

The Council Book Eight Chapter Eight Marcus and Snug

Visiting Australia with their families to attend the Olympics, staying at the Albermarle Inn overlooking the most beautiful natural harbour in the world, five youngsters were approached by a Kelpie named Youri and Snug, a three legged orange and white tabby cat, Youri and Snug cared about every individual, human or non human, Believing that empathy was the guiding principle to a happy life, they motivated everyone they met, It was the first time Shilli, Asha, Emilie, Julian and Samuel had understood the communication of animals.

When a white crow asked the youngsters if they would deliver a message at the Opening ceremony, they agreed. The five were standing on the platform in the center of the arena, when an unexpected outage began, shutting down all electronic devices, “The animals and the natural world have asked us to tell you something,” “We all need to listen, we need to change.” “Humans aren’t superior, just different.” “We fear what we don’t know.” You are all witnesses.” As hundreds of birds flew over the platform, forming interlocking letters LISTEN inside the Olympic circles of yellow, red, blue, orange, violet and green, eighty thousand people were in disbelief. Lapis, the singing sensation of the world, then sang *Changes Free the Hearts of You and Me*.

The following year, the youngsters were surprised to meet again in Prague. After explaining that another outage was imminent, White Crow asked them to meet with Marcus, a dark yellow Labrador, who lived at The Halcyon, to answer questions, help them understand. Prague now had the world’s attention.

At their first meeting with Marcus the Labrador, Shilli, Asha, Emilie, Julian and Samuel were electrified by his sheer presence. the depth of his convictions, how highly principled he was , his lightheartedness. He radiated thoughtfulness and kindness.

Marcus - “Your meeting each other last year in Australia was not a coincidence. We chose to ask you for your help for a reason - because you care, but didn’t yet know what to do. It’s important to precisely define the issue you are questioning. You can’t fix what you can’t define.” Let’s begin our meetings sitting quietly for a meditation.”

The following day’s gathering began with Marcus asking Shilli, Asha, Emilie, Julian and Samuel - “Please repeat after me. I was wrong. I was wrong. I was wrong” The kids all laughed. Marcus - “Say it to yourselves over and over. so when the time comes and it’s true. it won’t be so hard. We all make mistakes. Admitting them is the only way to learn . We learn far more from our mistakes than any successes.”The acronym, IWW, became familiar.

Another meeting, Julian asked Marcus. “What if my best isn’t good enough?” Marcus - “Doing your best will always be good enough, even if the outcome isn’t what you expected. The word activism is simple - you have to act! You have to stand for something.”

In the days to come, bits of wisdom came daily. Marcus - “We’ve all done and said things that were hurtful to others. We each have a breaking point.” At the meeting’s end., everyone went outside into the garden to invite creativity. Marcus always reminded them to listen...sometimes to other than human voices.

During the outage, animals asked for help. Explaining that, using sign language with their attorneys, Ayres the Orangutan and Victoria the Chimpanzee planned to bring a legal action against the human species for depraved indifference. Would Shilli, Asha, Julian, Emilie and Samuel be willing to defend the human race, outline their ideas for the necessary changes, promise to devote their lives working for these changes. Everyone agreed.

At the beginning of each morning meeting, to help the youngsters increase their vocabulary, Marcus handed out small cards, a word on one side, the definition on the other. *Condign, Palliative, Equanimity, Profligate, Recalibrate, Immutable, Plenipotential.*

Marcus always spoke the truth. “You are in your teens. This is the time of your life when you are fixated on yourself. No matter how hard, begin looking beyond yourselves. Honesty and moral character will grow as you mature. You will learn to simplify complex thoughts, your character will be tested as new crises are handled. What you think might be a simple thing for you to do could have a galvanizing effect on others.

Marcus continued. “If I gave all of you the same set of facts, the identical information, you will have different conclusions because you come from different cultures. Ideas that are currently not compatible will begin to be discussed, changes in thinking happening very gradually. Putting those changes into practice will take time.

Each of you has certain talents. One thing I’ve noticed that you all share is pattern recognition, which is very important.

Every human has the ability to manifest what they imagine. When you focus your mind on your dreams for the future, your expressed intent goes a long way to achieve them. Don't waste your imagination on unimportant things, focus on important goals. They will grow from the energy you give them.

As you grow older and face one challenge after another, more complicated and sometimes dangerous, all you can do is your best. If you ask yourself, "Can I handle this?" and still hesitate, ask yourself again "Am I better than this?" "What are humankind's highest values?" Marcus had the ability to encapsulate. "The most important thing in any relationship is trust! Asking for help is a strength not a weakness. Change means participation. We are fortunate to live in an environment of beauty, art and innovative thinking. As each day passes, we must continue to understand the importance of education, service, discipline, community, leadership, philanthropy, and above all, gratitude and kindness."

Slowly, after several weeks of daily meetings, the youngsters began redefining the basics of a good life, Marcus watched as each began to have one overriding passion, with imagination and knowledge, curiosity was at the top of the list. Independent thinkers were on the way to make changes never before imagined.

When the five arrived for the next morning meeting, a white crow and a pig sat on the table. "My name is ASTUTE. Marcus had an errand to do but will be here shortly. Are you as fascinated by the brain as I am? Our brain changes every hundredth of a millisecond. how we use it is important. In school, you've probably been taught that the normal way to think is analytical.

It's only when we are quiet and alone that our brain cells begin to explore, go on adventures of their own, to places that our normal thinking. Following the way our mind separates duties, doesn't allow. Asha interjected - "Do you mean day dreaming?" "Yes, in a way. Out logical thinking actually discourages. censors and silences our bizarre and outrageous thoughts. Our brain deserves the openness that will allow it to think what it wants. A human said it best - "Analytical thinking is antithetical to inspiration. I have a question for you. Humans call the lines around their eyes *crows' feet*? Why do humans want to remove my feet? Are my feet on their last legs?"

The pig began. My name is B. Guiling. You are lucky to have Marcus as your teacher and role model. I'm sure you have no idea how often he has put your needs ahead of his own. Shilli interjected - "Whenever a negative message was directed at him, his reaction was always the same. He smiled at the person, then politely answered their questions and concerns."

B, Guiling - "Until Marcus arrives, let me tell you a little about dogs. Marcus knows more about humans than most humans do about dogs. Dogs instinctively protect the young and vulnerable. They know their family's schedules, when they leave, when they are due to return, listening to the sound of their particular car, When their family goes on a vacation, they're not pleased. Dogs know how you are feeling. happy or sad and are more likely to approach someone who is unhappy, hoping to help. Marcus is the definition of empathy, Dogs are experts at what you humans call body language. When humans release a chemical called oxytocin, dogs know it, look at you with all their love. When their guardians dislike someone. and usually follow their lead by keeping their distance.

Dogs remember kind, generous and compassionate acts, as well as the opposite. Seeing a human being unkind, a dog will avoid contact. A dog's sense of smell, one hundred million times stronger than a human's, can be a life saver. Marcus instantly knows where each of you have been. You didn't need to have touched something, just walked close to it for him to know where you were. Dogs can detect certain cancers.. Everything in your behavior is noticed by dogs, the tone of your voice, your posture, how fast or slow you walk, your yelling at one another.

Dogs can get sick when their family members quarrel, even something like your slamming a book on the table can affect them. They know immediately when members of their family are scared, whether justifiable or not. If you ever sense a dog is frightened, playing classical music will help calm them.

Human scientists, studying canine behavioral genetics, are asking when did certain tendencies in canine behavior begin? They're looking into different methods to train dogs, questioning: how the environment affects each animal's behavior, does the environment affect different breeds differently. Is a dog's decline in cognitive skills related to their age, breed, genetic makeup?" Bowing his head, B. Guiling the pig laughed - "Although my lecture about dogs has now come to an end, I just wanted to say one final thing.

Marcus has told me you are all value conscious, how proud he is of you, your gifts of logic and intuition, your powers of perception and insight, understanding both sides of an argument, seeing past deception, delays and restraints."

Julian - "Talk about deception. I just read how criminals go to dry cleaners and steal uniforms of priests, nuns and police. The power of the uniform. Don't remember who said it - "The greatest evil often hides behind the greatest good."

Asha - "This has nothing to do with anything important but I was trying to remember who told me this, was it you, Julian? While waiting outside to be picked up to go to a fancy party, you noticed a basketball game in progress in the front yard next door and joined in. When your shirt got dirty, your neighbor ran and got a can of spray paint and painted over all the marks. Emergencies demand emergency solutions. Does anyone know why a mirror reverses an image horizontally but not vertically?"

Emilie - "When I was little, my father would take me to Tivoli Gardens, where we passed a large fountain with changing colored lights, blue yellow, green, and finally brilliant red. I always wanted to see the cascading water turn red but each trip the timing wasn't right. The last trip before he died, when the traffic light turned green, instead of driving turned off the ignition and we sat there, people honking behind us, getting angry, His last "I love you."

Julian - "When Marcus gets here, want to ask him what he thought about something. In Greek mythology, the Chimera was a monstrous fire breathing creature, created using parts of different animals, a snake, lion, a goat, Researchers, studying how people develop diseases, how the individual diseases progress. are now beginning to look into the possibility of creating a animal-human hybrid embryo, known as chimeras. In genetics, a chimera is a single organism produced through the combination of cells from different zygotes. fertilized eggs.

In the past studies have explored the benefit of developing plant and animal chimeras. Using human cells to do this is prohibited by many governments worldwide. Many believe that creating chimeras using human and animal cells violates the dignity of being human. I'm curious if Marcus agrees. What about the dignity of being a non human animal? Plants can be stressed the same way that animals and humans are. Plants can learn, remember, make choices and decisions. They knew it was time to begin communicate with humans when the time for many of their species was running out."

Shilli - "I've begun to write down all the lessons Marcus continues to teach us. Top of the current list is understanding how many people believe that security and identity are based primarily on the possession of material things. Last week we talked about the importance of avoiding complacency and indifference. how courage didn't just take strength, but also a negotiation between our strengths and weaknesses, how knowing them both was equally important. He reminded us that the smallest of good deeds could often, in the future, make an important difference in the lives of those involved, all unbeknownst to us.

B.Guiling - "Water in a glass bottle, when frozen, will break the glass. We are all just like drops of water. What we will begin to do now will change everything. Humans have not only thought they were superior to animals, they completely underestimated the intelligence of those in the natural world."

Each of the five young people continuously thanked Marcus, telling him precisely how he had inspired them. As time passed, they would inspire each other.

What was at stake was more than changing things temporarily, individual governments, it was changes that would be sustained by generations to come. Imagination will always triumph over cruelty.

When Marcus walked in for the next meeting, everyone immediately noticed something different about him. Sadness. “You each played a role in why you were chosen to be here. There will be times when you’ll be at a place where there are no signposts. No one will be there to help you decide the right thing to do. All you can do is your best. Tell the truth. Have the courage to speak up about things that are not right.

But, when you do, know there will be consequences. Fear is a weapon many use for dominance and control. When you’re afraid, it’s hard to make good decisions, you do things you’d never do otherwise, and might regret later. Don’t underestimate yourselves. Remember what it feels like to love, to be home, to be strong. Consider other people’s feelings. People who are mean, unkind, and selfish are that way because they’re afraid. Sometimes it hurts to feel. Telling each other how you feel can be hard. If you’re angry with someone, tell them. If you love someone, tell them. I love you all.” After a long pause, Marcus says something that surprises everyone. “Competition for power is at the heart of violence. Be prepared for the unexpected.”

The man who said he loved animals suddenly came into the room. Pulling a gun from his pocket, he shot Marcus, turned and walked out.

At the center of a large clearing in the forest sat a giant, gnarled Prometheus stump. A whistling flock of mourning doves swoops in, creating a closed circle around the tree. As Shilli walked toward the circle, doves move to open an entrance. Crying, "I never thanked you. I heard everything you said. I promise to find out who I am. You taught me how to play. I love you, Marcus." Emilie, trying not to cry, wasn't succeeding. "I never thanked you. I loved being with you, Marcus. I promise to speak up for myself."

Asha is crying. "You are the best teacher I ever had. I promise to always do my best. I love you." Julian - "Thank you, Marcus. I will remember everything. I love you." Lapis - "I never thanked you. I promise not to take myself too seriously. I love you." Samuel was overwhelmed with emotion. "I love you, I will always love you. I never thanked you, Marcus. I promise to be as good as my word. to find out what I stand for. You listened, you were always gentle and sweet. I love you."

Samuel felt responsible for Marcus' murder. Snug the three legged tabby cat had told him years before "No matter how scared, or tired, or ill you are, no matter how lost, or confused, or desperate you become, no matter how lonely, depressed or cranky you feel, just do what you can with what you have, from right where you are, it will always be enough." He knew something was not right about the man who was at the meeting but he hadn't spoken up. After he returned to Lebanon, while walking home one day, he heard a boy crying for help, screaming, in front of a house on fire. "My dog, Argos, is inside,,he can't get out!" Samuel ran into the house, took off his shirt to cover the dog, who then jumped from his arms to run to safety. Samuel died when he was hit by the collapsing roof.

Samuel was devastated at Marcus' death. Lapis, overwrought with emotion at Samuel's death, asked if he could take Samuel's place at the upcoming trial in the Hague.

The trial attracted international attention. No one could have imagined that Ayres and Victoria would be the first non humans to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Having left the Princeton Sanctuary to live with Jane Green on her Virginia farm, Typo the river otter and Snow Lotus were up to something. They both agreed - the time had come for everyone to be together again. No details would be told to those invited. Everyone would be flown by a private plane to a secret location. After they get together, they would be returned to their homes the following day.

Snow Lotus would create a small circular island in the middle of the Atlantic ocean with a landing strip and a simple structure that would accommodate everyone, ensuring each human and animal's privacy. How to design the building? The two discussed recreating the library of the Albemarle Inn in Australia, where not only had the five youngsters first met each other. but also when they first began to communicate with Youri the Kelpie and Snug, the three legged orange and white tabby cat. Another room would resemble where Shilli, Emilie, Asha, Julian and Samuel got together every day at the Halcyon in Prague for what would become life changing talks with Marcus the dark yellow Labrador.

Instead they decided on a large open space surrounded by a circle of majestic Baobab trees, roots in the air. Invitations were sent.

As one plane after another landed, the sky's color changed to green, with no sun visible. Those arriving were intrigued to see a large sapphire blue grass lawn, comfortable couches and armchairs, tables. individual beds, and, in the distance, outhouses of multiple architectural designs, from a log cabin to a miniature Taj Mahal. The temperature was comfortable for one and all. Giant butterflies, the size of a two seat fixed wing aircraft, flew overhead dropping parachutes containing all necessities for the coming twenty four hours.

Jane Green arrived with Jim the monkey, Ana the squirrel, Saltz the lamb,, Lisa the llama, Ethen the pig, Moon the goat, and Sam the bear cub. Thrilled to see Shilli, Asha and Julian, she introduced everyone, Having heard about the "recipes," the three had endless questions about each and every detail.

Everyone had arrived, overjoyed to see one another. Typo introduced Snow Lotus who then immediately ran away with Linger, Elsker, Zohha and Poti, the other puppies who'd last seen one another in Bhutan.

After a few hours, Snow Lotus returned - "There is one more flight to arrive. I think you will all be very happy to see the passengers." Within minutes the plane landed. As the door opened, a dark yellow Labrador ran down the stairs to where Shilli, Asha and Julian were sitting, jumping on them, licking their faces. It was Marcus, who had been murdered years before. As Samuel walked down the plane's staircase, everone ran to greet him. He had died saving Argos the Golden Retriever from a burning building. Lapis and Emilie. followed by Ellen March were the last to deplane. .

Before anyone could begin communicating with Marcus, Snow Lotus asked him to come with him for a short walk. They would return in less than a half hour.

The yellow Labrador and apricot poodle puppy walked to the edge of the small island, sitting down underneath a Baobab tree. When Snow Lotus whistled, another dark yellow Labrador came running. Snow Lotus- “Marcus, meet your brother, also named Marcus. He lives at the Sanctuary in Princeton, New Jersey. The two dogs sat quietly, listening carefully to every word. Snow Lotus- “ You were both born in Australia, a litter of two dogs. One of you was adopted by a family who lived in Prague, the other by a family who lived in the United States. To make things easier when I’m talking with you both, I’ll call the Prague Marcus *Sage*, for Wise Dog, and the American Marcus, *Philo*, for Philosopher,

Turning to *Sage*, Snow Lotus began. “When I was at the Princeton Sanctuary *Philo* approached me to talk, telling me he had cancer, his family had been killed in an automobile accident while driving him to the doctor for treatment. I cured the cancer. I trust him and contact him regularly to relay my messages to those in the Sanctuary office. He’s already been the intermediary to avert three tragedies in what will one day be known as the Age of Transition.

Turning to Marcus the *Sage*, “The role you played, teaching five young people both to defend the human race and to begin the steps necessary to save humanity is incalculable: Your wisdom, empathy and compassion will be their inspiration for the rest of their lives. Now, *Philo* and *Sage*, go and enjoy time with your friends.”

Returning to the gathering, Snow Lotus had one last thing to do - ask Samuel, Emilie, Lapis and Argos the golden retriever to go with him on a short walk, The five went to the same spot under the majestic Baobab Tree.

Samuel had died saving Argos from a house fire, When Lapis and Emilie were married in Denmark, Argos arrived at the wedding as a gift from Samuel's family, who had adopted him after their son's death..

When Argos went over to sit with Samuel - it was the first time the dog had met the man who had saved his life. "Thank you." Samuel - "It looks like we're all dealing with personal issues about life and death. You may not know this, but I felt responsible for Marcus' death. My instincts told me that the man who said he loved animals was lying, but I never spoke up. I know what it feels like to believe you were responsible for someone else's death, Argos - "When I arrived in Denmark and visited the Sanctuary , I met a penguin named Dorian who helped me understand it was not my fault that Lapis had died. Even though I went with him to Russia to protect him, no one could have prevented his murder.

Samuel looked at Argos - When I died, it was my time. I'd done what I'd come here to do. Now you can decide what you came here to do. I'd like to make a suggestion. Would you consider becoming a service dog? Argos - "I never thought about that. Yes! I'd like to be trained to become a service dog." Two years later, Argos would save the lives of 14 soldiers, protecting them from an improvised explosive device. Losing a leg, Argos returned to the Sanctuary to begin training assistance dogs.

Samuel went to find Marcus. “I knew something was wrong with that man, but I never spoke up. I am sorry. I am so sorry. Please forgive me.” Marcus - “It wasn’t your fault. I had done what I came here to do. I love you.” Samuel and Marcus sat quietly with each other, Julian and Snug soon to arrive.

Three legged Snug, his front paws crossed, bowed in front of Marcus “You taught me not to always believe what I think. I love you, Marcus, you are gallant. I’m still confused about one thing. If a family has a child, and they have to move to a difference location, they take their child with them. Why would they not do the same with a animal who is also a member of their family? I:ve seen the looks on the faces of many animals when they know they are losing their family, being put in a shetter. I understand there could be financial reasons, but it has never made sense to me, that a human would walk away from a member of their family.”

Julian - “Marcus, you always seemed to know the precise words to use for each of us to to question a decision we’d made or were about to make, to change our minds, using the exact expression that evoked our different cultural backgrounds, You focused on us as individuals, with many small moments of intimacy. The thanks, gratitude, appreciation and love we have for you, for indelibly shaping our lives. will never end. You inspired us to aspire for more and more change, which, because of you, has now become part of our core.”

Shilli - “Marcus, do you remember teaching us how to form a human chain to rescue someone who’d been trapped, in a ditch, over a cliff? None of us ever thought we would use that information.

Hyuuuuuujkjkjknhl can't tell you the number of times we've helped people and animals in different situations a fire, earthquake, flood, a dog who had fallen off a cliff, hanging onto a small ledge later saved a human's life..”

Emilie- “You encouraged us to think about the unimaginable. an idea too foolish for anyone to take seriously. The possibility that everything on earth was put here as an experiment., so those from a far more advanced universe could observe and record how the human species thought and behaved. Even the executives of the largest international comic book company thought it was too far fetched to capture imaginations. The first thing discovered was obvious - humans thought they were superior to animals. trees, flowers, plants, clouds, everything in the natural world. Clues were left everywhere for them to discover. A small insect could regenerate after being boiled, Plants and flowers could cure human diseases. It wasn't until the 21st century that the species began to consider and question that, possibly, they were not the superior beings they'd previously thought they were.

Ashs - “Would it be possible to change a flea bite from a negative to a positive? Fleas live by consuming the blood of their hosts, they thrive to thier hosts' detriment. Iagine what it must be like to know that, from the day you are born, everyone wants to destroy you.

Julian - “Marcus, because of you the moral equilancey between humans and animals, between humanity and the natural world, is now an ongoing debate - All Of Us implied. Snug, because of you I came to understand that what was currently ruling our planet was financial incentives, not survival incentives.”

Marcus - "Each of you did wonderfully to see things from a multicultural vantage point. You had empathy, a quality rarely seen in teenagers. To see you learn resilience, grow in character. self confidence, sensitivity and compassion has been one of the greatest joys of my life. I've watched you discuss and question what is the most prized talent in countries all over the world: making money, athletics, reason, education, imagination, open mindedness, kindness. You understand that pride and shame are two of the most dominant human emotions. You knew that changes were needed, understood that with a twist in destiny, humanity had been knocked off course, what was needed would have to begin with small steps. You asked the important questions - how to honor cultural significance and, at the same time, meet the challenges of a changing world. Different cultures developing new traditions has begun and will continue. Knowing there must be an appetite for brutality, you questioned violence in war, sports, and now gaming. Where did it come from? You asked about the concept of winners and losers, *Your lose is my gain.*

Hour after hour, everyone asked the same question - what is it like not to be alive. Marcus, Samuel, Lapis, Emilie, and Ellen March each described a different existence, with one commonality. "It is nothing like any of us expected. What we are each now experiencing is as extraordinary, wonderful and exciting as being alive."

When it was time for the first plane to leave, Marcus the Labrador walked slowly up the plane's staircase, turning before entering saying "Stars burn brighter as they ago...so do humans." He was followed by Samuel, Lapis. Emilie and Ellen March, each waving goodbye as they entered the plane.

The breaking point had arrived. Planet Earth would soon no longer be a safe habitat for the human species. The level of carbon dioxide, deforestation, increasing rate of extinction for many in the natural world. amount of phosphorous and nitrogen flowing into the oceans,

A dark yellow Labrador named Marcus and a three legged orange and white tabby cat named Snug met with five young people to help. People who had not been prepared to hear the truth, had changed

Marcus and Snug would never be credited or celebrated in any way for the worldwide changes for which both had acted as the initial, and most significant, catalysts. With the help of youngsters and five poodle puppies. They had ensured that both the interspecies internet, and the interuniverse internet was on its way

Everyone had stayed awake for the full twenty four hours, twenty four hours no one would ever forget. Marcus the yellow Labrador. Snug the three legged orange and white tabby cat, Youri the Kelpie, Shilli from Namibia, Asha from India, Julian from the United States, Samuel from Lebanon, Emilie from Denmark, Lapis from Russia, Love the buff tabby, Jane Green, Ellen March, Nahum, Typo the river otter, Ayres the orangutan and Victoria the chimpanzee, Chopper the English bulldog, Chloe, the Sloth. Ami the Turkish angora cat. Philo (Marcus' newly discovered brother) Dorian the penguin. Corinne the squirrel, five apricot poodle puppies (Linger, Elsker, Zohha. Poti and Snow Lotus) Jim the monkey, Ana the squirrel, Saltz the lamb, Lisa the llama, Ethen the pig, Moon the goat and Sam the tiger cub had started a revolution that couldn't be stopped. All Of Us.