

LUNDEERIA

THE TALE OF
A JOURNEY TO ANOTHER LAND,
COURAGE AND COMPASSION

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THE TALE OF
A JOURNEY TO ANOTHER LAND,
COURAGE AND COMPASSION

AS TOLD BY JUSTIN AND EMMA
TO
VENERABLE WULING

Illustrated by Ann Marie Napoli

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Preface

Over the past few years, people in Pure Land societies have occasionally asked me if we had any children's books on being vegetarian. Regrettably, we did not. Personally, I wish we did because, like those asking, I am a vegetarian. Unfortunately, the conditions had never been right for such a book.

But that was about to change dramatically.

Late one night, while I was at the Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre, I became seriously ill. Understanding this was my karma catching up with me, my thoughts went to the suffering I had caused. I vowed to do something to alleviate such suffering.

How?

I would write a book.

A few days later, I roughed out the idea for what was to become *Lundeeria*. When I had finished the project I was working on, one beautiful spring day in Nanango, I “returned to Lundeeria.” And in a very short time, Justin and Emma’s story was told.

At that point, all I had was the text. As I had over the years, I once again wished that I knew an artist. Surely drawings would enhance this book.

But how to find the illustrator I needed?

A few months later, I had the good fortune to be introduced to Ann Marie Napoli, a talented illustrator. She graciously, and enthusiastically, volunteered to draw what became the wonderful illustrations that would help make this book come alive and, hopefully, touch the heart.

And if the heart is touched, it might begin to wonder about some of the choices we make and how these choices affect others. We do not have to be adults to ask the questions.

We just need to have a caring heart.

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Chapter 1

The Dreams

No one was sure exactly when the dreams began. At first no one paid much attention to them. After all, they were just dreams. But gradually, as more animals had them, they began to talk about their dreams – and how similar they were.

The animals seemed to be dreaming of another land. No one knew for sure because they didn't recognize it. But in the dreams the name of the land was always the same.

The land was called "Earth."

In many ways, Earth was like the animals' own beloved Lundeeria. There were birds and fish and insects and many other kinds of animals. There were trees and flowers and mountains and seas. In fact,

there was really only one difference – an animal that was not found on Lundeeria.

Earth had an animal called “humans.”

Unlike on Lundeeria, where all the animals shared equal status, humans were the sole rulers on Earth. And on Earth, because of the humans, something was wrong. Those Lundeerians who had the dreams could feel it. But they couldn't figure out what the problem was.

As more and more animals dreamed of Earth, the Lundeerian Council began to hear about it. But even the wise council members didn't know why Lundeerians were dreaming of a land called Earth and its creatures called humans. So the council members decided to hold a meeting to discuss what was happening. After all, they had always solved their problems by talking

and working together.

And so news of the meeting was sent throughout the land. The swifts and the



eagles cried out word of it as they flew through the sky. The leopards and the antelopes announced it as they ran through the forests, valleys, and

mountains. The whales and the salmon sang of the meeting as they swam in the seas and rivers.

Even the badgers and groundhogs rumbled out the message deep underground. All the creatures of Lundeeria were asked to come to a meeting of the utmost importance.



As usual, no one was to be left out. Used to helping one another, all the animals of Lundeeria began the journey. They travelled, as if one, to the ancient volcano crater that served as Lundeeria's assembly place. The



birds flew and the land animals walked, hopped, and ran. The reptiles crawled and the fish swam. The

insects came as well. Those who were younger and stronger carried those who were older and weaker. Larger or faster Lundeerians helped those who were smaller or slower.

By land, air, and water, they all came. Land animals sat on the ground and the rocks. The birds perched in the trees, butterflies on the bushes, and insects in the grass. The creatures of the water swam into the crater's lake from the great sea that was fed by all the rivers in Lundeeria. As they all settled down in the volcano crater waiting for the meeting to start, they talked of little else but the *dreams*.



Was this what the meeting was about?

Chapter 2

Dream Seekers

When at last everyone was settled and quiet, the council members came to the center of the crater. They took their places and the meeting began.

Being the oldest member of the council, Tortoise spoke first. He walked in a dignified manner to the spot reserved for the speaker. In a deep, strong voice, he began.

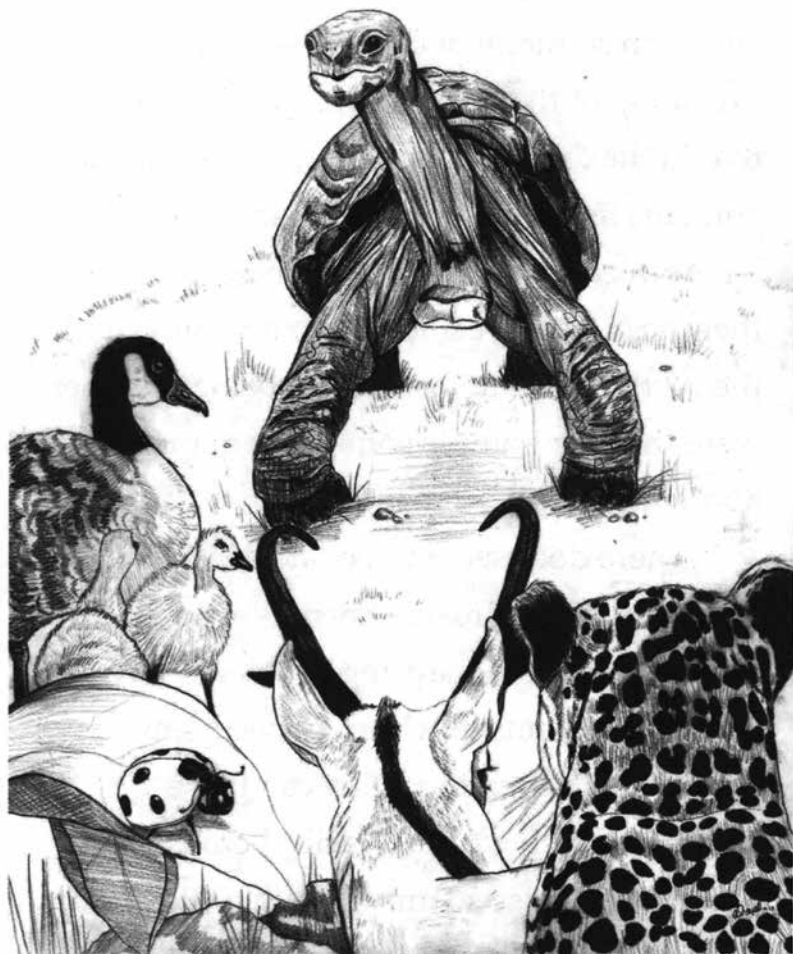
“My dear fellow Lundeerians, some of you may already know why this meeting has been called. For a while now, we have been hearing reports of dreams. These are not ordinary dreams. They are not dreams of what happened during the day or of friends and family. Apparently, these are not even dreams of life here on Lundeeria! These are

dreams of another land. A land called Earth.”

“Needless to say, this is all very strange. How can so many of our fellow citizens be dreaming of the same things? We have heard that in the dreams there are creatures like us: animals, fish, birds, reptiles, and insects.”

As Tortoise spoke, the listeners nodded their heads in agreement. Soft murmurs and the rustling of many creatures being together were the only sounds coming from the audience.

“There does seem to be one difference, however. In the dreams, there is an animal who appears to be causing problems. Very serious problems. But very honestly my friends, it’s confusing. How can these animals, which we have heard being called “humans,” cause so much trouble? It’s hard to understand because we know nothing of



this animal. It does not exist here.”

“Many of you are having the same dreams. How can that be happening? And why is it happening? It must mean something, but what? And what, if anything, can we do about the dreams?”

“We members of the council have given this matter much serious thought. We have decided that there is only one way open to us. We will try to find the answers to these questions using an ancient practice. My fellow Lundeerians, the problem is dreams. So we will seek the answers through dreams.”

“We will engage in Dream Seeking.”

The Lundeerians looked at one another in disbelief.

Tortoise continued, “My friends, Dream Seeking, as you all know, has been done only

once in all of Lundeeria's long history. It was done at the time of great danger and much fear. It was a time of uncertainty, the time before peace between all animals – all Lundeerians – became our way of life."

"My friends, a sense of unease is again entering our lives. We all feel it. We need to quickly find out what is happening. Then, hopefully, we will know what we can do about it."

With this, Tortoise returned to his place among the other council members. He nodded to Gazelle, who walked gracefully forward to stand before the assembly.

In a warm, lilting voice, she began. "Dearest friends, once we saw that we had to do Dream Seeking, we realized we would need someone to guide us. We would need a creature who is of the night, a creature used

to calling out when most others were dreaming. Someone skilled at catching and holding our thoughts with her songs.”

“We need Nightingale.”

As Gazelle looked up, Nightingale flew down, passed over Gazelle’s head, and perched on a nearby tree branch. She sang one long beautiful note, her voice clear and pure. It was heard by every Lundeerian.

“With Nightingale singing to us, everyone will fall asleep. Everyone, that is, but Nightingale and myself. She will place moss in my ears so that I cannot hear her singing. This way, I will be able to stay awake to see what happens. When the time is right for all of you to wake up, Nightingale will stop singing.”

“But my friends, I must first ask, is there anyone who does not wish to join in the

Dreaming? No one is required to do so. But please understand that for this to work, we need as many Dream Seekers as possible.”

“Frankly, we are worried that something is very wrong. We do not know what it is. We do not know what we will learn in our Dream Seeking. But everyone on the council feels we must find out. We fear that some being desperately needs our help. And even worse, we fear that many beings may be in need of our help.”

Gazelle stopped talking, looked out over the assembly, and waited patiently for their answers. The crater was filled with the murmuring of all the creatures of Lundeeria. Gradually, the sounds faded away until all was perfectly silent.

“Dearest friends, are there any among you who do not wish to be a part of the

Dreaming?" Gazelle asked.

No one said no. No one shook their head.
Not one Lundeerian left the assembly.
Gazelle turned and looked at Nightingale, as
did everyone else.

First, Nightingale carefully placed some



moss in Gazelle's ears so she would stay awake. Then, Nightingale closed her eyes, took a deep breath, and began to sing.

She sang of the beauty of the night. She sang of the courage and concern of all her friends. She sang of the peace of Lundeeria and the happiness of all who lived there.

Then Nightingale began to sing of sleeping, and of dreaming. Finally, she sang of Earth and those who lived there. Soon, with the sole exception of Gazelle and Nightingale, every living creature on Lundeeria was dreaming. Through the night, they all slept and, as one, they dreamed of Earth.

And throughout that long night, Nightingale sang and guided them in their dreaming.

Chapter 3
Strangers in Lundeeria

As the first rays of the sun began to lighten the sky, it happened.

As Gazelle shook the moss from her ears, Nightingale sang more softly and then became quiet. The Lundeerians ceased dreaming and began to wake up. The air next to Gazelle started to shimmer. As she and Nightingale and all of Lundeeria watched, the shimmering started to become solid.

The animals saw form and color taking shape, disappearing, and then coming together again, more clear than before. This happened several times. Then, the form and color shimmered brightly one last time, swirled as if in a tiny whirlwind, and settled

to reveal two unmoving shapes!



It seemed as if everyone on Lundeeria was holding his or her breath. Indeed, in all the land, the only breathing seemed to be coming from the two forms who lay in front of them. Suddenly from the assembly a voice called out, "I've seen such animals before in my dreams! Those are humans!"

The Dream Seeking had really worked?

Were these the humans? But they looked so innocent! How could creatures like these cause problems? And how did they get here? How could dreams produce forms? Dreams are just that, dreams. But these creatures appear very real! And since they appear very real, and very alive, what happens now?

Gazelle called out, "Be quiet my friends. Please be quiet as we think what to do now."

But it was too late.

The two shapes had begun to move. But not like before when they had shimmered and changed. This time the shapes moved as solid wholes. Everyone in the assembly drew back.

It looked as if the human creatures were waking up!

Tortoise came forward to stand next to Gazelle. Nightingale flew in and landed

lightly on one of the humans. After a moment, one of the humans sat up. As he opened his eyes and then stared in delight at Nightingale, he said, “Emma, wake up! There’s a bird on your arm!”

The human named Emma stretched, also opened her eyes, and sat up. She didn’t notice a bird. But she saw a gazelle! And a tortoise!! And that wasn’t all. There were other animals standing behind the gazelle and the tortoise. She was too scared to move. All she could do was point and stammer, “Justin, loo-look!”

But Justin didn’t turn to look where Emma was pointing. He couldn’t. He too was frozen as he looked out on a sea of animals. All staring back at him!

Seeing that the two humans were alarmed, Nightingale hopped to Emma’s

shoulder and began to sing a soothing song. Gazelle began to softly speak.

“Please don’t be afraid. We mean you no harm.”

Gazelle’s eyes were so warm and gentle that Emma felt herself begin to breathe again. And the way Nightingale blinked her brown eyes and cocked her head made Justin smile a bit in spite of his fear.

“That’s better. Are you okay? You’re not hurt in any way, are you?”

Gazelle’s soothing voice seemed to further calm the two humans. But even so, all they could do was shake their heads in reply.

“My name is Gazelle. This is Tortoise, and the bird on your shoulder is called Nightingale. Am I to understand that you are a Justin and that you are an Emma?”

Gazelle looked from one to the other as she said their names.

By now Justin was also staring at Gazelle. "Uh-huh," he said as he nodded his head.

"Yes," added the other. "I'm Emma. This, this is my brother Justin," she managed to add.

"I'm very happy to meet you. We've never met a Justin or an Emma before," Gazelle replied as she gazed serenely back at the two, who stared open-mouthed at her.

"Wait a minute! You're talking! How? Animals can't talk!" Justin's curiosity was winning out over his fear.

"Animals can't talk in your world? In our world, all animals can talk just like we are doing." Gazelle took a deep breath. This was going to take a bit of explaining.

"You are humans, right?" Gazelle asked.

“Of course,” Justin replied, somewhat confused. How could anyone not know they were humans?

Curious himself, and sensing that Justin and Emma were getting over their initial shock, Tortoise asked, “Please excuse my ignorance, but are all humans like you?”

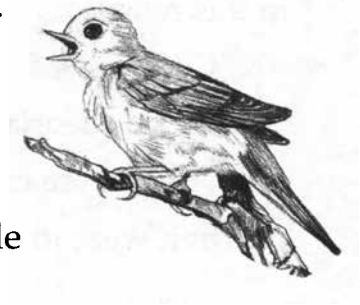
Unsure what he meant, Emma replied, “Well, yes. But we’re children, not adults. Is that what you mean? We’re twins actually.”

Emma then looked at Gazelle. “Earlier when you referred to ‘our world,’ you meant the animal world, right?”

“In a way,” Gazelle answered.

Nightingale spoke next.

“Our world is an animal world, yes. But it’s more than that. Our world is called Lundeeria. And while



I don't want to shock you any more than I'm afraid we already have, I have to ask, is your world called Earth?"

The children were again speechless. Justin managed to blurt out, "Our world? Are you saying this isn't Earth?"

"Are you saying we're on another planet?" Emma squeaked.

"Umm, yes dear. Lundeeria is another planet. Have you never heard of it?"

From the children's faces, the Lundeerians realized the children hadn't. The animals all held their breath waiting to see how the two small humans would react to this news.

"Cool!" suddenly laughed both children.

The Lundeerians were greatly relieved. Also, they were rather impressed. The two children were remarkably okay with the fact

they were on another planet.

“How did we get here?” Justin asked.

“We dreamed you here,” replied

Nightingale.

“Super cool!” giggled the two children.

“What do you mean dreamed? How did you dream us here? And why?”

“Well, it’s rather a long story,” Tortoise replied.

And with that, he began to tell Justin and Emma how the dreams started, how confused and worried the Lundeerians had become, and how they all dreamed together and two human children appeared.

After listening to all this, Justin said, “But we still don’t know why we’re here.”

Thoughtfully, Gazelle spoke. “We dreamed you here because we sensed trouble in your world. We felt much fear there.

That's not something we feel often in our world. If something unusual happens, we might become anxious. But the fear we felt from your world seemed much more than that."

"Oh!" Justin and Emma looked at each other. They were also at a loss to explain what was going on.

Trying to be helpful, Justin spoke up. "Well, sure, there's fear in our world, but that's normal. Things can happen and people get scared, but it's okay in the end. Things work out. It's no big deal. Right Emma?"

Emma looked thoughtful and then said, "Justin, wait a minute. We're humans so we're thinking of human fear. But the Lundeerians are animals."

"Maybe they're talking about animal fear?"

Chapter 4
The Terrible Truth

Suddenly, both children became very quiet. Gone was their laughter, gone their thinking that being on Lundeeria was cool. The color had drained from their faces. They looked, what, embarrassed? Scared?

Emma moved closer to Justin, reached out for his hand, and held on to it. She stared at the ground while Justin tried to speak. But now he was having trouble doing so.

Finally, he spoke very softly. "I think we might know what fear you felt. Our parents have told us about it. Since you're all animals, and you feel the problem comes from humans, I . . ." His voice trailed off. He couldn't speak any more.

All around Emma and him were animals

like they had on Earth. There was Tortoise, Gazelle, and Nightingale. There were also elephants and monkeys and sparrows and frogs and dolphins. And so many more animals, just like at home.

Well, no, not *just* like at home.

Here the animals talked. And looking around, Justin and Emma could see that all the animals got along peacefully. There were animals as far as they could see, and yet every single one of them was acting like they were all friends. The crater was filled with animals of every size and shape and kind, but no one was fussing at others.

No one was hurting anyone else.

Emma looked at Gazelle. She spoke so softly that Gazelle could barely hear her. "Gazelle, what do the animals on Lundeeria eat?"

Gazelle looked a bit puzzled but replied, “Well, the land animals eat things like grass, nuts, and fruit. The birds eat seeds and grain. The sea animals eat plants that grow in the water, like algae. Why do you ask? Oh! Are you hungry? I’m so sorry, we shouldn’t have kept you talking so much without offering you something to eat. That’s terrible of us. Please pardon our bad manners. We’d be very happy to get something for you if you tell us what humans eat.”

Justin felt like his heart was pounding so hard that the animals must be able to hear it. He couldn’t bear to look at Gazelle. He shook his head and mumbled, “We’re not hungry, thank you.”

The animals were puzzled, why were the children so upset?

Her eyes glistening with tears, Emma

said in a whisper, "We're so very, very sorry. I don't know how to tell you. In our world some people, like our parents and us, eat only plants and nuts and fruit and stuff. But others, others . . ." Then like her brother, she too became speechless.



Gazelle looked at the two. Suddenly a feeling of dread unlike anything she had

ever felt came over her. “Children, what else do humans eat?” she asked hoarsely.

Tears filled the children’s eyes and began to slowly run down their cheeks. Neither could say a word.

“No! Oh no!” Gazelle whispered.

Then she collapsed, shaking her head in disbelief. “Please, children please tell me it’s not so,” she pleaded. The children still couldn’t speak.

With profound grief, Gazelle said the one word she dreaded to.

“Animals?”

Both children nodded, tears now streaming down their faces. Gazelle had spoken very softly and yet every animal had heard her. And like Gazelle, they all knew why they had felt the fear.

On a distant world where humans ruled

and animals had no way to speak, humans ate animals.

At that moment, a sense of disbelief, of grief, overwhelmed every Lundeerian. They were speechless, unable to believe what they had heard. No, it couldn't be. It just wasn't possible.

The children had to be wrong.

Chapter 5
An Ancient Time

Tortoise bowed his head. He knew what he had to do. He began to speak to the assembly, slowly at first, as he carefully chose his words.

“My dear fellow Lundeerians, please listen to me very carefully. What I am about to say will be new to every one of you. Most of you have probably heard tales about Dream Seeking. It is said that it had been done before, but only once. It was in a time so far in our past that all that remains from that period are whisperings of the way things were. And that is probably all that you have heard of Dream Seeking.”

Everyone seemed to be holding his or her breath. Tortoise looked at their expectant

faces and continued.

“Actually my friends, there is more. A very long time ago, wise elders decided that what happened in the ancient past, the time before records were written, had to remain a secret. From generation to generation, the secret would be passed from one animal to



just one other. And so it has happened since that time far in the past.”

“It was decided when I was still quite young that I would become the next Keeper of the Secret. As did every past Keeper, I took an oath of honor that I would only reveal the secret in a time of extreme emergency. An emergency so grave that Dream Seeking would need to be done again. My friends, it is now time to tell you of what led to the first Dream Seeking.”

“It happened in a time when our world was very young and the animals, our ancestors, were very ignorant and selfish. It was a time of terrible fear and sorrow.”

“Why was there such great fear and sorrow? With much sadness, I must tell you the secret that the Keepers hoped no future Lundeerians would ever learn. In a time of

ignorance and cruelty, our ancestors ate other animals.”

It was as if Lundeeria herself gasped in horror. Animals had eaten one another? How could it be? All the animals on Lundeeria lived together in peace. No Lundeerian would do that! It would be like eating a family member or a friend. Impossible! It couldn't happen! It just couldn't!

As if knowing their thoughts, Tortoise continued. “Dear friends, what I am telling you is the truth. It did happen.”

He sighed deeply. “And now, now it seems that on another world, on the world called Earth, it is happening again. An animal is eating other animals. I do not think the human children are wrong. With a very heavy heart, I feel they have told us a terrible, terrible truth.”

Tortoise then looked at Justin and Emma.



“Children, please look at me. We need to clearly hear your answer so no one will doubt what you have said.”

“Is it true that on Earth humans eat animals?”

Not wanting to say more than they had to for fear of hurting their new friends, the children looked at Tortoise. They felt miserable, but they knew it was true. Justin and Emma tearfully admitted, “Yes.” And having said that, they looked down again.

Gazelle watched the children, sensing that they were still very uneasy. Why? They had told the truth of what happens on Earth. And they explained that they themselves did not eat animals, only plants and things. So why were they crying again and staring at

the ground, unable to look at anyone? Could there be even more to their terrible tale?

“Justin, Emma, is there something else, something that you haven’t told us yet?”
Gazelle asked cautiously.

The two children looked at each other. How could they tell the animals the whole truth? A truth so painful, so awful that they themselves could hardly bear to think of it.

Gazelle closed her eyes, took a deep breath, and slowly exhaled. She spoke with great sadness. “Take your time and know that we will not be upset with you. But I think you need to tell us exactly what is happening on your world.”

Chapter 6

Life on Earth

Justin and Emma looked at each other, dreading what they knew and did not want to say. How could they tell the Lundeerians about what happens on Earth? And yet, having been asked to tell the truth, how could they not?

Justin felt a lump in his throat and had to swallow hard. Not knowing what to say first, he just blurted out, "On Earth many animals, not just humans, eat other animals."

The Lundeerians gasped. It was even worse than they thought. Animals just like them were eating other animals? It was unthinkable!

Emma continued when Justin hesitated. "But . . . but there are many animals on Earth

that eat only plants. It's just that the animals that eat other animals . . . they just don't know better. And so they kill when they're hungry. They just need something to eat."

A groan went up from countless animals around them. First, they had learned that humans ate animals. Next, they learned that other animals also ate animals. And now they realized that all those animals that were eaten were, of course, killed first. How much worse could the children's tale of Earth get?

Justin and Emma didn't know what to say next. The more they tried to explain, the worse things became. They were both beginning to wish they had never awakened on Lundeeria. As exciting as it had first seemed, now they were confused and feeling lost. If only Mom and Dad were here, they would know what to do, what to say.

That was it! They'd explain to the Lundeerians like Mom and Dad had explained to them.

Justin began. "On earth, many animals used to live in the woods and fields. Like I guess you do here. Others flew in the sky or swam in the water. When they were hungry, many would catch something and eat it. Humans, too, hunted and fished for their food. And they also ate plants and nuts and seeds."

"But now, people go to one place, called a store. It's where they get all their food. And it's so much easier than hunting or fishing. Humans can eat animals whenever they want since so many animals are raised on factory farms," Emma continued.

Nightingale asked, "What is a factory farm? Is it a better place for animals to live

than in the woods and rivers?”

“No way!” Justin shook his head and shuddered.

“Nightingale, how do animals live together here?” asked Emma.

Nightingale replied, “We like living together with our families and friends. That way we can look after each other. Young animals can play with one another. Older animals take turns looking after younger ones. Many of us like living in large groups, so we have lots of friends. We live in the woods, the valleys, in oceans and streams, and in the sky. When the weather is bad we take cover. But mostly we feel the sun on our backs, or the air or water around us. All of this is very natural to us.”

“It’s natural to animals on Earth too,” Emma said. “That’s the same way they used

to live.”

“But not now? Not on the factory farms?”
Tortoise asked.

“No. On factory farms, animals live in buildings. They’re sort of like caves. And the animals never see the sky or the ground,”
Justin replied.

“That’s terrible! Do many animals have to live like this?” Gazelle asked.

“Millions, billions, have to.”

“What’s a billion?” Tortoise asked.

“Mom and Dad say it’s really a lot. Emma and I couldn’t begin to count that high. Even you counting all your life couldn’t count that high,” Justin answered.

As Tortoise heard this, a single tear rolled slowly down his cheek that was lined with wrinkles.

“What kinds of animals?” asked Gazelle.

“Well, do you have chickens or turkeys here?” Justin asked looking out at the immense crater that was filled with animals.

“I’m here. I’m Hen and this is Rooster,” cried out a chicken, as a rooster proudly escorted her to the front of the crowd.

Looking first at Hen and then at Justin and Emma, Rooster said, “We look after our children together. First, we both scout around and agree on a good place to build a nest. Then, I keep watch while their mother here sits on the eggs to keep our children warm before they hatch. I’ve even caught her clucking to the young ones before they hatch,” explained Rooster as he winked at the twins. “We love taking baths in the dust and pecking around to find things to eat.”

“I’m here, too,” gobbled Turkey. “Like Hen and Rooster, I love living in a group, the

larger the better. My friends and I love to strut around showing off our feathers. We are very curious and good at solving problems. When we're happy, we purr, like the cats. And at night, we fly up into the trees to sleep."

Emma looked at the three birds. "I'm so very sorry. Many chickens on factory farms spend their lives in buildings that seem to go on forever. They never get to peck around. Or take a bath in the dirt. They don't hatch and raise their children. Most don't even see the sky or breathe fresh air. There are so many packed in together that they don't have enough space to spread their wings."

"And turkeys are made to eat so much, they become fat and can't even fly. Sometimes they are so heavy and sick, they can't even walk. And they certainly don't

play with friends. On factory farms, they don't have friends," Emma quietly said.

Hen and Rooster and Turkey froze. No dirt beneath one's feet to explore? No flying in the air with the sun on one's back? It was as if their feathers had suddenly become dull and the life had gone out of them. Their hearts ached and went out to their kind on Earth. Heads drooping, they took only a few steps before they collapsed, unable to move any further.

"I don't know what to say. I'm just so very, very sorry." Emma bent down to stroke their feathers as she looked into their eyes and apologized for something she herself didn't really understand.

"Who else?" asked Gazelle, closing her eyes and opening them again as she gave a deep sigh.

“Do you have ducks and geese?” asked Justin.

Duck and Goose came forward, but more slowly than Hen, Rooster, and Turkey had. What about their kind, they wondered.

“Like turkey, we too love to fly. We also love to play and swim in the water and dive to eat the plants growing there. I am very protective. I keep a careful eye on my young until they are old enough to look after themselves,” explained Duck.

“We geese travel far in the sky over long distances. We fly with the seasons to warmer places in the winter and cooler places in the summer. We geese are very loyal. We look after each of our children until they can take care



of themselves. When they become sick, we stay with them until they are well. We mate for life and mourn when we lose our spouse,” added Goose.



Justin swallowed and then spoke softly, barely able to look at Duck and Goose. “Ducks and geese are also forced to eat a lot. Like turkeys, they become too fat to fly. Ducks and geese live in fear. Because their lives are so hard, they easily become sick. They don’t live long. Or know the happiness that you know here on Lundeeria.”

Duck and Goose bowed their heads in shock. Their tears fell to the ground at their feet, and they became very quiet. It was as if they had stopped breathing. They slowly moved to join the others.

Gazelle gazed at Justin. His eyes were so

sad; she felt his sorrow as strongly as she felt her own. "Justin, I know this is very difficult for both of you, and I know you do not want to hurt us. But we must know the truth. And you and Emma are the only ones who can tell us that truth."

Emma looked at Justin and took a deep breath.

"Are there pigs here?" she asked.

A soft squeal was heard as Pig came forward. "I am here. I love living with my parents and all my brothers and sisters. Mothers will carefully build a nest so their babies will be born in a safe area. When we are young, we call for help if we get into trouble. We know our mother will recognize our voice and come as quickly as she can to help us."

"When we make friends with other pigs,

we become friends for life. We all sometimes play in the mud because it keeps us cool in the summer. But other than that, we like being clean. And other animals often ask us for advice saying that we are very smart.”

Emma knelt on the ground and gently stroked Pig’s head. “Pigs are known to be clever on Earth, also. They’re as smart as three-year old human children!”

“How do we live on Earth, Emma? On factory farms like the others?” Pig held her breath as she looked up at Emma.

It was so hard to answer, to tell the truth. But these caring, peaceful animals honestly wanted to know about their kind a long, long way from here.

“Yes, Pig. On factory farms, pigs live in big, dark buildings where the air smells terrible. They live in cages so small they can’t

turn around. These cages are not kept clean. Pigs never get to play with their brothers and sisters in the dirt.”

“Mother pigs do not have their babies in a safe nest, but on concrete, kind of like rock. The little piglets are separated from their mothers when they’re just a few weeks old.



The piglets cry in terror for their mothers to come, but the mothers are in cages. They can do nothing for their crying babies.”

Pig gave a sob and then gained control of herself. She went over to Hen, Rooster, Turkey, Duck, and Goose, and lay down with them. The six could feel the love from their fellow Lundeerians, but even so their hearts felt numb with sadness over what they had learned.

“Who else?” asked Tortoise.

“Sheep?” Justin looked again at all the faces before him and saw a beautiful snow white sheep walking gracefully toward him. Her long lashes almost covered her downcast eyes. “I know it was very selfish of me, but I was so hoping not to be called,” she said, looking up at Justin.

“I love living with all my friends. The

more the merrier. We show we care for one another by rubbing our heads together. We have very good memories and can remember many faces for years. Other animals say we're quite clever."

Justin sat down cross-legged in front of her and ran his hands over her thick wool coat.

"On factory farms, sheep are kept in pens with wire mesh bottoms. It's like standing on tiny sticks that are loosely connected. They are kept in buildings all their lives. They never feel the sun on their faces or the grass beneath their feet. I am so sorry, but the babies are taken away from their mothers soon after they are born."

Justin pressed his face to Sheep's face and she rubbed against his. She felt his tears mix with her own. Then she too went slowly to

join the others where she sank tearfully to the ground.

“Are there cows here?” Emma didn’t know how much longer she could do this.

A large brown cow moved carefully through the crowd so she wouldn’t harm any of the smaller creatures. She had a single white mark, which ran from between her eyes down her face. Her eyes, as dark as chocolate, were fixed on Emma’s blue eyes.

“We cows are very social. We stay together with family and friends all our lives. We live in fields where we can lazily chew the grass. We often groom others, especially if they are upset. We have very good memories and can remember a lot about where we live and how to find what we want. When our children are young, we mothers gather all the young ones into a

group and take turns looking after them. This way the other mothers can go eat.”

With a tear in her eye, she continued, “If something happens to one of us, all the others become very sad. What about us, Emma?”

Emma stretched up to put her arms around Cow’s neck but she was too short. So she stroked Cow’s face instead.

“Cows too. Mothers and their children are also separated a day or two after the babies are born. Cows are crowded in with so many others they have no freedom. They easily become sick. Since there are too many to care for, the humans keep giving them medicine. It’s supposed to make them better. But often it just causes other problems.”

“Cows, too, often stand on concrete, not grass or the ground. Instead of the grass that

cows love to eat, they are only given corn because it makes them fat.”

In grief for her kind on Earth, Cow bowed her head. Emma stood on tiptoe to gently kiss the white mark on Cow’s face. Then, Cow slowly turned to join the others.

“Who else?” Tortoise asked huskily.

“Sea creatures. They too are now beginning to be raised on factory farms.”

Justin peered into the water that was in the crater’s pond and saw countless fish in the deep water. He saw tunas, shrimp,

lobsters, trout, and

others. He looked at

Tortoise. “All of

them, and many

more. Once our world

had loads of these and

other sea creatures. But so many were caught



that now there are fewer and fewer.”

Dolphin swam to the edge of the pond where Justin was standing and looked deep into Justin’s eyes. If he didn’t know better he would have thought Dolphin was crying. But dolphins can’t cry. Can they?

Justin continued. “Most people don’t know that fish can feel pain. They are very aware. They can even sense what is around them without touching it.”

“Thank you, children. We have heard enough. Now we know what is happening on the world called Earth,” announced Tortoise.



Chapter 7

Hope for Earth

It was done. Justin and Emma had told the Lundeerians what they needed to know. The two children were more tired than they had ever been in their lives. And they couldn't remember a time when they had felt so sad.

Nightingale understood how hard this was for Justin and Emma. She led the twins to a nearby grassy spot that was shaded by some flowering trees so the two could rest. Seeds, nuts, and fruit were brought for them to eat. Fresh water was carried from the pond for them to drink.

Some of the animals stayed with them so they would not feel alone or be afraid. Exhausted, the two children lay down after they had eaten some food and drunk a little

of the water.

Nightingale stayed as well and sang them to sleep. She sang to them of dreams, dreams of Lundeeria as it was now: a peaceful land where all animals respected and cared for one another.

As the two exhausted children rested under the loving care of Nightingale, the other animals returned to the assembly.

After speaking with the other council members, Tortoise again came forward to address the assembly. "When we began the Dream Seeking, we did not know what would happen. We just knew that we had felt much fear. Now, with a sorrow so great we can hardly bear to even speak of it, we know the reason for that fear."

"There is an animal on Earth that is not only eating other animals, but treating them

without any thought for their welfare. The Earth animals, unlike we Lundeerians, are unable to speak up for themselves. Unable to tell the humans that factory farming, that mistreating and killing animals is all wrong.”

“Fortunately, some humans, like Justin and Emma and their parents, do understand this.”

“In our own ancient past, our ancestors learned that killing is wrong. And although it was not easy, they learned to change. And due to their courage, we have lived peacefully with one another since that time.”

Gazelle came forward and stood next to Tortoise.

“Dear Friends, although we live on different worlds, we are still one with our brothers and sisters on Earth. In our Dream Seeking, we brought two human children

here from that world so very far away. Surely it was their goodness and their compassion that helped us reach out to them, to bring them here.”

“The council proposes that through them, we try to speak for all those who cannot speak for themselves. If our ancestors could change, surely so can these humans.”

“We need to dream Justin and Emma back to where they came from. And we need to do so now because their parents must be getting very worried about them.”

As Gazelle finished speaking, Nightingale flew toward the center of the crater. Justin and Emma followed behind her on the ground. As they moved through the immense crowd, the animals parted to make room for the two to pass. As they did so, the children reached out to the animals who

nuzzled them, gave soft sounds of greeting, or simply looked on with love. They looked up as birds flew over their heads in encouragement.

“Yes, our parents will be worried,” Justin said.

“But can you dream us home safely?” asked Emma.

Gazelle looked thoughtfully into Justin’s eyes and then into Emma’s. “We dreamed you here without knowing who we were dreaming of. I believe now that we know you, we will be able to return you home safely. But my dear ones, we cannot promise this. If you would like to remain here with us, we will happily look after you and do everything we can to



make your lives here good ones.”

Gazelle looked at both of them before adding, “That I *can* promise you.”

Emma and Justin turned to each other and seemed to know what the other was thinking.

Emma looked back at Gazelle and spoke first. “We heard you speaking of the courage of the ancient Lundeerians. We know it would be safer for us to stay here. And we’d love to live here. To us this is a world more wonderful than anything we could have imagined.”

“But we cannot stay,” Justin said with regret. “We cannot stay even though we are not sure we can return safely home.”

“Tortoise, Gazelle, Nightingale, all the animals of Lundeeria, we will be your voice. We will find a way to speak for you on

behalf of the animals on our world.”

“We have learned that humans are not the only ones who know fear. Not the only ones to feel pain, the sadness of losing mothers and fathers, children, and friends.

Emma continued. “We now know that many animals, not just humans, want to live safely. Want to be happy. And free from pain. Like humans, they too love their children. Are loyal to those they love and to their friends.”

“People need to understand. It is wrong for us to think only of ourselves. Wrong to think we are more important than other animals. Wrong to make them suffer, to feel sad and afraid.”

Justin looked at Emma who nodded at him. He turned back to Tortoise and Gazelle and said, “We need to help others

understand this. We are ready to go home.”

What could the Lundeerians say? They didn't know the words to express how grateful they were to these two young humans. But really, they didn't need to say anything. Justin and Emma could feel their thoughts. An overwhelming love and gratitude came into their hearts that just a while ago had felt so sad and empty. They looked out at the crater overflowing with animals, and spoke together.

“We know. Thank you. We will never forget.” With that, they lay down in the same place where they had appeared just hours before.

Nightingale began to sing all the animals and the two humans to sleep. She sang of friendship and love. She sang of a world that needed help and of two human children

returning home. She sang of courage and thinking of others not just oneself. And she sang of doing what is right when ignored or even laughed at by others. As everyone slept, Nightingale guided the dreams of all the Lundeerians and of two brave, caring children.

In a little while, Nightingale stopped singing. And again, as if one, all the Lundeerians awoke. Then they all heard deep in their hearts the voices of Justin and Emma. "Thank you. We are safe. We are home. We will always remember you and what you taught us."

The animals knew that somehow things would be better on the world called Earth. Justin and Emma would tell others what they had learned. More humans would come to understand that killing and eating animals

is wrong.

Between Earth and Lundeeria the air seemed to vibrate as all the creatures on Lundeeria and two small children on Earth thought as one: "Love all beings."



For Parents

For those of you who are vegetarians or vegans, having your child say “I’m not eating meat ever again” will most likely be welcomed. Your lessons on respecting animals and practicing compassion will have taken root.

But for those who are not vegetarian, such a proclamation will very likely be viewed with alarm.

“How will you get your protein?” “You’re still growing and need a balanced diet!” “I don’t know how to cook vegetarian, plus I don’t have time to prepare separate meals for you!”

Before you dash off an email wanting to know what on earth I was thinking when I wrote this book—wait! There is a growing body of research indicating that a diet with reduced animal products is better for us, regardless of whether we’re adults or children.

And also very important for our children’s future, reducing our consumption of animal products is better for the environment, that place where our children will be living, hopefully, for many decades to come.

So before you decide that becoming vegetarian or vegan is detrimental to both your child’s health and your family’s peace and happiness, some research might be a good idea.

Where to start?

A great place is *The China Study* by T. Colin Campbell. It's fascinating to read and has a wealth of peer-reviewed research. If you want to read further in the field, there are excellent references listed in the back of the book.

Where to go next? Try searching online bookstores or going to your local library to see what they have under "children vegetarian." You'll find some excellent information and ideas on nutrition and cooking, how to integrate vegetarian meals with meat ones, how to help your vegetarian children get along respectfully with those who eat meat, and a bunch of other issues that arise when your child suddenly announces "I'm not eating meat ever again!"



May the goodness
accrued from this work
help to alleviate
the suffering of all beings
and enable them
to find lasting happiness.

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DEDICATION OF MERIT

May the merit and virtue
accrued from this work
adorn Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land,
repay the four great kindnesses above,
and relieve the suffering of
those on the three paths below.

May those who see or hear of these efforts
generate Bodhi-mind,
spend their lives devoted to the Buddha Dharma,
and finally be reborn together in
the Land of Ultimate Bliss.
Homage to Amita Buddha!

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