



Regiena Heringa

Manny and Joothan

Manny had been sitting in the pale yellow grasses for sometime now contemplating the small furry neck of a delicate field mouse as it nibbled at the few summer seeds which lay in her hand. The nervous movement of its minute whiskers tickled and she almost pulled away with a smile. But there was something wonderful in the moment and so she left her hand, silent and soft, forming a platform for the trusting creature to enjoy. She realized that he had completely abandoned himself to her and this she admired.

Manny was only ten earth years old but her mind was ancient. Now, as she sat facing the warm afternoon sun which flooded the meadowlands, she began once again to question the world. Why did the mouse come to her and not to someone else? Why does the butterfly never sing? Why was her body so short? Why could she feel what other people were thinking sometimes and not at other times? These and so many other thoughts would pull through her mind like a train, leaving more questions behind. The greatest question of all was, why was she here upon this earth? Every now and then Manny would feel a reply or see the answer in the fields. But that was never enough.

Just as another thought was being created, Manny looked down to see that her hand was empty and decided it was time to return home. As she stood up she could barely see above the strong, slender stalks of the field but she knew her way back. It simply meant standing on her toes from time to time to glimpse where the great stand of willows grew and move in that direction. Where there were willows there was water and where there was water there was the stream which led her home.

Over the years Manny continued to create and to collect her questions. She no longer fed the mice, for the villagers had discouraged that but she always had time after her busy day of learning and working to leave food for other fine creatures of the meadowlands. Sometimes when her mind was especially alert a graceful soonshow would appear, that wondrous white deer-like animal, and Manny would feel a wide admiration for the beauty and complexity of Creation.

It was also during these growing years that Manny developed a very special friendship with Joothan, an unusually intelligent and caring boy. His blond hair reminded her of the tall grasses

where she had once fed the mice and his blue clear eyes, as fresh as the sky after a hard rain, kept her close to her admiration of life.

Joothan, as others in her village, had drifted into the area with his parents several years ago. It was said that the family had come from the direction of Sevenaaz, the vast sea, but none of this had been determined and after a while it no longer seemed important. They were generous and kind people, much loved by the community. From time to time, after the midnight hour, whispers swirled around the gathering place that perhaps Joothan and his family were not really from this part of the planet. After all the parents were seen curing animals of various diseases and Joothan himself was once surprised by a group of youngsters, who claimed he actually spoke to the flowers and the insects! But not much of that was taken into serious consideration, as the honesty and compassion for the family clearly outweighed the possibility of strangeness.

Manny never really understood her deep and easy friendship with Joothan that had taken root over the years. Not until one very eventful day.

It had been storming since the early evening. Thunder bellowed throughout the valley and rolled off the mountains with triumphant power. Lightning streamed and flashed like a whip through the fast-moving clouds of dark blue ink. Everything smelled of electricity, water and earth. The inhabitants of the village were filled with a cold uneasiness. In such times they felt helpless and could only stay indoors to keep warm in friendship of the many.

Manny and Joothan had been gone since early morning to explore the countryside and its many trails which led to hidden groves and gullies. Now they found themselves comfortably seated in a small cave overlooking an expanse of long, flat, recently plowed fields. The view of the storm from there was breathtaking. Suddenly, as sharp as the turn of the humming bird, Manny found herself transported into tall, familiar grasses facing the sweet glowing sun and feeling the gentle nuzzling of a mouse eating out of her hand. How could this be? And then a clear bell-like voice spoke from within her mind.

“Manny,” it said lovingly, “all your questions can now be answered. The mouse comes to you because it senses your kindness. The butterfly needs not sing because its exquisite beauty and liberty fill others with song. Your body was once short so that it had time to adapt to your world. And now you can sense other peoples’ thoughts because you, yourself, have taken in a greater understanding of the world.”

Manny, filled with wonderment, then asked, “But why am I here?”

“Watch what is about to happen,” answered the voice.

With a sudden pull she was brought back into the cave as the thunderous sky before her dissolved. In its place, trembling in the brilliance of silver light and individually surrounded by a rainbow of heavenly colours, were all the people and animals she had met so far in her lifetime.

“This world as all other worlds is made of beauty and of love, Manny. Through your thoughts and your actions you are here to ensure that your world continues to pour forth and to increase this beauty and this love. All life in the universe is created by the hand of Light and Grace and your life lies deeply within all of this Creation. Recognizing and living these truths are the greatest glory that any person can reach for.”

It was only much later that Manny felt the warm hand of friendship on her shoulder. It was Joochnan with an understanding light in his eyes. She knew that he had seen all what she had witnessed. It was also very possible that he had somehow initiated the event.

As the storm melted away leaving an earth fresh and renewed, Manny and Joochnan slowly made their way back to the village. Manny’s mind was quiet and her heart deep. She had been helped to a place of greater understanding and thankfully realized that her world had suddenly become very important.