



Excerpt from the "MAGIC TREE" Book by Talidari

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An excerpt from CHAPTER 8 It takes place in Japan in jail - Magda was detained after being caught working illegally

In the evenings, after the guards would lock the cells and the lights were switched off, the only entertainment they could get was the kind they would create themselves, and usually that was nothing else but singing or chatting. On some evenings they would sit in a circle in the center of the cell and try to find the songs they all knew and sing them in a low tone to keep the guards off their necks. One time they got even Magda in the mood to sing, so she initiated a song that she would normally never consider, but in those strange circumstances, it seemed appropriate, because some gimmicks came with it, that made it fairly amusing, and it was one of the songs which most countries have in their own language. It was the children's song 'When you happy and you know it'. Much to her surprise, it turned out to be an amazing experience, because she felt uplifted and delighted after she heard the girls from other cells joining in. She had sung a line and then they repeated it across the halls, followed by clapping hands or snapping fingers, and so on.

Now, how can I tell you about the sensation she was experiencing while hearing all the others joining unexpectedly? There was more to it than I am able to put into words, as those kinds of exhilarating moments are generally beyond vocabulary. It was in times like those that she learned to appreciate the simplest little moments and turn them into something impressive and momentous. Those are the things you cannot tell by hearing about them. You had to be there.

At that moment, she felt the presence of a spirit, a holy spirit that brought them together in the joyous manifest. The song itself didn't matter that much as it was a stupid song anyway, but what did matter was this shared togetherness. It certainly felt like they were having a communion, although there were no words of wisdom told and no prayers uttered. It was like that song of a bird, which she didn't understand, but meant so much to her at the given moment. Right then it became clear to her why the caged birds sung. Reading about it from being nestled in a comfy armchair in your home, it might be hard for you to imagine what was going on there at those particular moments. Some things are just impossible to describe in words, as they can only be felt, not explained.

In such strange circumstances and even stranger venue, a person tends to change perspective and adopts a whole new outlook. After initial hellish anguish, very soon she became humble and modest. Once she put things in perspective, she came to realize how all the privileges she had been taking for granted were pretty frail and ephemeral; and, essentially,

very unreal. What was real and could be accounted for were the privileges that she had built within herself, the ones that didn't depend on the context and were reliable under any circumstances. Before this incident, she thought she got it made, that she had it all together - great looks, pockets full of money, perfect health, sexy soul-mate, loving romance, countless friends, time for herself, fun job that she was going to come back to after her visa were renewed, but now all that went out the window. All that, however fabulous and desirable it seemed, none of it could comfort her while being locked up. She couldn't rely on any of that. The only thing she could rely on was her inner sense of freedom.

Takayama-san found out where she was, having contacts among the police force, so he sent her a book that she actually already read before, but what earned it a spot in our story was that what he wrote inside as inscription: 'Although the river may force you to change course, hold fast to what you believe. A lion remains to be a lion, even if they lock him in a cage'. Wow!

She thought about it for a while, as she had much time for reflection then, and came to an enlightening revelation. They took everything from her, her job, friends, boyfriend, freedom, choices, income, access to her stuff, even her lucky Buddha figurine, but what they couldn't take from her, if she didn't allow them, was who she was, and she was a lion queen, for all she cared. In any case, she was determined not to allow them to take away her dignity, her sense of worth and her own values.

She almost let it happen, but was luckily reminded of her true privileges that no man could take away from her without her permission. All the things that she thought she couldn't live without, she learned them to be very replaceable and fickle. So much for the things she took for granted, she learned to appreciate them more. Things like sunrise and moonrise, rainbows, the smell of the rain, the sound of the wind, being surrounded by friends, having choices, no matter how insufficient they might seem at times, and little things like that.

There is always something to be learned from every situation, no matter how awful it is, and being in jail is no exception. What better place to regroup and repent! Unfortunately, rain has to fall before a rainbow appears. It often takes a tragedy to make us take another look at our lives, since we neglect the warning signs in times of pleasure. As with any major shake-up in life, you really have to ask yourself this question: How did I bring it onto myself? Or: is the universe trying to tell me something? As far as that goes, it struck her there that somewhere along the road she had become caught up in the superficialities of life once again and made a wrong turn. It took some days of contemplation to see the connection and realize why she got into this mess. It was the understanding of the universal laws such as the one of the cause and effect, the law of retribution, which shed some light onto her misfortune.

During her stay in Japan, apart from working illegally, she did some things that were not right, but she made me promise not to tell at this point, so there you go, I cannot tell you now what it was, but you'll figure it out later. If I told you, it would be like telling ghost stories with the lights on. It's better to keep you in the dark for a while. If Lena would take over the narration at this point, I'm sure she would give it to you. I give you this much though, the deeds had their roots in greed, and if you read between the lines, you'll figure it soon enough. But it does not matter that much anyway.

What really did matter was that Magda saw it clearly then how her past had shaped her present and recognized the link between her running a red light, so to speak, and the consequent retribution. Imprisonment itself was therefore only a natural consequence in the functioning of the nature's laws, and not just bad luck, as she saw it at first. She got what was coming to her. It goes to show that one always ends up stewing in his or her own juice. The nature's law says: what you sow is what you reap. You cannot plant corn and expect to harvest apples, can you?

Regardless of the universal laws backfiring on her, she could see certain benefits of her detention, such as the recognition of her true privileges and of the supremacy of God's laws. She realized that being in detention was not so bad after all. It was not that bad for Nelson Mandela either, since it propelled him to stardom. Mind you, he deserved his celebrity status owing to his virtues, especially to his courage and forgiveness. Not all that is perceived as negative must be bad, because we have the power to transform it into opportunities to strengthen our virtues and into positive lessons, with the tool of understanding. The worst prison is actually the one we build for ourselves, while having freedom. We limit ourselves with our fears, prejudices, narrow-mindedness, doubts, compromises, discriminations, attachments and other goblins of our minds. This insight gave Magda an idea that one day she should write a book about how she found freedom behind the bars.

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