

### *Gordon's Decision*

Gordon, the deer-fox, was sitting alone at the far end of the little stream, contemplating all by himself, under the starry night.

"So Tammy had to leave, without having time to say goodbye to us," he thought, "All Emma ever said afterwards was that it was time for a new approach and Tammy had to go with the old-fashioned useless method." The thought of what Emma said made Gordon very sad.

He recalled a group meeting from a couple of months ago.

Richard, the vegetarian fox and Jack, the vegetarian tiger, were both making their annual visit to the center. Once again, Richard was trying to convince Jack that he would be better off letting the other tigers in his forest know that he was a vegetarian. This time, Cassandra and Emma jumped to agree with Richard. They designed an "intervention plan".

The very next day, the whole group took off to Jack's forest and told the tigers about Jack being a vegetarian. The tigers broke the peace pact and started eating rabbits again. They also declared Jack "unwelcome" in the forest and from then on, Jack became a homeless vegetarian tiger, even though Richard took him to his own forest, but "it is not really home", Jack told Gordon a few days ago. And yet according to Richard, Emma and Cassandra, it was "good progress" for both Jack and his old forest because every tiger now knew Jack as an honest tiger and Jack was proud of who he was.

The more Gordon pondered on this, the more hopeless he felt. There were just too many "interventions" like this in the last few months after Tammy left. When Gordon got sadder and sadder sitting all by himself, a swallow landed right in front of him and said that he was asked to make a trip to Sally's house.

"Why does the old fox want to see me?" Gordon asked the swallow.

"She didn't say and I didn't ask" was the swallow's reply as she flew away.

Gordon set out on his way immediately. With his fast deer-fox ways, he made it there within the next day. He arrived at suppertime and was invited to share some freshly roasted chicken with the old fox.

"Gordon, I'll be very frank with you about this. I want to talk to you because of Emma," right after dinner, Sally said over a cup of tea, "I love Emma very dearly. She was very happy when she came back to help Tammy with the healing center. Now Tammy has left and I am afraid that Emma has lost a valuable perspective in looking at her work and her own life. Cassandra seems very driven in one direction and I am not sure that is the way for Emma. I just visited her last week. When I saw her, she looked very unhappy but she insisted that this 'discontentment' was only temporary. She told me, 'Cassandra said that in order to make true progress, we have to hurt some people's feelings first and sooner or later, they'd come around when they realize that we only want to help them grow.' But I am very worried about Emma's own state of mind, would you help me?"

"How would you like me to help?" Gordon asked, bewildered.

"Stay with her, no matter what she says to you and how she treats you. Do it for me. She needs you there, even though she does not see it right now," Sally replied.

Tears dropped down the deer-fox's cheeks and he looked tentatively at the old fox, "But I am really disturbed by how they run the center and Cassandra has told me that if I could not agree with her about the new method in another month, she wants me 'gone'. I really don't know what I should do anymore."

"Oh, my," Sally's face fell when she heard this, "Cassandra said this? Well, how do you think Emma feels?"

"Emma said that perhaps I should be open to the new method. And she would very much like me to stay and work with her. But I could not agree with their new method, especially when I clearly see that it has made a lot of people suffer. I simply don't see how that can be interpreted as 'growth' in any way. The sadder part is that I think that a part of Emma even knows it. She is just denying that 'knowing part' right now." Gordon said very slowly, with many tears.

There was a long silence before Sally spoke again, "Gordon, would you stay for a while longer and just try not to say too much about their new method and see how it goes? I know it's a lot to ask and I know you will be hurt witnessing all the damage that this is doing to a lot of people. But I think Emma really needs a friend like you, especially now. And if you leave now, she will have no other perspective at all about all this. It looks like she is about to lose her whole world."

Gordon stretched out his right front leg and touched the old fox's face with his paw, "Okay. I will do it, for you, for Emma and for me, because I love her, too. But you have to promise me that you will never mention this conversation to Emma."

With tears streaming down her face, the old fox nodded. She handed what was left of the roasted chicken to the deer-fox, hugged him and then watched him disappear in the darkness.

"What a kind soul, that hybrid, " Sally murmured to herself, "and his wish of offering his love in secret. I have given him such a hard task and I wish him all the strength."