

Julian's aunt, uncle and best friend, Wayne, were waiting at the San Francisco airport. There was no new information about his parents' whereabouts.

With Wayne due to return to Arizona the next day, the two friends talked well into the night. Julian was to leave for the East Coast in five days. Should he stay at home or go back to college? What could he do to help his parents? Should he tell his friends and professors what had happened in Bhutan or simply say nothing? How to explain his new gray blue skin?

Wayne - "Remember the discussion you had with Marcus about thinking and feeling being equally important?" Julian - "I'm not sure now. Marcus believed feeling was most important. On the flight I overheard two people talking about how the brain stops developing after the age of twenty-five . . . feeling is. . ." Finally letting go, staring to cry, he couldn't stop for several minutes. Wayne - "Cry!" Silas the yellow Labrador walked into the room, putting his head in Julian's lap.

The yellow Labrador had first appeared at the trial in the Hague. Because he and Julian's dog, Marco the dalmatian, had become friends, Silas returned with them both to the United States. After Marco died, the majestic dog was a constant comfort. Like Marcus, he listened to what others said, never sitting in judgment. Julian - "I love you Silas. The interspecies corridor isn't going to be easy. Some people in other countries eat dogs." Silas answered. "Americans eat cows. Cows are sacred in India."

Julian - "If another outage is coming, it's up to us to do everything we can to be ready, to help others prepare. Look past appearances, optimism and open minds instead of fear. Time for the squeaky wheel." Silas - "Squeaky wheel?" Julian - "What is noticed most will get attention. The louder you are about something, the more people will listen." Silas - "What about people who want attention and will say anything to get it?" Julian - "It doesn't matter. Everyone will be affected by what's going to happen. Know what you don't know. Let's start by asking the experts for help."

When the subject turned to hunting, the soft spoken Wayne was adamant. Wayne - "Survival is one thing, Hunting for sport is something else. Why would anyone want to kill another living being just to prove they can hit a target?" Silas asked Julian "What did you write on the wall panel?" "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened."

When Wayne left for Arizona the following morning, Julian slept around the clock. When his uncle gently shook him, saying someone was at the front door to see him, he was far from awake. A dark haired woman dressed in navy pants, a white shirt and blazer, nodded as he entered the front hall. Julian - "How can I help you?" Tipping her head, obviously taken aback by seeing a blue skinned young man, she introduced herself. "I'm Detective White. "Are you Julian Emerson?" Julian - "Yes." "I have a warrant for your arrest."

Months before, receiving a notice for jury duty, he'd put the letter away in a drawer and forgotten it. Little did he know not answering a jury summons would lead to this. Apologizing sincerely for his mistake, he asked the detective if she'd agree to speak with his attorney, Jane Green. She went outside to make the call. As had so many things in the recent past, what happened sparked a connection to a Marcus memory. "When you make a mistake, do what you can to make things right." At that moment, Julian made a promise to himself.

Carefully carrying the seeds he'd been given in Bhutan, Julian walked outside to the orchard, a foggy and overcast afternoon. He loved avocados, four trees in the back yard providing a constant supply. Completing the circle of the four cados was a kumquat tree, overflowing with small yellow orange fruit he called *yum-yums*. Knowing avocado trees don't self-pollinate, needing another tree nearby to bear fruit, he started digging into the soft dirt, planting the seeds under each of the five trees. Two speckled starlings, circling overhead, chirped in morse code. "Parents safe." As he walked back to the house a noise startled him. The small silver duck sculpture sitting on the side of the bird bath came to life and flew away.

Though difficult for him, Julian trusted his intuition and instinct and decided to return to school. He would tell the truth about what happened. Whether people believed him wasn't his concern. Against the tide.

At dinner, he asked his Aunt and Uncle his favorite question. "What was the first thing you read that moved and inspired you?" Uncle John - "Stranger in a Strange Land, Have you read it?" Julian - "No." "It changed how I looked at the world." "Ann of Green Gables" for me, smiled his Aunt, countering with her own question. "If you could meet and spend a day with one person, living or dead, who would it be?" Julian - "Marcus Aurelius. How about you?" Uncle John - "Three, not one. Shakespeare, Winston Churchill and Abraham Lincoln." Aunt Beth - "That's easy, a quiet afternoon with Joan of Arc, Hildegard of Bingen, Marie Curie and Eleanor Roosevelt, no men allowed."

Having read the final grant applications, Julian made his choices. Next week's computer conference with Shilli, Emilie, Asha and Lapis would tell the tale.