

THE BOOK OF MEM

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Prologue

Bear, huge and **determined**, **approached** the clearing from deep within the woods, dark eyes focused on his mission. Fox followed from a near-by thicket. They glanced toward each other and bowed, rubbing hind paws **thrice** against the grass. With that **gesture** they left behind the field of **space/ time** and entered the **Circle of Light**. Bear continued to bow as he faced a **discarded** heap of old rubber tires.

“Morning,” Fox also bowed and took his place. Bear nodded warmly.

Next to arrive was Snake, who slithered into the circle not wanting to be late. He made three slinky-like loops in the dust.

“Coming!” shouted Deer as she halted in her gallop. She too bowed and then scratched the land with her

hind hooves. “Sorry about the dust.”

”Quite all right, Deer, but where’s Porcupine?”

As the creatures looked about, they heard a giggle coming from the tall grasses.

“Been here all along,” Quill giggled. She was the last of the five criters to perform the **ritual**, three hind paw strokes and one bend of the head.

Deer took charge of the circle. She motioned all to close in around the pile of **debris**. Without another word, heads again bowed. Each member took a deep breath and began to chant. Their slow, gentle song soothed like a deep, underground lullaby. It seeped through the soil and then rose into the cloudless blue sky.

The air was filled with **vibrations**. At times the tones grew louder and higher in pitch until at last the old tires that had once appeared lifeless now began to vibrate. Bit by bit they floated and



hovered close to the ground and still the creatures continued their song.

Suddenly the animals' sounds swelled in harmony. The tires were no longer a solid mass but tiny bits of matter **pivoting** and spiraling above the chanting creatures. Higher and higher the particles swarmed like a flock of birds in a well-**choreographed performance**. It was as though the song compelled those **molecular** black specks to flit and flutter till their ghostly shadows finally dove toward a **cavernous** entryway deep within the forest.

In that instant the animals' voices hushed and grew silent.

Deer, Snake, Bear, Fox and Porcupine stretched and yawned as though waking from a deep sleep. Each critter backed up a few paces, bowed toward the others one last time, scratched thrice against the earth and moved back into daily routine.

Vocabulary

determined: (dee-ter'mend) wanting to do something without fail

approached: (a-proacht') Came near

thrice: three times

gesture: (jest'shur) a body movement, like waving "hello"

space/time: The normal way of living with a past, present and future

Circle of Light: Being in a place beyond the five senses; beyond time and space

discarded: (dis-kard') thrown away

ritual (rich'oo-el) a formal act

debris: (da'bree) trash

vibrations: (vy-braa-shun) a throbbing

pivoting: (piv'e-ting) turning

choreographed performance: (kor'e-o-graft) (per-form'ens) a dance that is well done and organized a certain way

Molecular: (mow-lek'-ew-ler) very tiny

cavernous: (kav'-ern-us) cave-like

Book One

The Story Keepers

Chapter One

Liz waddled close to the water's edge **glancing** again at the smooth inlay of stones encrusted in sand and mud. "I love you, Stones! I love you, Pond! I love you, Breeze!" For a brief instant she felt she had been shouting instead of imagining but no, it was just a thought. Yet what a grand thought! To be here! To be alive! "Come on my little ducklings," she called. "Time to go."

"Ah, Momma," cried Thomas. "Not yet. We've barely had time to **investigate**." Thomas, like his mom, had lost all track of time. They smiled at each other and her son understood. "O.K.," he offered. "I'll get the girls."

Hey, Momma," called Teresa, out of breath with excitement. "Look what Ana found!" Ana was the older of the two girls and curious about everything. Things like colorful rocks or old bottle caps left over from the days when humans had visited Little Meadow had always caught her attention. This time she could hardly drag her bulky **relic** through the tall grasses. She dropped her find with a plunk just missing her mom's foot.

"Hi!" she declared with a mischievous grin before snatching the bag up again with her little beak.

"Ana! What in the world have you found this time?"

"We don't know!" Teresa said. "But you've got to see it!"

Momma sighed and waddled toward her ducklings to get a better look. "Let's see. Hmm. Looks to me like more bits and pieces we'll need to store in the cave."

Ana would not be **discouraged** however, and she grasped the bottom edge of the plastic bag tipping it up as high as she could. Liz caught on and used her beak to tip the bag even higher, forcing its content to slide out onto some dry moss.

“Awesome!” shouted Teresa, so proud of her sister’s **ingenuity**.

“Can you eat it?” asked Thomas, who was beginning to get hungry.

“Don’t think so,” said Teresa as she sniffed the item for a few seconds.

“Smells like that old cereal box we tried nibbling on last week.”

“Yuk!” all three ducklings exclaimed at once.

“It’s a book,” Momma stated after giving it a closer look. “My, my! How easily the pages can be damaged! We need to wrap it back up and leave it here for now.”

“Ah, Momma! This one’s different! Look!” Ana pleaded! With the help of

her **siblings** she managed to flip the book over. Everyone’s eyes widened as a breeze from deep within the forest rippled over them like water.

“Ah!” they all sighed for there on the front cover was a picture of the most beautiful duck they had ever seen. The portrait looked like the ducklings’ father, dark green head trimmed with a narrow white neck ring, breast chestnut-brown, wings a brownish gray, black tail feathers and a smooth yellow bill. “So **magnificent!**”

“I can’t imagine anyone leaving a beautiful book like that behind?”

“Can we keep it?” all three ducklings asked at once.

“Well,” their mom replied, “first we have to figure out a way to get it across the pond without getting it wet.” She had seen other pictures made by humans in old books and magazines, on wrappers and empty boxes with faded logos.

All the plants and animals at Little Meadow had decided that even though humans no longer visited the campground their things should be saved. Who knew? Humans might return some day. So all the things people had left behind were slowly gathered up and stored in the Old North Cave, but Momma couldn't imagine stowing away something this fine. Perhaps this book should be shared.

Thomas grunted as he bobbed up and down in the current pushing a piece of bark and splashing it toward the shore. Teresa and Ana rushed to help drag it up onto the grass. Then all three waited, hoping Momma would take the hint. She didn't disappoint them. "Ah, guys," she beamed, "I knew I could count on you to think of something. Way to go!"

With their strong bills, they had lifted the book onto the dry bark and pushed

it out into the open water. Each duck positioned its soft, feathery breast against the wood and paddled **effo tlessly** into the deep. Teresa began the song first and within a few beats the whole family was quacking in rhythm knowing the tune would continue until they reached dry land.

Thud!

"We did it!" they yelled, pushing their treasure ashore. Liz waddled ahead to the nest to prepare Poppa. Her mate's strength was needed. While some duck nests were built in the hollows of dead trees, Momma and Poppa Duck's home was comfortably situated in a slumped out area carpeted in down and surrounded by a protective wall of reeds, ferns and willows. Momma was pretty sure her mate would be inside.

"Michael! Michael! Wake up!" she quacked softly. Her mate was napping so she nudged him and whispered his name again. "Honey, it's time to wake up."



Michael opened one eye first then the other. Slowly, he withdrew his head from beneath his wing and managed to look his wife, Liz, in the eye. “Uh-oh,” he thought, “now what?”

Liz told him all about the ducklings’ exciting adventure as he pecked on a few barley grains and listened. “The kids are out there by the pond right now pushing the bark through the tall grasses. Their little bodies are worn out. You must come and help.”

“Okay.” His deep, slow moan reassured her of his support. He waddled over to greet his little darlings. “Hi, guys! You look exhausted. Tell you what. You go ahead of me and flatten out the grass to make a trail and your mom and I will push this thing over the path.” Always a team! That was important.

The ducklings began **catapulting** their soft round bodies onto the grass

laughing each time they rolled. It was in this way that the book found its new home. Michael finally noticed the image that seemed to stare back at him from the cover of the book. “Amazing!” he said as he continued to gaze. “It looks so real!”

“Looks like you, Sweetie, right after our wedding,” Liz said with her upturned beak, as she leaned against him.

“But you know we can’t keep it.”

“What?” quacked the three ducklings in **unison?**

“Let’s sit down and talk,” said Liz. The ducklings positioned themselves around the book. Liz sat at one end and Michael at the other.

“It’s the Way of the Meadow,” Their father said. “Many years ago, humans came here all the time and they were happy. They loved this place so much that my great-great-grandpa used to say he could actually feel their sadness

each time they had to depart.”

“Then they stopped coming,” said Momma. “Don’t know why, but we decided to try and take care of all the stuff they left behind. Maybe those things were meant to be **offering** and we have to respect that. Who knows? Perhaps humans will return someday. Won’t they be surprised to find that all their precious things are still here!”

“Why do you think they stopped coming?” the three ducklings asked in unison.

“Don’t know,” Poppa sighed. “I guess they discovered other places they liked better.”

“Better than here? No way!” Thomas exclaimed.

“It is hard to imagine,” Liz agreed, “but my great-grandma said that one day she heard some humans arguing over a camp site, and some of them not only began to argue, they got into a fight.

Gram got sick just watching and swam as far from them as she could get.”

“What’s that mean? To f-f-fight?” inquired Thomas.

“It means to hurt someone else simply because you want to or because you think you need to. Teresa, what would happen if you hurt Ana or Thomas?”

“Oh, I could never do that, but I guess if I did, we would feel pain,” responded Teresa.

“That’s right,” said Michael. “And why would you both feel the pain?”

“Because if I hurt Thomas or Ana it would make me feel horrible. I couldn’t imagine doing something like that.”

“Oh, you are so wise, Teresa,” her mom spoke with pride.

“Then what happened?” asked Ana, hoping for a story.

“Well, Gram began to cry and couldn’t stop. And her tears flooded some of the va leys.”

Ana grinned, “Ah, Momma, you’re messing with us!”

“Well, maybe just a little,” her father put in, “But **apparently** all the plants and animals who were here that day felt sick. They could sense the hurt the humans carried with them.”

“But how could a painting of one adorable duck hurt anyone?” asked Ana.

“That’s a good question,” her mom praised. “What do you think, Michael?”

“I think I’m hungry,” he sighed as his beak poked at the ground hoping for some morsels of food. “Let’s go scrounge up something to eat and then we’ll decide what to do.”

Vocabulary

glancing: looking at

investigate: (in-ves’-te-gate) explore

relic: (rel’-ik) keepsake

discouraged (dis-ker’ij) Ana would not give up

ingenuity:(in-jen-oo’-a-tee) talented thinker

siblings: brothers and sisters

magnificent: (mag-nif’-e-sent) great

effortlessly: (ef’-fort-les-lee) with ease

catapulting: (kat’-e-pult-ing) diving into a forward roll

unison: (you’-na-son) All speak together

offering : gifts to the forest

apparently: (a-pear’-ent-lee) most likely

Chapter Two

Just as the ducks were about to leave their nest they heard a rustling sound outside. Ana waddled out to investigate and almost stumbled over her friend, Turtle.

“Turt! Hi!” Ana greeted, with her usual, cheerful grin. Before Turt had a chance to respond he found himself surrounded by his feathered friends. They waited **patiently** for him to speak.

“Hi, Michael! Liz! Hey, kids. Good to see you! I dropped by to tell you I found some seed pods down on the old south path. I know how much you all love those things, though I’ll never know why.”

“Thanks, Turt,” replied Mike.
“We were heading in that direction. Want to come along?”

“Well, I don’t ...”

Turt was **interrupted** by a pleading Teresa. “Yes, Turt! Come with us. When we get back, we’ll show you something exciting!”

Mike and Liz **glanced** at each other. They had wanted to keep their little secret till they had a chance to talk it over but it was too late for that now. Turt was nothing if not inquisitive. His eyes grew wider.

“Well, I do say! A surprise? Tell me all about it.” Before the others could say anything, Turt **maneuvered** himself past them and into the nest. He couldn’t help but notice the book lying in the middle of the rushes.

Liz knew she needed to explain. In her calmest duck voice she told Old Turt about the book, how Ana had found it, and how they had managed to get it across the pond and into the nest. The children stood proudly around their



new find. The glorious painting of the duck seemed to stare back at them.

“My, my, my! That is a good likeness, Michael, I must say,” declared Turt. “Perhaps I can help you take it to the cave with all that other stu .”

“The cave?” interrupted Thomas. “Not you, too!”

“We don’t understand,” Teresa chimed in.

Before Turt had time to go into their **community’s** decisions, Thomas reassured him that Momma and Poppa had already begun telling them about the “Preserve Human Stu ” rule.

“Of course. Of course,” said Old Turt, “but I don’t see why we can’t have a look at it first. t’s a book, right? Let’s open it.” The ducklings cheered and then looked at Momma.

“Well, we’ll need to be careful. You know how easily paper tears.”

“Honey,” Poppa motioned toward his mate, “will you do the honors?”

All eyes focused on Liz then as the others stepped aside to give her more space. And so it was that Momma Duck had a new job. She was in charge of turning pages, a task that would require great care. She had always wondered why she had been born with an extra curve on the inside of her beak. Now, with the help of her special bill, she was able to open the book and turn to the first picture. The others cheered in triumph.

“This is a special moment,” Ana sighed.

Suddenly, a tear formed in the corner of Turt’s eye, and he felt it trickle down his cheek and plop to the ground. He could hardly believe what he saw. The image that stared back at him reminded him so much of his grandmother with her sturdy, protective shell, her sharp black eyes, and her firm, muscular limbs. “Oh, m ,” he

whispered. “Gram!” Michael and Liz looked away trying to hold back their own tears.

“What happened to your grandma?” Teresa asked.

Before Turt could respond however, an eerie booming sound frightened the ducklings with its slow, deliberate syllables.

“BE---BEM---BER---BE! BE---BEM---BER---BE? BE---BEM---BER---BE?” The question was heard as **vibrations**, rumbling through the ducklings little bodies. They began trembling and huddled next to Poppa for protection.

Rather than retreating to his shell for safety, Turt looked around until he spotted the source. “Mem!” he shouted in delight, looking toward the large rock wedged into the ground behind him. “I should have known it was you.”

“Turt’s acting strange,” Thomas whispered to his siblings. “He’s talking to a rock.”

“BE---BEM---BER---BE?” the rumbling echo asked again.

“Of course I do,” said Turt as he made his way to the **boulder** jutting up from between some ferns. “Mem, I’m so sorry. Let me introduce you to my friends. This is Michael and Liz Duck and their latest brood, Ana, Teresa and Thomas.”

Rock neither moved nor spoke but Liz and Michael bowed politely and urged their ducklings to move toward the chunk of granite. “Hi, Rock,” said Teresa trying not to giggle. She’d never greeted a rock before.

“Don’t be afraid, my friends,” Turt reassured. “This is Mem. He’s solid **granite**. His **molecules** are packed so tightly together that it is only with great effort that he speaks, but he has an amazing memory.

“What’s he trying to say?” asked Teresa.

“BE---BEM---BER---BE?” Mem strained as the ducklings scrambled ever closer to good old Dad.

“Re-mem-ber me?” Turt interpreted for Mem. “He’s asking us, ‘Do you remember me?’ He has trouble forming some of the sounds. ‘Remember me’ comes out as ‘Be bem ber be.’”

“Of course I remember you,” Turt reassured. “How could I forget? You’re the one who explained to me what happened to my grandmother that day the hunters stormed through here with their guns. One of the men spotted my beautiful grandmother and decided to capture her. She scratched and clawed and snapped, trying to get free but the **brutish** fellow was much too strong. Gram ended up being stuffed in o a crate. He stole her along with my heart!” Turt again began to sob.

“I’m so sorry, old boy,”
Michael comforted.

“Oh, my goodness,” declared
Liz. “What happened to her?
Did you ever see her again?”

“Touch your heads against Mem,
and close your eyes,” said Turt,
still sniffing. e’ll show you.”

Vocabulary

patiently: (pa’shunt-lee) in a calm way

interrupted: (in-ter-rup-ted) to begin speaking
when someone else is still trying to speak

glanced: (glanst) to look at

maneuvered: (ma-new’-verd) to move around

community: a group who lives, works and
plays together

vibrations: (vi-bray’shunz) feeling a pulsing
or tremor

boulder: a big rock

granite: (gran’-it) a type of rock that is
very hard

molecules: (moll’-a-kewlz) small parts of
something larger

brutish: (broot’-ish) tough, uncaring



Chapter Three

And so the family of ducks did as they were told. They pressed their small heads against Mem's body and closed their eyes. At first, all they saw was a small glowing ball but slowly the circle of light grew larger. Then the ducks were shown a dream of a beautiful turtle being taken to a very unusual place and put in a large cage. Humans were staring at her through the cage and their stares felt like pin pricks. Someone painted a design on her shell and the fumes from the paint

made her gag as she hid her head. The ducks felt her loneliness and fear as though they too had been jailed. Her heart was broken. Now in great sadness, Turt's five feathered friends drew away from the **solid mass** not wanting to know more.

There was a long silence before Michael spoke. "Thank you, Mem. I had no idea you carried so much weight. No wonder you try and stay in one place."

"BE---LAX. BE---BE---BINE."

"Wait, let me guess!" cried Teresa, wanting to interpret. "Re-lax. I am fine!

"Quite right you are!" declared Turt, and they all laughed.

"Can Momma turn the page again!" pleaded Thomas, interrupting the word-guessing game with his unending curiosity.

"Please, Momma. Please," Teresa and Ana joined in the chorus.

"BEEZ---BAM---BA---BEEZ!"

Everyone was chuckling now, happy

with this new companion. Liz looked at Mem and then at Michael and Turt, who both nodded in agreement. She rubbed her bill into her feathers a few times for a good cleaning, and resumed her task. Again six pairs of eyes looked in awe as an adorable brown chipmunk appeared on the page. “Jarvis,” they all shouted. There was an amazing **resemblance**. At the sound of his name, Jarvis and his chipmunk family scurried toward the noise. Of course they too froze as they peered down at the breathtaking sight.

And so it continued. The sounds of excitement and chatter attracted more and more curious onlookers who in turn became as excited and chatty as the animals who had come before. As each new page was examined and each new creature or rock or plant **emerged** into view, more cries of delight arose, and new visitors came to check out the

commotion. Animals brought food, and it became a celebration with dancing that lasted for quite some time.

Finally Michael who had begun to miss his quiet nap announced that it was time to take the book to its proper place. At first some gumbled, wishing to tear out their own family portrait from the lot. Some wanted to make an exception to their law about stu . A few wanted to keep on partying. Old Turt lumbered toward the book. “Come on,” he said to Michael and the others. “Help get this fine thing on my back. Support the sides so it doesn’t tip off and e’ll go to the cave. Old Tree will know what to do.” And with that, Turt braced himself and waited.

“BE BE BARE BE BOR BOO?” joked Mem.

“BE BE BARE BE BOR BOO?” repeated Ana, thrilled with the new word **challenge**. “Oh! I know! I



know! 'I'll be there before you!'”

“Good guess, Ana.” Turt smiled.

“But how could he be there before us?” Liz mumbled to Michael.

“I guess we'll find out soon enough,” he reassured her with an **affectionate** wink. They gathered round to help and before long the book was in place. They slowly headed toward Old Tree who had guarded the cave's entrance for hundreds and hundreds of years. Along the way there was laughter and play but also concern and heavy hearts.

Of course, Old Tree, who had always seemed to know everything, saw the parade advancing up the hill. She chuckled at the sight of Turtle balancing the heavy load on his back while others kept the item steady. It wasn't easy she knew and she was so proud of all these forest creatures. She waited patiently as the **procession** continued its slow climb.

At last, Turt and the other animals arrived at their **destination**. Carefully, they slid the book off Turt's shell, placed it before the old oak and stood quietly. A hush settled and even the birds stopped chirping.

“I see you found a book, Ana,” Old Tree began knowingly. Ana was amazed that the tree knew so much. Tree continued, “I heard your big party. How wonderful to hear so much laughter! Liz, would you mind if an old, old tree had a look at the pictures everyone's been raving about?”

“It would be a pleasure.” Liz again came forward and using her special beak displayed page after page of wonderful wildlife portraits. They were all images of Tree's dearest friends or at least their grandparents or great-grandparents or relatives. Old Tree wondered who had painted them. She knew one thing. The artist must have loved the creatures in the wild very much.

“What do you think we should do with the book?” Michael finally inquired.

“What do you want to do with it?” asked Old Tree.

Since Old Tree had lots of time and was a good listener, all the animals had a chance to express their feelings. Finally Tree spoke. “Well most of you would like to take the book apart and keep the pictures that represent your individual animal or plant family. Am I right?”

“Yes,” came the reply from many who had gathered. Some including Michael and Liz remained silent.

“Well, let’s suppose we decided to do that. Would we be able to come up with a plan to figure out who gets to take care of each picture?”

After a pause, Squirrel made a suggestion, “How about getting all the ducks together in a group, and all the rabbits together in another group,

and all the blue jays together in a third group, and so on and so on and so on?”

“I think I see where you’re going with that,” said Porcupine. “Each group can choose among themselves which family member in that group should be in charge of the portrait of their family.”

“Sounds good to me,” sang Butterfly, who was hovering above a leaf in Old Tree’s hair.

“All right,” said Tree. “Why not divide up into your groups and decide.”

Vocabulary

solid mass: refers to the rock

resemblance: (ree-zem’-blens) looks like

emerged: (e-merjd’) came forward

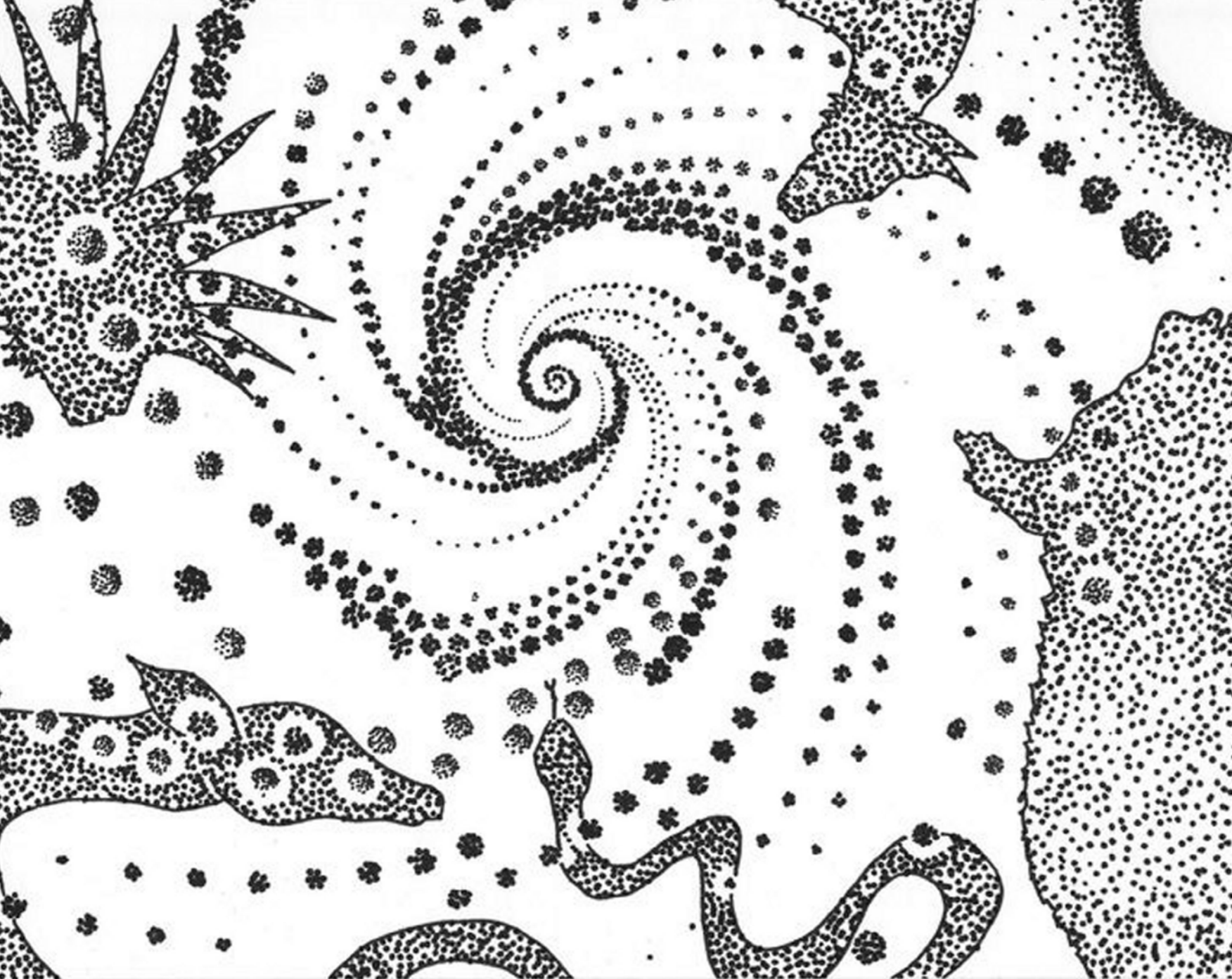
commotion: (ka-mo’-shen) lots of excitement

challenge: (chal’ enj) to solve the problem

affectionate: (a-fek’-shun-it) kind

procession: (pro-sesh’-un) quietly walking in line

destination: (des-ta-nay’-shun) place they want to go



Chapter Four

It sounded simple enough and everyone was happy at first, gathering together into families as they spread out around Old Tree. Soon however the pleasant tone of friendship vanished like a puddle on a hot, windy day. The animals within each group began to argue over who was **best qualified** to be in charge of their prized family portrait. The arguing became shouting and the quarreling was like nothing Michael or

Liz or their dear ducklings had ever heard before. They wondered if this was the kind of pain that had often been felt by humans.

A few of the young began to cry. They had never seen their parents **bickering** before. Aunts and uncles and cousins got so mad they decided to stop speaking to one another. The animals began to feel sick. Their heads began to hurt. This caused the mob to realize what was happening. The noise died down as animals began looking to Old Tree. They couldn't stand one more minute in such terrible pain.

In the silence, Turt asked Tree the most important question of the day. "Old Tree, if we were to decide to break the book apart, which part would you want?"

Some sap dripped down Old Tree's bark as she watched the pain her friends had brought upon themselves. She knew how important it was that they work things out together, so she was glad to

answer Turt's question. "If we were like this grand book," Tree began, "I suppose I would want to be the spine, the part of the book that holds all the pages together. Yet a spine without its pages is worth nothing. You see, that's what makes this book seem **sacred** to you, I think."

The animals nodded wanting to hear more. "The real sadness would not be the loss of the book which is what would happen if we took it apart but the loss of our **connection** to each other. Can you feel that loss now?" Everyone nodded in agreement as their heads ached and their stomachs churned.

"You see Life is perfect. We are perfect. We come from Love and return to it in complete **harmony**. We reflect that harmony to the earth. It's not that we each have a separate life. We are Life! Our **collective memories** are programmed and encoded directly into our bodies and stems

and leaves. We need nothing but the sun, the air, food and water and each other."

Heads stopped hurting and the pain ended as everyone recognized in themselves their own inner knowing. They felt so grateful to be who they were yet they so loved listening to the voice of Old Tree that they waited, longing to hear more.

"Beaver needs no book to learn construction yet his lodge is always perfect. Bird somehow knows everything she needs to know about weaving and her nest becomes an ideal family place. Caterpillar knows without knowing the exact moment in which to wrap her slender body into a silky cocoon so that her butterfly-self can later emerge. We've never fought over the land or the sky or the water. Yes, we have to eat, but we never take more than we need, and we respect each other. You're all born knowing everything you'll ever need to know to survive."

“What about the humans?”
asked one of the toads.

“BE---BE---BEM---BER.” The
voice was **unmistakable**, but how
did Mem make it up the hill?

“Mem! So good to hear your voice!”
Tree said in greeting; yet she wasn’t
talking to the rock at the bottom of
the hill but to a different rock

“Maybe they’re related,”
said Deer to Porcupine.

BE---BE---BE---EB---REE---PACE.

The animals looked at each
other to see who could guess the
meaning of Mem’s syllables.

“BE---BE---BE---EB---REE---
PACE,” Mem repeated, frustrated that
he couldn’t get them to understand.
Friend Turtle came to his aid.

“Mem is telling us that he is all over
the place. There is only one Mem. What
you see jutting out from the ground are

his knees and elbows. He’s got thousands
of them and they’re all around us.”

If Mem had been able to show his
emotions, everyone would have seen
him beaming with pride. At last they
understood and so all the critters found
the closest rock to them, closed their
eyes and connected with Memory.

As they settled back to enjoy this new
dream-like trance they found themselves
floating peacefully through the pages of
a great book. There were plants and trees
and rocks and streams, blue skies and
the familiar **aroma** of autumn. A stream
sparkled with reflected sunlight as it
splashed and curled around slippery rocks.

The dream book was brimming
with life fed by a soft heart-beat. The
drumming seemed to steady things. Its
rhythm kept thousands of familiar
sights and sounds and smells from
fading off the pages. The dreamers were



shimmering with their wanting. Pages turned slowly **revealing** discoveries. Each small scene was a celebration. Humans, too, were ying through the great **script**, climbing trees, running, swimming, hiking and laughing. Adults were busy gathering fir wood, spreading tablecloths and preparing for picnics. Being human looked like so much fun.

But the pages suddenly began flipping from scene to scene much too quickly and the critters of Little Meadow felt as though they had entered into a giant wind tunnel. As they flew out the other end of the whirlwind they became very confused. What had happened to the wildlife? The plants and trees and rocks and streams had been replaced by fake walls and fake skies with little fake suns lighting the way. Even the air they breathed seemed unnatural. The critters were trapped in a horrid nightmare walled within a dead

place where **artificial** voices spoke in **simulated words** about robot-like things.

Humans were still there but they weren't laughing any more. They were busy pushing wheeled cages aimlessly back and forth inside huge places with walls and ceilings. Shelves were loaded with all kind of stuff that was gathered into the cages and then taken home. The critters felt confused as thousands of talk-boxes, wind-makers, lawn choppers, hair blowers and plastic gadgets flew effortlessly from shelf to crate to house to landfill.

Humans often seemed impatient and irritated. Something had changed! The critters began to see that humans had begun to treasure things more than they treasured each other. The weather had changed too and many humans lost their homes, their health and their food supply. Of course the plants and animals wanted to return to the picnic but gradually, one by one, each

lifted its head from Mem's rocky surface just to get a breath of fresh air. Pages kept flying by more rapidly than ever but the critters of Little Meadow had seen enough.

Michael stood tall, puffed out his chest, and in his finest voice asked his friends, "Is that what we want?"

"No! No! No!" Shouts were heard rising into the sky like prayers. That was an easy **decision**. Everyone who was there that day felt so lucky to be themselves.

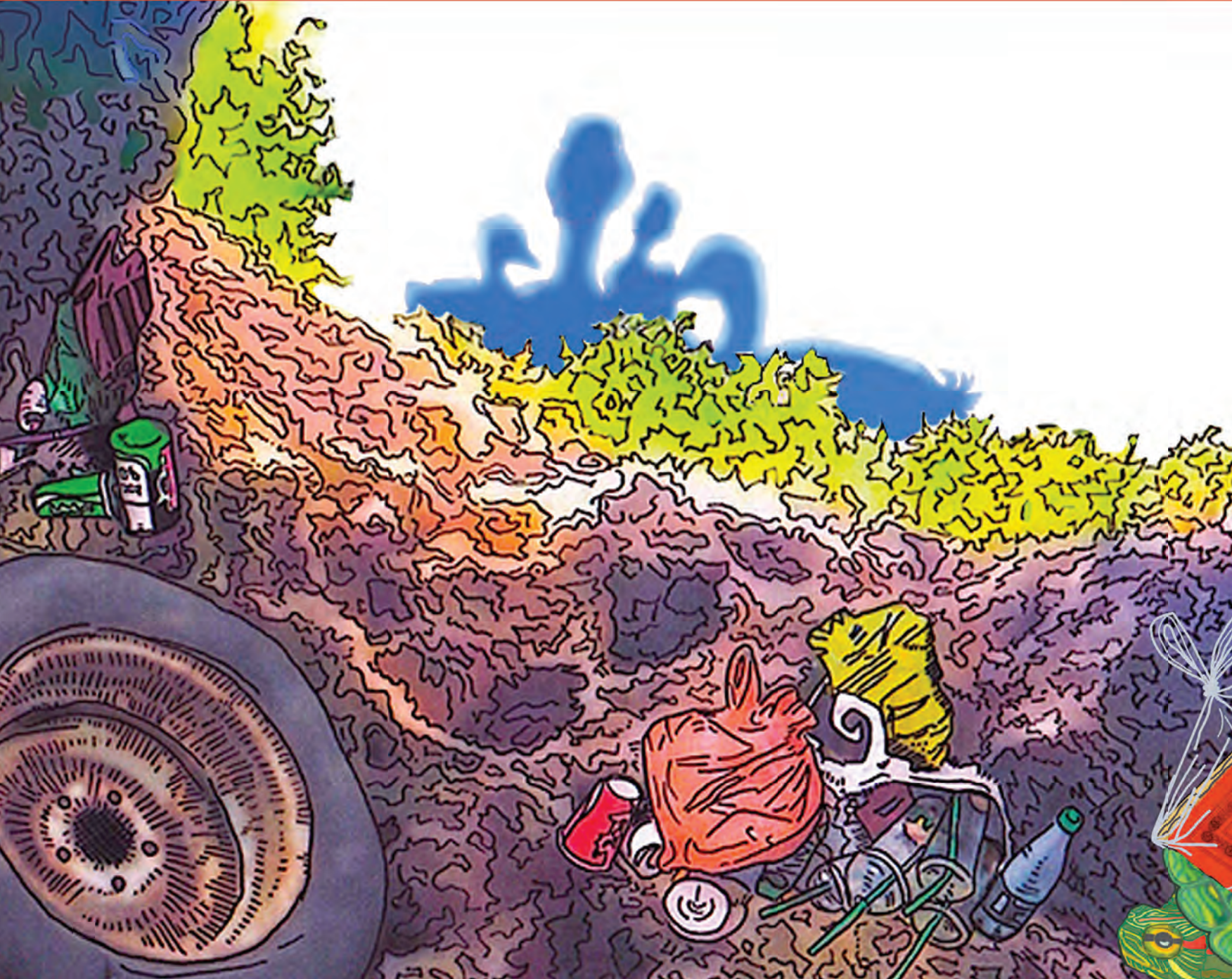
Daisies were content being daisies and the same was true for the sparrows and the woodchucks and all who stood or hovered or sprouted or slithered or crawled or swam at Little Meadow Lake that day.

Without another word the book was again hoisted up onto Turt's firm shell and was taken to the cave where it was placed into an old bread bag and stowed alongside the other human things: aluminum cans, plastic bags, bottles,

trinkets, toys, fake flowers, electric heaters, truck tires, Styrofoam cartons—everything that animals were able to place there. It all seemed so sad except, of course, for the book. Yet a book was not for them. Their inner connectedness felt more and more like a treasure.

An extraordinary calm told them that they had made a wise decision, for they would always draw energy and support from the natural world.

Deer, Snake, Bear, Fox and Porcupine were the first to bow their heads or bodies low to honor the All-That-Is. The forest became very still. All the plants and animals began to bow to each other and to the earth and Mem recorded everything.



Vocabulary

best quali ed: best able

bickering: arguing with each other

sacred: (say'-krid) cherished, holy

connection: (kun-nek'shun) being together as part of a group

harmony: feeling loved and being loving

collective memories: all their memories joined together

unmistakable: (un-mu-stake'-e-ble) very clear

aroma: smells

rhythm: (riTH'em) a pattern of pulses

revealing: (ree-veel'-ing) showing

script: The story

arti cial: (art-a- sh'-el) not real

simulated words: (sim'-you-lay-ted) recorded words

decision: (de-sizh'en) choice

Stillness Speaks

Book Two:

Chapter One

The creatures of Little Meadow Lake had almost forgotten about the day of the big argument. Yet how could they ever forget the strange aches and pains they had felt that day when they tried to **rank** themselves? How could one ladybug be more worthy than another? How could one opossum outshine all the other possums? Impossible. For weren't they all equally wonderful? Weren't they all part of the one earth the way the ripples on the pond were merely part of the one pond feeling itself as ripples?

“How hard it must be to be human!” they thought. “To know jealousy and anger and **resentment** because of stuff they wanted to own!” What a relief to know that all the headaches and upset stomachs, the back pain and trembling wings, the stem surges and sweaty paws were things of the past, stored in the cave with all the other human things.

Spring arrived in blissful sighs. Little Meadow was alive with activity. Nests were being woven into spiral designs as ancient as time itself and Woodpecker kept the tempo in hungry **staccato rhythm**. Chipmunks were scurrying up and down tree trunks chatting and laughing, tickling the oaks and maples with their tiny paws. Rabbit found a good sliding place next to an old campsite and Tadpole was gradually developing legs and longing for land. Teresa, Thomas and Ana were as curious as ever and

sailing the water with a keen sense for its depths and its gifts. Turt was content to nap in the warm sun as Old Tree stood watch offering up each breath for her friends.

Then one morning the peaceful community was interrupted. Blue Jay was the first to notice the strange object that seemed to be heading directly toward them. He alerted Wren and Sparrow who told Jarvis who told Rabbit who told Groundhog and in less time than it takes a hawk to squawk, everyone but the trees and grasses had found places to hide. The meadow became still.

Old Tree knew what it was of course. She’d seen cars and campers and other vehicles before. Humans were back.

Some of the older residents of the meadow remembered humans but this new vehicle seemed strange. For one thing it was completely silent. If it hadn’t been for the trail of dust following in its path, many of



the **burrowers** wouldn't have even noticed. The suspense was chilling yet thrilling as wildlife positioned itself above, below, and behind the landscape to get a better look. The young were warned to be very still.

The creatures felt they were ready but as the car pulled to a stop in the turnabout Turt noticed the Duck Family. Michael, Liz and their three young ducks were still floating peacefully on the pond as though they had **erected** some sort of invisible shield. The turtle's heart skipped a beat which startled Chipmunk, Squirrel and Blue Jay.

Not wanting to frighten the newcomers nor draw attention to his friends, Jay signaled the rest of the birds to start singing again as though nothing was wrong. When Frog heard the birds, he signaled his mates to croak as usual, and the bees, too, understood and joined in. But thousands of eyes peered with

suspicion through branches and grasses and from behind boulders and trunks.

As this new human family stepped out into the open, the plants and animals sighed in relief. Each picked up on the calmness of these human hearts. The two children were both so excited that they energized the breeze which then magically drew them toward the water's edge. With great relief, many **edgy critters** began breathing more easily and went about their daily routine feeling safe.

Turt and Mem continued to watch, noticing the light that seemed to surround the children. Of course, Turt and Mem had lived there for a very long time. They had seen **auras** (or light rays) in humans before but the colors were usually grayish and matted with worry. The glow surrounding these children was so crisp and clear.

The breeze was so electrically charged that it began rippling the tiny lake

into hundreds of tummy bumps. “Hey, cool!” quacked Teresa as she bobbed up and down atop the swelling wrinkles of current. The ducklings had grown firm feathers, replacing their furry down. When Teresa looked at herself in the water now, the reflection that peered back at her looked more and more like her mom and she was content simply to allow the water beneath to do with her what it willed.

Momma Duck, who had been focusing on her daily yoga routine, was the first to notice the newcomers on the beach. Nudging her husband, they both snapped a quick order. “Quick! Swim to the cattails! Now!”

Thomas tried **desperately** to contain his excitement at seeing his first humans. They looked so much like the one he’d seen on the back cover of the old book! His heart pounded rapidly as he climbed atop Mem’s back to get a better view.

“Thomas, get down from Rock right now!” his father demanded in hushed tones but by that time Thomas had lost his balance falling back into the water with a splash. That’s when he heard the laughter, the magical **hilarity**. It drew him and his sisters ever closer to shore.

Vocabulary

rank: deciding who was better than

resentment: (ree-zent’-ment) holding a grudge

staccato rhythm: (sta-cot’-o) a repeated pattern of beats

burrowers :(ber’row-erz) animals that tunnel underground

suspicion: (sus-pish’-on) uncertain

erected: (ee-rek’ ted) built

edgy critters: nervous animals

Auras: (are’-uzz) giving off light ray

desperately:(des’pret-lee) in a frantic or fearful way

hilarity: (ha-lare’-a-tee) something funny



Chapter Two

“Dad! Mom! Look! Ducks!” shouted the boy. He hugged his sister. Then they both began jiggling their fingers at each other in **rapid movements**. Again, more rapid finger movements before Boy turned to his parents. “Can we feed them?” he pleaded. The two taller humans began laughing then and handed two brown paper bags to the children.

The ducklings immediately smelled an aroma that made their mouths water. Forgetting completely about **composure**, they swam eagerly toward the smell. Michael and Liz raced to catch up, hoping to rescue their children from these creatures but it was too late.

“Here’s some breadcrumbs, little ducks!

Come!” called Evan, wanting so much for them to stay. He and his sister, Kendall, began throwing bits of bread toward Thomas and his sisters, and after the first taste the ducks were hooked. The humans’ laughter put Momma and Poppa at ease and they too began to nibble on this new treat.

Thomas noticed a faint glow around the boy’s body and sensed that his family would not be harmed. The little girl’s glow shimmered even more brightly with a slight tint of sky blue.

“Do you guys see that?”

Thomas whispered.

“Never seen anything like it,” his father replied trying not to stare.

“Pure love,” added Liz. “I think she’s pleased to meet us.”

It was love at first sight for everyone. Before long the duck family was following the humans all about the campsite as tents and supplies were unloaded. Thomas

accidentally bumped up against the little girl's leg and she stooped to hug him. It was electric. Thomas could feel her **history** with that gentle squeeze, and he understood her at a deep level. He let her energy wash over him like a slow, steady rain.

After a time, dusk began to cover the lake with its gentle shadow, and the duck family knew it was time to swim back across the pond. Thomas had so many questions to ask and so much he wanted to say. "Momma, humans have auras too! How come?"

"I noticed! All of us did."

"Yep," their dad added. "The colors weren't quite as clear, but I picked up on a great gentleness."

"Me too," Teresa said.

"I think we'll go and talk to Old Tree tomorrow," Dad said with a yawn. "We'll see what she and Turt and Mem might know about humans from the old days."

"Goodnight, little ones," Momma

sighed, wanting so much to lie down.

"Close your eyes and get some rest."

"I love that little girl and that little boy," said Ana, pretending not to hear her mom.

"Yea, did you see me bump into Girl?" asked Thomas.

"Yes, and I thought you were going to pass out," Ana teased.

"What's up with that?"

"She hugged me! It felt strange, and I wanted it to last, but I learned things with that touch. It was like she talked without talking."

"Amazing," Teresa added dreamily. "Maybe I'll pretend to bump into her tomorrow."

"You'll do no such thing," Momma **interjected** and then, with a grin, added, "Well, bumping up against them certainly wouldn't hurt, I guess."

"And who knows," Teresa laughed, "they might enjoy our company enough

to hand out some more of those tasty treats.” Even their dad’s eyes popped open at that comment though he was much too tired to join in the conversation.

“Did you know that the boy is an artist? I wonder if he knows yet?” Thomas wondered aloud.

“So the girl talks through touch?” Ana inquired.

“Yes. She told me all about their trip. She also said she was born without the ability to speak. She couldn’t say words out loud. I think her aura is beautiful.”

“Goodnight little ones,” Michael said with finality. His eyes had already closed yet his muffled voice got through to them.

“Goodnight little twos,” Thomas chuckled, before rolling over. His sisters giggled softly as their father began to snore.

Vocabulary

rapid finger movement : using sign language

composure: (kum-poz’-zher) calmness

history: (hiss’ter-ee) the story of her life

Interjected: (in-ter-jek’-ted) added

Chapter Three

The whole forest was singing the next morning. After breakfast, the children were allowed to do some exploring on their own. Like many humans, their first wish was to go to the water's edge. Perhaps it was the way water reflects sunlight or the way the waves ripple as they waft against the shore, but for Evan and his sister, Kendall, who had filled their pockets with bread, it was also about ducks, five ducks to be exact, and the two young humans weren't disappointed.

Michael and Liz Duck had insisted their children wait in the reeds until Boy and Girl were finished with breakfast. The delay seemed endless but at a signal from their dad, Ana, Teresa and Thomas swam across the wide pond quacking with **enthusiasm**, diving skillfully for bits of bread and expressing their delight

by swimming in circles and figure eights. Liz held back and enjoyed watching but her partner joined in the fun, diving and splashing alongside his young.

"What a gorgeous mallard!"

Momma thought.

There was plenty of leg bumping and head petting, followed by yet another parade as the ducks trailed Evan and Kendall everywhere. Evan liked to draw. He removed a sketch pad from his backpack and climbed up onto a large rock. He **surveyed** the land watching as his younger sister ran from tree to tree wrapping her arms around trunks large and small. She often stopped to pet small animals or to smell flowers.

Evan looked up from his drawing just in time to see a squirrel coaxing his sister up a steep path. The small creature kept scampering up close enough for her to touch but then would scurry a few yards up the



bank only to return and repeat the motion. Wanting to keep his sister in sight, Ev returned his art supplies to his pack, flung it over his shoulder and ran to catch up.

It felt so free here. Every leaf and rock was alive! Evan was rapidly becoming part of this aliveness! Upon reaching the **summit** he was unable to spot his sister and began to panic until he spotted a turtle that appeared from out of nowhere. The old reptile was stretching his head toward the left so the boy dashed in that direction. Then he froze. His pounding heart quieted. The scene up ahead was bathed in a shimmering glow. It appeared as though the light was shining from within all the plants rather than coming from the sun. He knelt down on one knee and gazed toward his sister. She seemed to be in some kind of **trance**.

Slowly he forced his limbs to move. He reached for his backpack and **retrieved** his pencils and paper.

A sketching frenzy began and he couldn't have stopped even if he had wanted to. The shades of green and yellow and gold were shimmering with his wanting them. It felt to him like he was taking in energy from all the colors around him.

Kendall was kneeling in front of a huge oak tree. Her brother had never seen her so excited and each time she hugged the tree its branches seemed to spread higher. The quaking leaves sounded like the rush of a waterfall. Soon all kinds of forest creatures began gathering around them. Ev sketched and sketched as he watched his sister merge with the wilderness. Then he thought of his parents. They could be worried!

He dropped his drawings and dashed down the hill alerting his mom and dad who immediately stopped loading their gear and followed their son up the spiraling path that lead to Old Tree. Seeing the smile on their daughter's face, Mom and Dad



sat down next to their son and beamed with joy at the scene before them.

After a time, as though on **cue**, the adorable animals crawled and slithered and flew and fluttered away to give these new humans some privacy. Kendall had so much to tell her family, and her fingers were rapidly signing the story Old Tree had told. She then led them to the opening of a cave and invited them inside. They spent a long time within its deep, dark **crevices** searching and talking and rummaging through piles of old trash. The only item they removed from the cave however was a book. Forest had given its permission and it seemed like such a treasure to this young child who couldn't speak.

After **examining** this amazing book and talking for some time, Mom, Dad, Evan and Kendall hugged Old Tree once more, headed back to their transport, finished packing and hovered on. The same

spray of rising dust that had accompanied the family's arrival was again churning along the old deserted road. The woods at Little Meadow and its **inhabitants** no longer saw the strange car and the humans inside it as a warning or as something they needed to fear. They now understood that for some reason a great and wonderful change had occurred.

Vocabulary

enthusiasm: (en-thu'zee-az-m) with lots of energy

surveyed: (ser'vay') to look about

summit: the top of the hill

trance: under a spell

retrieved:(ree-treevd') to get

cue:(kew) a signal

Crevice: (krev'a-sayz) cracks or small openings

examining: (ex-am'n-ing) looking carefully

inhabitants: (in-hab'e-tants) those who live there

Chapter Four

The forest felt a bit lonely as the human scent began to fade. Would these marvelous humans ever return? Ana, Thomas and Teresa felt like crying at the loss of their new friends.

“We’ll never taste food that good again,” Father Duck moaned. Liz sat rubbing her cheek against some soft, green moss trying to wipe her tears. She would certainly miss them too. Slowly they made their way up the bank and climbed the winding trail

toward Old Tree. Many others had the same idea. As they approached the clearing by the cave, they quietly formed a circle around, above and below the oldest oak in the wood.

“Do you think the humans will ever come back?”

“Why have they returned at all?”

“Why are their auras so much lighter?”

“Humans have changed,” said Kai **Spruce**, and then, like many wave-like echoes all the other trees and plants and rocks surrounding them agreed with Kai. “Humans have changed. Humans have changed.”

“Why have they changed?”

“How do you know?”

Kai explained, “Every time Girl hugged a tree she told us her thoughts. We felt her feelings. Every time Boy sat on Mem, we could understand him better too.” Everyone looked at Mem.

“NO! NO...MORE...DREAM-

VID...EEE...O,” he declared. “TOO...
LONG!...BUT...HEW...MANS...
BETTER....NOW!...THEY WAKE...
UP...SEE..MORE...CLEAR LEE”

Mem became tired after so much speaking and he suddenly fell fast asleep.

Not that knowing about humans and their understanding about life would affect these forest creatures one way or the other. It was simply that anything important to their new human friends seemed as though it should be important to them as well.

The critters and plants who had been at Little Meadow at that glorious time went on with their lives just as before. They understood, somewhere deep inside, that the connection between humans and the earth was puzzling and probably very **complicated**. It seemed that life had become better for these strange, two-legged creatures but there was no need for life in the forest to change. Yet

even to this day the critters of the earth are still talking about Evan and Kendall and about all the other children who began to show up at their campground.

The End

Vocabulary

spruce: (sproos) a type of evergreen tree

complicated:(kom'-ple-ka-ted) hard to understand

Epilogue

A Place Beyond

For us humans, the story is often the place where the head and the heart come together and so it has been for me. You see, in the story you just read, I was that boy, and when I was young, I had terrible asthma. Because it was often so hard for me to breathe normally, I couldn't run as much as some of the other boys and girls and I spent very little time outside the domes. My favorite pastime was drawing or painting. The first time I held a paintbrush in my hand it was like going back in time to a place where color and light and softness revealed in a slowly unfolding friendship. I wanted to paint everything I saw.

There's a knowing that comes from being an artist, but I hadn't understood what was happening to me back then. It just felt like I had once been somewhat

asleep but now I was becoming more and more awake. Art changed me.

One day, when Mom and my little sister, Kendall, were walking me home from school, I said something that had been on my mind all day. I said, "Art's not important, is it Mom?"

Surprised, she looked at me and asked, "What do you mean, Evan?"

"Well, you know. It's not important like reading and math and stuff like that."

"Honey, art is very important!"

"It is?" I asked. I hadn't expected that answer.

"Sure, honey," she continued. "Art is something you can enjoy your whole life. You'll feel the need to express yourself in ways that can only come to this world through your eyes, through your hands, through your spirit. When you create with an artist's eye, the creator voice within you breaths new life into all of us."



Of course, I was lost after “Sure, Honey.” I began running toward our pod. That’s when Kendall, who had been holding Mom’s hand, did something weird. Oh, I know. All sisters can be weird sometimes, but I mean super-impossibly weird. I know this sounds dorky, but Kendall, who has never been able to use her vocal cords, let go of Mom’s hand and ran toward me. She put her little hand on my arm and looked directly into my eyes so that I wasn’t sure what to do. I stopped and stood motionless, staring back at her.

Kendall had learned to use sign language by then and so had our parents but I couldn’t be bothered much. I had always wanted a dog, not a sister who couldn’t talk. I began to feel this wonderful aliveness when she touched me like that. I mean it was better than chocolate pudding! I wanted it to last! In a few seconds she let go and with a big smile on her face she ran inside.

Mom didn’t even seem to notice

what had happened, but I kept feeling this thought. Yes. That’s what I said. I felt a thought! It whispered inside my head like a song with a beat.

“Enjoy your art, if art you seek!

Go deep within where stillness speaks!”

I let the words sink in a bit and then dashed inside and jotted them into my notebook in case I forgot. I wasn’t sure what she meant but it made me feel good. After that day I began bouncing my basketball to the rhythm.

“Enjoy your art, if art you seek!

Go deep within where stillness speaks!”

It became my mantra. I found myself inhaling more and more deeply. The words did something else too. For the first time I began paying more and more attention to Kendall. I spent all my spare time studying sign language, and soon I became such a good signer that I began to **communicate** with other kids in

my class who also were unable to speak. It opened up a whole new world for me and I got to know lots of kids I hadn't really paid much attention to before.

One day, our dad came home excited. He announced that the air quality had finally improved. We were all happy to hear that! Then he added **the clincher**. "Evan," and he looked right at me, "the doctor says you're well enough to spend lots more time outside."

"Yes!" I screamed. Kendall and I high-fived but the news got even better! Dad was going to take us on a camping trip! Overnight!

About a week later we ended up at an old abandoned campground. I'll never forget the day we arrived. Dad had been driving northwest, and soon we were entering a large forested area. The sights were so amazing. Finally, we stopped and got out to walk around. That's when Kendall spotted

an old, old sign from back in the days before all the bad weather. You could still make out the words, "Little Meadow" and what looked like a "C," and there was an arrow.

Mom and Dad became curious then. They started clearing out the brush and discovered an old road. We all joined in then clearing out branches and tall weeds. Soon we were able to get back into our car. Eventually, the road became nothing but gravel and we found ourselves circling a small pond. That's when Kendall and I spotted our first duckling.

"Look!" I shouted. I then realized that I might scare wildlife away with my yell. We had studied about lots of forest animals in school but I had never seen any real ducks. They were so cute I wanted to hold them. I couldn't wait to get my easel in place and begin sketching. Kendall was signing like crazy, and I'd never seen her so excited. She wanted to get closer so Dad let us





get out. We dashed to the water's edge.

"I wish I could swim that fast," Kendall signed, and then "Hey! Where'd they go?" The three ducklings met up with two larger ducks across the pond and all five swam out of sight. The sun was shining! The sky was blue! Birds were singing like they were happy we had come. It was a spring song and how we tried to breathe it all in: air, sky, forest, water.

Then quite unexpectedly, we heard a loud "Splash!" One of the small ducks had slipped off the top of a big rock and landed in the lake. We began laughing and now that Ducky had our complete attention, he swam straight toward us followed by the others. Mom gave us each a bag of breadcrumbs, and after that, it's all history. We fell in love with everything there and when I wasn't painting or sketching we were wandering up and down old winding trails that seemed familiar in an odd sort of way.

Something else was happening, however, that I hesitated telling my parents about. Kendall was acting strange again. She kept staring at the trees and touching their bark over and over again, and then she'd put her hand up to her mouth to conceal a giggle. It was like she was having her own private chat with them. Then, she started hiking up a steep path. It looked like she was following a squirrel and knew exactly where she was going. I put my things back into my backpack and dashed to catch up.

Finally, Kendall stopped. I looked up still breathing hard. Before us stood the most **humongous** tree I had ever seen. Most of those big oaks had been cut down long before the changes or at least that was what I'd been told. This was too good to be true. My sister became so calm and focused like the day she did that touchy thing on my arm. She seemed to be in some kind of trance. Then she slowly

proceeded toward this big old creature and put her arms around its trunk. Of course she couldn't reach very far around but she had a good, firm grip. She stood like that for the longest time listening.

I knelt down as quietly as I could and began sketching. I'm not sure how long I was there before I thought of our parents. They were probably looking for us. I raced down the hill to tell Mom and Dad. By the time we returned, Kendall was holding the old oak as though her strength was holding it in place. She seemed glad to see us and her hands and fingers went to work.

"Tree told me things," she signed. "Amazing things and our talking seemed so normal. For the first time in my life, I've met someone who can feel my thoughts! Part of me wants to spend the rest of my life here."

Mom seemed to understand completely but my dad was in shock. Kendall continued

to tell us about all the animals who had lived in these woods and about the cave. She pointed to the opening even though it was camouflaged with stones and branches. We could hardly see it at first. Dad and I busied ourselves immediately clearing the entrance while Mom went back to the camp to get a flashlight. Dad thought he had better go in first. Kendall **reassured** him that the cave would be safe and that it was filled with old stuff. Dad still insisted on entering ahead of us. I think he was having fun. What an adventure! We managed to climb in as we followed the beam of Mom's flashlight. The bright light **illuminated** old plastic bags, bottles, cans, lids, containers, old fishing tackle, and even some rubber boots.

When Kendall thought our curiosity had been satisfied she headed closer toward the entrance, reached down toward a rock covered with moss and flipped it over. Something was underneath. Dad had gloves

on, so he stooped down and gently picked it up. At first it looked like an old plastic bag. He carried it outside into the light and placed it on the ground. After removing the plastic we discovered the cave's secret treasure. It was a book! A very special book!

"From the old days," Dad said with a tone of devotion.

"Did you know that was going to be there?" Mom asked Kendall.

Kendall nodded her head and smiled. "The tree told me it was there," she signed. Mom looked at Dad. They shrugged their shoulders and grinned with such love in their eyes.

"Let's open it!" I encouraged. I was feeling impatient.

"O.K., but very carefully," Mom warned.

We set it down on a dry tree stump. Mom did the honors. She turned the pages as though they might cry out in pain if she handled them too harshly. They were

still intact and our eyes feasted on the most beautiful paintings! The colors were still quite vivid. There were many animal pictures and lots of different plants and rocks and on the back of each picture was a description. For me it was like **déjà vu**, as if I had somehow experienced all this before. Yet to this day, it's a mystery. I knew one thing for sure; I understood in my heart that I would someday paint beautiful pictures like the ones in the book. I also knew that Kendall would write down all the stories told to her by the forest.

They would be wonderful stories of ducks and squirrels, rabbits and butterflies and even rocks, all coming together and speaking in one voice. They would be stories of peace and hope. Ones we all needed to know.

So the book you just read was not actually written by my sister alone. Little Meadow told her about much of it through

Old Tree and I hope you enjoyed reading it.

Did I mention that on our way back toward the car we noticed it doing something weird? Our hover-car was shimmering in its own light and we could see right through it. I thought it was going to fly in the air at any second. Five animals were sitting around it in a circle and they seemed to be humming something. Mom and Dad grabbed us as they spotted a bear and a fox, but it was the snake that did it! Mom fainted. Dad tried to ease her fall and Kendall moved toward a gorgeous doe as though they had already met.

The deer stood calmly and Kendall reached out and touched the doe's neck pressing her hand there for a few seconds. I stooped next to the porcupine and we all stayed perfectly still. Luckily, Kendall understood what was happening and the deer understood my sister's touch. Our vehicle stopped vibrating. One by one each

critter slowly disappeared into the thicket.

"We'll explain later," Kendall and I both signed as we helped Mom climb up into her seat and fasten her seatbelt. As we hovered away from Little Meadow, Dad spotted the deer again. She stood watching us. We turned around and peered out the back window to keep her in our sights for as long as possible. Kendall and I sensed that she was there to say good-bye.

At that instant I remembered Kendall's **mantra**, her repeated word poem. I allowed myself to go deep within where stillness speaks. I knew then that this fine goddess of the deep wood was wearing a smile (that I could not see) and vibrating with pure love.

Enjoy your art, if art you seek!
Go deep within where stillness speaks!
Love,
Evan



Vocabulary

Communicate: (ka-meun'-a-kate) connecting with others, sharing ideas

The clincher: (klinch'-er) the most important part

humongous: (hew-mon'-gous) Very, very large

reassured: (ree-a-sherd') let one know something is safe

illuminated: (ill-oom'-e-nate-ed) shown light upon

déjà vu: (day-zja-voo') feeling as though what is happening, has already happened

mantra: repeating a poem over and over again

Post Script

As a child living in Frostburg, I spent lots of time at New Germany State Park but there was one particular picnic that is so imbedded in my memory that I can almost reach out and touch it at any time, feel it like a smooth pebble in the pocket of my favorite jeans. I lost myself that day in an instant of cosmic kinship. I was given a vision of something beyond the trap of dualism and was no longer separate and apart. I had dissolved into the wild joy of being a part of something greater than myself.

Mom and Dad wanted us to find a new spot that day, a place where no one else had been before, so we didn't stay on the paths or trails. We followed a small brook that fed into the lake until we came to an opening in the trees where the grass seemed as smooth and inviting as moss-green velvet. Mom's red-and-white checkered

tablecloth made the perfect centerpiece.

My brother Bill and I had been climbing trees when I suddenly became mesmerized by the bark of a locust tree. I kept touching it, examining the unusual patterns it created but when I finally looked up, everything around me had changed. I could still see my brother and sisters, Mom and Dad, but they were surrounded by a landscape that was now glowing, as though the light was radiating from inside each blade of grass, within each leaf and flower, up from the small stream's shimmering treasures. I breathed in the fragrance as though the entire scene entered my lungs with each in-breath, and I clung to the branch in wonder. Apparently I had entered into some portal of peak awareness outside of time. I still feel energized just thinking about the gift I received from the Universe that day.

All I have to do is close my eyes and the brilliant light show returns and again I remember so vividly the love I felt for my family.

I wasn't a bit shy about sharing the crayfish I found in the stream with my sister, Mary Lee, or showing my mom the unusual texture of the bark on that locust tree Bill and I had climbed, or lifting Angie up to see the sparkly spider web with its light-splitting jewels. But I said nothing about the vision, about the special way they had all been framed in brilliance and color and warmth. I couldn't tell them how, for an instant outside of time I saw everything around me with new eyes. The forest's splashing-brook laughter and its wildlife rhythms had frozen in place along with the vapors of pine and campfire. I was so young and wouldn't have been able to explain it even if I had tried. I should have shouted at the top of my lungs! I LOVE YOU!

The vibrant energy seemed to ooze from a light more powerful than any sun! We belonged! All of us! To the trees, to the woods, to the brook, to the sounds, the smells, to Life! Perhaps that small little corner of the world

was also in love with us and wanted a small child to be in on its mysterious playfulness.

Dedication

The Book of Mem is dedicated to Mom and Dad, Leo and Mary (Lyons) Grimm, to my favorite great aunt, Angela Brady, to my Godparents, Irene Condry and Uncle John & Lucille Lyons, to Uncle Frank and Aunt Laura (Lyons) Greco, to my Uncle Joe Lyons and Aunt Doris, to my cousins, Patti Greco Gillis, Michael, Mary Susan (Shanks) and Thomas Lyons, Edward, Charles and Johnny Lyons, to my treasured siblings Mary Lee (Grimm)Fair, Bill and Nan Grimm and Angela Grimm and to my wonderful supportive husband of 46 years, Carey. I wish to pass on the torch to our amazing children Amy (Wayne) & Brad (Sharyn), to Evan and Kendall, our adventurous grandchildren and to Carolyn, Ed, Bill, Jim, Becky, Emily, Libby, Ana, Teresa, Michael, Thomas, and Kai.

A big thank you to my son Brad for preparing the book for production and to Cecile Gilchrist & Nina Forsythe who helped us with editing. We couldn't have done it without you!

Questions and Thoughts for discussion

The Book of Mem takes place sometime in the future.

What were some of the things in the story that would hint to that fact? Would the illustrations also cause you to see the story as science fiction as well as a fantasy? Which ones come to mind?

In Book I (page 18) the animals at Little Meadow had their first ever argument. What were they fighting about? How did it make them feel? How was the problem solved?

In the “Circle of Light” there were five animals, a bear, a fox, a deer, a snake and a porcupine. As you pictured these creatures in your mind, which one was your favorite and why?

When these animals formed their special circle and began chanting, they seemed to have magical powers, and could send lots of unwanted “human” stuff out of the cave for safe keeping. If you could have those same powers, what stuff would you like to locate to a different place? Why?

How did the ducklings react the first time they heard Mem speak? Try and make up a sentence and say it the way Mem would have to. See if someone else could guess what you’re trying to say. Keep it simple. Mem spoke very slowly with a deep voice.

When the plants and animals finally saw the human family, they felt completely safe. In the story it is explained that the human auras were so bright and clear and that was how they knew the humans wouldn’t hurt them. Do animals in real life somehow know things about people. I wonder if plants and animals can see our auras.

When the human family comes to Little Meadow their vehicle was much quieter than any vehicle known to Old Tree. Why was the new transport so unusual? Can you design a science fiction car or transport?

Why did Kendall use sign language? Do you know any words using sign?

Why did Evan change his mind about wanting to learn sign language?

Kendall wasn't the only child who couldn't use her vocal chords. I wonder if the others like her also had her special power of touch. If you could communicate through touch, you'd be able to speak to plants and animals as well as humans. How would that change the way you thought of the earth?

Evan loved to draw and paint but he also had a kind, understanding heart and seemed so wise. Would you like to have a friend like him? Why?

Would you like to have Kendall as a friend? What activities would you want to do together?

The animals refer to the fact that they hadn't seen humans since all the bad storms and weather changes. Lots of people, including Evan, suffered from asthma and they had good and bad days regarding air quality. Do you know anyone with asthma? What are some things that can make the air bad to breathe?

Did you notice any differences between the new humans in the "Book of Mem" and the way we live today?

Can you make up a story that takes place 50 years from now? Show at least five things in your adventure that might be unknown to us today.

Draw a picture of your favorite animal in the story and share with a friend.

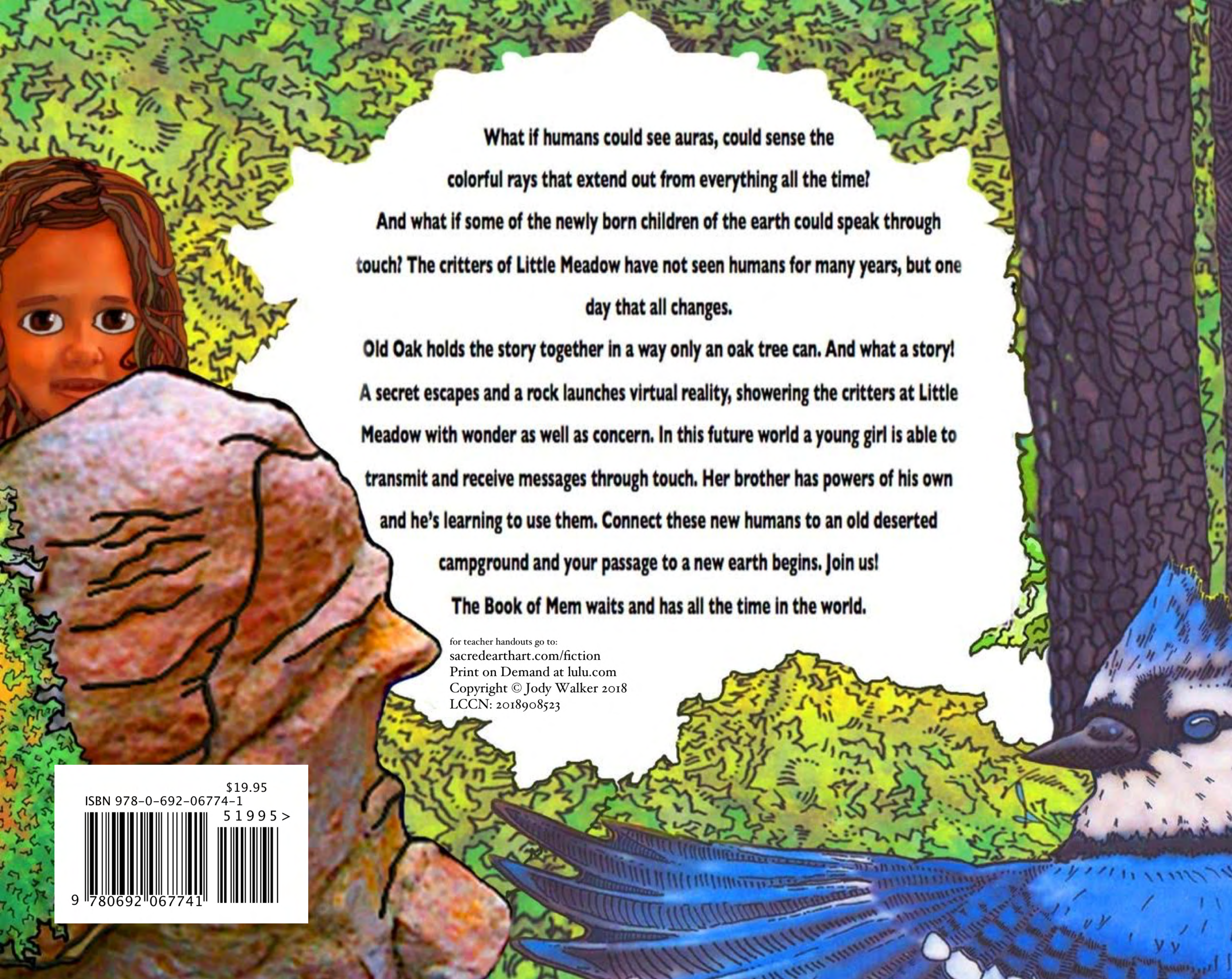
Which story probably took place first? (a. The one about the animals who find a book and decide to place it in the cave.) or (b. The one about Evan and Kendall being raised sometime in the future and getting to go camping) There's a clue on page 55.

*On page 54, it says that Mom seemed to understand completely when Kendall signed that she and the oak tree were talking to each other using touch. Why do you think Mom stayed so calm?

This is the second book created as a team by
Jody Walker and Shannon Benson.
Shannon is an extraordinary artist and Jody is
thrilled to have discovered his work.

Copies of the book may be purchased online at Amazon, Lulu.com or
by sending an email to me at cwalkero7@atlanticbb.net.
Find some Shannon stuff @ [https://www .instagram.com/funcleshag](https://www.instagram.com/funcleshag)

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What if humans could see auras, could sense the colorful rays that extend out from everything all the time?

And what if some of the newly born children of the earth could speak through touch? The critters of Little Meadow have not seen humans for many years, but one day that all changes.

Old Oak holds the story together in a way only an oak tree can. And what a story! A secret escapes and a rock launches virtual reality, showering the critters at Little Meadow with wonder as well as concern. In this future world a young girl is able to transmit and receive messages through touch. Her brother has powers of his own and he's learning to use them. Connect these new humans to an old deserted campground and your passage to a new earth begins. Join us!

The Book of Mem waits and has all the time in the world.

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