

### *Peace in the Forest*

One snowy afternoon, a tiger approached Emmett's house at the edge of the forest. He stopped at the door, called out to Angelino, the duck, and then waited. When Emmett came home from his trip to town a few days later, Angelino introduced Hans, the tiger, to him.

Pressed for time, Hans quickly told Emmett what brought him there -

This forest was just like any other forest in the old days, foxes hunted chickens, tigers hunted rabbits, and men hunted just about anyone in sight. Some fifty years ago, a peace agreement was made among all the animals - they wanted to stop hunting and eating each other for as long as they lived in the same forest. They learned about each other's eating habits and they modified them in order to save lives and live with each other in peace. Sometimes they got a terrible craving for their old food. But then they saw that their old food had become a friend, they could no longer bear the thought of eating them. This way, Hans explained to Emmett, all the beasts stopped being each other's enemies because they were each other's friends.

But the peace agreement failed to reach humans and the forest suffered great losses because of that. "Men just don't understand," Hans sighed, "we have so many animals living in the forest only because we don't eat each other anymore. And men have caused us great sorrow by killing our brothers and sisters. We tried to fight them by getting together and scaring them off. But now the hunters get together, they team up, and because they have guns, it seems that a great war is going to break and we are all going to die in the end, including the last hunter."

Emmett thought about the trouble Hans presented and said that he would go down to the village and have a talk with his father, James, as he was the chief hunter of his village.

Later that day, Emmett visited his father. "But Emmett, don't be so naïve," James said, devoid of all emotions, "we need to eat animals to survive. It's just a fact of life. How do you think we raised you, your brothers and your sisters? Of course I'd choose my family's survival over theirs. Your friends should just accept that this is their lot in life. And if they can simply accept this as what life has in store for them, they might even feel content in giving their lives to us."

Feeling that there was something wrong with his father's logic and also knowing that he was not going to change his father's mind, Emmett went back to his own house, and started thinking about other options. Having said goodnight to Angelino when the night had fallen, Emmett went to his room to contemplate some more.

Still, he found no solutions.

Deep into the night, Emmett decided to leave his contemplation for the morning, when he would have a clearer head for the dilemma at hand.

Angelino was sitting right beside him when Emmett opened his eyes the next morning, "I dreamt of Angelo, the deer," he told Emmett, "he said that he once ran into a wise man on one of his journeys. He is known to have great wisdom and he lives three mountains away. Angelo said that you might want to seek his counsel."

Thus Emmett packed his bag, said goodbye to Angelino and went on his way.

When he arrived at the wise man's hut, so many people were waiting to gain "wisdom" that Emmett had to wait well into the night.

"How can I help you?" The wise man asked when he finally sat down with Emmett, each with his own cup of tea.

While Emmett talked, the wise man listened intently, not uttering a word. When the wise man finally spoke, what he said was not at all what Emmett expected, "Your father has a point. If we see the animals as our food, there is no way we are going to stop killing them. On the other hand, your friend Hans seems to already have found his solution in his heart, he just hasn't seen it yet. How do you think the animals in the forest stopped killing each other?"

Emmett thought about it, "Well, they knew each other's names, they became friends."

Hearing what he himself just said, Emmett knew he had found the answer.

He said goodbye to the wise man and left for home. Hans was waiting at his house when he arrived.

It was said that that day Emmett, Hans, Angelino and all the other animals in the forest made a plan.

The decision was such a secret that even until today, we humans still do not know of the details.

All we know is that after that day, a little duck was seen to appear at James' village and invite little children for walks in the forest. More often than not, some of these children would disappear for days at a time. And when they grew up, none of them became hunters. Instead, some of them planted their wheat, others raised their chickens, pigs, cows and rabbits, and the rest became shepherds or dug up ponds to raise their own fish. The only thing this new generation was known to have in common was that for some reason all of them refused to name any of the animals they raised for food....

It was also rumored that despite the peaceful atmosphere in the forest, Emmett remained unhappy with the outcome of their plan and he was still searching for new and better solutions until the day he died.