

House for the Poor

For years after Tammy left Emma, the deer and Sally, the fox, in order to fulfil her heart's desire of becoming a healer just like Angelo, Emma and Sally went about their lives as usual.

One day, Emma suddenly looked up from her plate at dinner, "Sally, I am discontent, so I talked to Alex about my wanting to be like Tammy - to help people - and he told me that he has a friend Emmett, who lives far far away. And Emmett knows a rabbit Sarah who has built a home for the poor. I think I'm going to go help Sarah."

Taken completely by surprise, Sally didn't know what to say. She missed Emma already. And she didn't see why Emma needed to go so far away to help the poor. After all, Emma frequently visited Tammy and learned a great deal about helping others from her. She even helped Tammy with her group gatherings twice a week. "But then, " Sally thought to herself, "perhaps she needs to find a bigger and more visible way to help people." She knew then that the only right thing for her to do was to let Emma go.

A few months later, when dawn broke in one breezy spring morning, Emma hugged Sally goodbye and went on her way.

Alex was right, Sarah and Emmett really did live far far away. By the time Emma reached where they lived, it was already winter - white and gray were the only visible colors everywhere she turned.

Emma brought regards from Alex to Emmett and Angelino, the duck, and then went to meet Sarah. She received a warm welcome from Sarah and all her relations. The very next day, she went to live in one of the shelters, along with 32 rabbits and 21 other animals, who had all been homeless before Sarah took them in and gave them a place to stay.

At first, Emma was excited about her new life; she was learning to cook for over 50 people with different diets and favorites and all. Then she was getting used to listening to them and helping them resolve conflicts between one another. A few years later, Emma started missing her life alone with Sally in the quiet little forest near Alex's fishing village. Here with Sarah there were always people around her who needed her constant

attention. She felt as if she had no time to contemplate quietly and no time to "recharge" herself. Soon she even started to resent being needed all the time.

Emma explored the possibility of not living in Sarah's Place - it was what the shelter was called - coming in only to cook and listen to the residents. "But that's not the way we do things here" was Sarah's final and non-negotiable answer. When Emma felt that she had run out of options, she showed up at Emmett and Angelino's door. "My dear," The duck said, hugging Emma tightly with his wings, "you look really thin and worn. Are you okay?"

First nodding and then shaking her head, tears streamed down Emma's pretty deer cheeks, "No, I'm not okay. I feel lonely in the crowd. I want to help all of them. And yet I don't think I'm doing well while living among them. I thought helping people might give me a sense of contentment but I guess I was mistaken... ."

At this moment Emmett came in the house.

By the time all three sat down for dinner, both Angelino and Emma half-expected Emmett to come up with a solution for her, but all Emmett did was to ask more questions. Dinner became late night tea and then more tea, and more food....

Angelino dozed off when dawn was near. When Emmett gently touched his wings to wake him up, the sun was already right above their heads. Emma told them that she was going to say goodbye to Sarah and the rest of her family and she was going to go home to Sally.

"But why?" It was Angelino's turn to cry, "You are going to leave us?!" After much debating within himself, Angelino added, "But of course I, of all people, understand...."

After many tears, Emma went to the shelter to say goodbye.

The way home seemed to be faster than the way to Sarah's Place. Months later, one hot summer day, Emma arrived at the little stream where Tammy did her healing. Upon seeing the deer, Tammy felt the urge to talk, "I had heard that you had left to help the poor—Sally was just passing by last month and said how much she missed you—," she stopped in half sentence when she suddenly noticed Emma's tears.

Emma told Tammy how bad she felt about leaving Sarah's Place and how Sarah's parting words didn't help matters, "She said that I really needed to work harder on my

willingness to help the poor. She made it sound like I was abandoning my mission. And now I am also worried how Sally feels about me coming back. I know that Emmett sees things differently but...."

At this time a voice broke softly behind them, "One does not become a better person just because she can live with the poor. Nor could one say that you are not a good enough person because you can only listen to people part time or you are unable to live among the poor. The key is a kind heart and your efforts," Emma broke into tears and laughter at the same time when she heard Sally's familiar voice, "And my dear, welcome home! Now we are all going to help you find your own way...."