen by five members of the Prize Committee. The prize is awarded to the person who had “done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses.”

Since Ayres the orangutan and Victoria the chimpanzee had filed their lawsuit in the Hague, the world had taken notice. From the first day nominations were accepted, the Committee was inundated, a hundred fold the normal number. The same two names. A difficult decision.

By bringing a legal action against the human race, had Victoria and Ayres brought into the world’s consciousness, as had never been done before, the urgent necessity for change? Had their call to engage the youth of the world to commit to change been successful? The answer was “Yes!”

Samuel’s parents, Ahmed and Nisrine Karam, sat with Wayne Catori; the twins, Shilli and Matheus Louwrens, with their parents, Andimba and Nico. Neil Augula, his mother and father, Celie and Bradley, were seated next to Peter and Marie Emerson and their son, Julian. Next to them was Asha and her parents, Aboli and Manu Singh.

Emilie Larsen, her mother, Nan, and step father, Victor Mortensen, sat with the newest members of their family, Lapis Lashin, his mother Anya and father Denis.

Irina Klima (Lapis’ cousin), her mother Vera and father Jan, sat next to Nicholas Lada, Irina’s husband to be. A year ago, Lapis had come upon Nicholas hiding in an alley, having lost his memory after witnessing his parents’ accidental deaths. Like Lapis, Nicholas had Synesthesia. That they would now be cousins, by marriage, was no coincidence.

On December tenth, the Nobel Peace Prize was shared by two Laureates, Victoria the chimpanzee and Ayres the orangutan.

From the Valley of Elephants to Yellow Coach Beach, the Baobab Forest to Lake Atitlan, the Ice Cave to the Himalayan majesty of Bhutan, the natural world was there in spirit.

Though rarely seen in Oslo, the Aurora Borealis appeared the moment the award presentation began, vanishing at the ceremony's conclusion. Never before had nature's timing been so precise, the celestial spectacle so brilliant.

Arriving with Victoria the chimpanzee at the U.S. Embassy following the ceremony, Ayres the orangutan immediately went to find Shilli, Emilie, Julian, Asha and Lapis. Opening his long arms, an amazing span of seven feet, he took them all into his embrace, communicating "I miss the forest, the branches, the trees. I miss being alone." Shilli, looking into Ayres' gentle eyes, started signing. Holding his fingers and thumb together, he first touched near his mouth, then moved his hand back toward his ear to touch his cheeks. Ayres nodded, understanding. Home.

From the moment they had left the zoo in Prague, living temporarily in the Chuchle forest, flying to the farmhouse near Dresden, staying at Jane Green's farm in Virginia, to the Netherlands for the trial, and now in Norway, Victoria and Ayres wanted to go home. For them, international prestige meant nothing.

The Laureates were given a medal, diploma and monetary award. Ayres wanted Jane Green to have his medal; Victoria communicated that hers be given to Irina. One diploma was given to Samuel's parents, the other to be placed on Marcus' grave. Victoria and Ayres neither understood nor cared about money. "If you want it, we would like you to have it." The two million dollars would be divided equally between Shilli, Emilie, Julian, Asha and Lapis.

It was arranged that Victoria would leave for Tanzania the following morning, Ayres for the island of Borneo. Home.

It was after midnight when Jane Green arrived from the kitchen carrying a cake, the silhouette of a Labrador, the word *Jaslems* in white icing. “The embassy received an anonymous note. The request was approved by the Ambassador.”

Gentil and Snug walked to the dining table. Snug, the orange Tabby cat, was known for his sweet disposition. Born with an abnormally small stomach, he ate undersized meals throughout the day. Run over by a car, his back left leg had been amputated. “A human gave me a home. The love we now share is the love you all shared, and always will, with Marcus. Part of the whole. What is the most important thing Marcus wanted us all to remember?”

Before anyone else could speak, Gentil, the Labrador puppy, was immediate with his response. “That we are part of one another.”

Everyone was silent. Lapis thought of the wonderful times he and Samuel had spent together, how his best friend had given his life to save Argos the Golden Retriever. Asha remembered her dream after the accident, floating in shadowless light, the indescribably beautiful colors, everyone morphed together. Emilie’s memory of piloting the biplane on New Year’s Eve with Ayres, Victoria, Gentil and Chopper, came to her mind. Julian thought how much he loved reading late at night, Marco the Dalmatian sleeping at his side. Shilli felt both his excitement hearing about his scholarship to medical school, and his heartbreak when told his twin had died. Part of the whole.

Marcus the Labrador would always be part of them and they of him.
Shilli, Emilie, Julian, Asha, Samuel and Lapis
would always be part of one another.

What had started in Bhutan would not end in Norway.
It was the beginning of an unprecedented and innovative upheaval.

