

Tennessee Seed Pearl: Part I

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When the well was full, all the frogs, ants, and bugs came out to dry land. They were playing together until a huge hawk flew overhead. They tried to jump back in the well, but it was still overflowing rivulets down its sides. Luckily the hawk was not hungry (or thirsty), so they began playing again. A rooster came by. There were threats and murmurs to make them scared. But what could they do? Their normal habitat was not safe anymore. The rooster saw a hen had found a worm. He forgot everything, and the animals from the well went on playing. Gradually the sides of the well dried up, and the water level dropped below the top, leaving just a little space. First the ants sought solace. Then the crickets, and so on, from the smallest to the largest. When they were all safe back in the well, it flooded all over again. Like the day into night, the animals suffered this pilgrimage over and over until they grew too tired to play. For what was this designed? What purpose? they asked. Some thought it was from the shaking of the earth. Some thought the rivulets wanted to explore the world around them. We should find a better home. It should be under something, a rock or a roof, they worried. Just then, a beautiful, old-fashioned touring car came up to them from around the corner. Get in, said its driver. I'll take you to a new place. They couldn't believe their luck, so they all got in except one salamander who didn't feel right about it, though it was his idea to look for a new place. Off they went careening, when a huge screech sounded at the crossroads. The salamander was right. The driver was no good. The salamander hooting loud enough for his friends to hear, most of them found their way back to the well, which never flowed over again. They all were happy and made the salamander president of the republic and chose their flag to be salamander-colored with just a dot of green.

The green dot was seen before. Was it up against a wall? Was it behind something? A red something? I didn't like it being green. It seemed to bore a hole right through the salamander color. But everyone else did. They cheered and cheered, couldn't wait to see it flying in the air above their heads. It turned a darker color, almost black, and struck the whiffs of wind this way and that. Someone proposed to take it down. This was treated as heresy, sacrilege, and treason. So there it stayed day in and day out. I kind of got to like it, along with the others who by this time had gotten on with other things, making babies, enlarging their houses, stomping on their enemies. The future looked bright. They decided to incorporate and join the United League of Nations. There they met others who had not had the advantage of a common background as denizens of a well. Some were used to the air, who talked about nothing except air rights. Others were from the sea, and that horrid saltwater smell hung all about them. But there were others, too, who were slightly similar, as the swamp animals were and the ones who lived at night. They tended to be smaller. There was no chance the smaller animals could gang up on the larger, even if there were so many more. So everything worked out just right. It was really an organization where members could talk with each other, get to know one another, and grow to love one another. Through the institution of representatives, each group had someone to send to

meet the others. The representative would both carry thoughts, questions, and ideas to the gatherings and bring back what they heard for discussion at home.

A rabbit met a frog at the gathering of the animals' League of Nations. The rabbit was perplexed to see the frog looking slimy with no fur. But they had speed in common. Both could get away from a predator with highly developed rear legs. We should do something for rear legs, said the rabbit to the frog. The frog, used to having big things, rabbit-sized, look at it as food, said yes, a very good idea. How would we do that? The rabbit thought better food might help. What do you eat? he smiled. Insects, said the frog. I need better insects. Maybe we can have a farm to raise more nutritious insects? The rabbit thought that was a terrible idea, since the insects also eat grasses. Why don't we change our diets? ventured the rabbit. I know a cook who can make a stew. It could have everything in it, so not just you and I, but all the other animals, too, could eat it. It could be protected by law for security and guaranteed to members. OK, said the frog, I will go back to my people with this idea and hear what they have to say about it. I'm not sure it will be popular or easily understood unless I take a sample to show. Do you know where I could get a sample? The rabbit understood the wisdom of this and phoned the chef, who said it would take some time to get all the ingredients together and cook it just right so each animal would taste in it something they liked—maybe two days. A messenger could bring it over to your well, suggested the rabbit. If you do not say anything until the stew is there, maybe a lot of confusion can be avoided. As for my people, I think I can explain how much less work and less dangerous it will be for them. But what will we need stronger leg muscles for if we no longer have to run from enemies? You could invent jumping contests, the frog said. That would help, and we would know if it is working.

Good idea, said the rabbit. I'll go talk to the other rabbits. There are a lot of different kinds of rabbits. We also have other soft, furry animals with us—even some not so furry, like hedgehog and shrew, which eats a lot. There better be some beetles in the stew. I'll meet you back here in two weeks. And off went the rabbit. Frog hopped all the way back. On the way he met scarecrow, who asked him how he was doing. I've just had a meeting where we decided to make a stew all the animals can eat as long as they are members. That sounds interesting, said the scarecrow. No reason to fight to have food in your belly. What's the food going to be made of? Well, the chef is going to collect something from what each animal eats and put it together, hoping each animal tastes what they like in it. But some of the animals eat other animals, said the scarecrow. The chef is very clever. He will disguise those tastes with plants, fruits, and specially chosen earth. They will send me a sample all the animals of the well can try. And then there are condiments galore to give and change taste. We're going to try to work it out. The advantages are many. The scarecrow said, We scarecrows don't have to eat anything. The wind blows through our tummies and we never get hungry. Why don't you be like me? I would if I could. Hey, you'd be out of a job if nothing ate anything. And if we were all scarecrows, we wouldn't exist. There's a big cycle of life, you aren't part of. So you want to be part of the cycle of life, do you? said the scarecrow. That's like wanting to be what you want to be . . . , pointless! Boring! You should eat

something no one else eats! The frog started at these words and was not so sure he could convince the others anymore.

In the meantime, the rabbit had started back to his hutch. He had to cross a stream full of eddies without a boat, canoe, or life raft. I'll just pave it with gravel, he said, cheerful as ever. So he began digging in the bank and found lots of sand and gravel. Now, how am I going to get this to float? I need a bridge, he thought. Where am I going to get that? Just then, the maker-of-bridges fairy was passing by. What kind of a bridge do you want? it said. You mean I can choose a bridge? There are so many kinds. I like a bridge with a high arch, but then the sand would fall off. You don't need sand if you have a bridge, said the fairy. But what will the sand do if I don't use it? asked the rabbit. I better take a flat bridge. Once I cross, the sand can do whatever it likes? I think the sand would like to be back where you took it from. I know this from the riverbank fairy, just so you know I'm not pretending. We are wasting valuable time. Just make the quickest bridge you can and leave the sand to me, please, said the slightly exasperated rabbit. In a flash of two seconds a small bridge was built right over all the eddies just wide enough for the rabbit. If my legs were stronger, I could have jumped over this whole stream, said the rabbit, totally forgetting the unsightly pile of sand left behind. Better leave this bridge up for when I come back, winked the rabbit, as he was off to the next, highest hill, hoping to stay dry. The eddies all chimed, he won't be coming back, he won't be coming back, he won't be coming back. How do you know this? asked the bridge fairy.

A pain is worth a thousand pound
A wrist clocks the nearest bend
A thought is through the night
All travelers are not the same

When the gravel—all thousands of tiny stones—heard this, they were so moved, their energy stirred each to come back to the snug place they remembered, and the riverbank fairy was so proud of them, it said, I will never let this happen to you again. Count on that!

The rabbit stopped off at a kitchen found on the way. He was so hungry dreaming the perfect stew yet to be made, he rushed into the kitchen, not waiting outside to order something. It was good so, because there was no one cooking there. The rabbit went to the refrigerator, pulled open the door, and found vegetables literally overflowing. I know rabbits in the wild are supposed to eat this stuff raw, but I like it cooked. Um, ah, how would I like to cook, steamed, stir-fry, boiled? I think steamed, then put in a grinder to mix the tastes real good. There's a big pot. Let's get to work. In short order, the rabbit was able to put a huge pile of pureed vegetables on the table. That'll be three dollars, a voice commanded. Who's speaking to me? the rabbit asked. I am, said the voice. You can put the money in the jar by the stove. But I have no money, said the rabbit. Who goes to a kitchen to eat without money? Are you a thief? I can give you my word I'll pay when I come back. I'm so hungry. But I heard from the fairies you are never coming back, said the voice. The fairies don't know anything. You just think because they are not real, they speak the truth. Well, let me tell you the truth. We rabbits always do what we say. The voice said, Things that are

disembodied are real, too. If you want to eat your food, I can make it unreal and you won't have to pay. Maybe then you will have more respect for fairies? Well, I cooked it myself. I should have something to say about what's real, don't you think? You are truly a conventional rabbit. I offer you exactly what you want and you can't see it. Better take your food until the last word reopened what food is all about. Then someone will come forward with the three dollars. But you will be so ashamed by then, you will always look this way and that before bettering the bargain I just gave you to eat with the other rabbits when you get home.

Three birds flew down, visiting the scene. This is such a forlorn place. Surely we don't have to have arguments like this here. To watch over a measly three dollars is the growth to make one stay. Get on little rabbit. Two of us will take you on your way, and I will stay to talk with the voice. Catch up with you later, my friends. The voice was really the place. Places are not animals or trees, plants or shrubs. Because it is unusual for places to have voices, many have thought they are haunted. In fact these places are unusual in other ways besides, hence finding a kitchen. They often alert to be on one's toes, to expect the unexpected. The voice was glad to hear these things as it had no way of knowing its own situation, and sometimes this inability would turn it into something fearful, harsh, or mean. The little bird that stayed knew this meant the voice would not be alone, where it would stew for lack of company. They spent some jolly time together—the bird and the voice—until each was calm and found enough self-dignity to part, as friends part, slightly sad to see each other off. But the voice was going to stay invested, as it was, in every aspect, measurement, contextualization, of the place, for that was the way to make it to be a voice, after all. And in truth its eyes had in them the joy of believing in not such a long time, it would have three dollars! The kitchen had been all worthwhile.

At long last the rabbit got back home to his hutch—the two birds were excellent, and there were many adventures they helped the rabbit through, which we do not relate here. Almost every step of the way was fraught with one kind of anxiety or another, as our rabbit was nervous, overly cautious, untrusting, and suspicious. He was welcomed back as a hero. All gathered around him, knocking against each other to get closer. What was it like out there? Did you find something? We thought you were never coming back! Things like that were said over and over. Our rabbit was so tired by this point, he begged to go home and take a nap. The others were a bit annoyed their hero of the moment did not have the stamina or the pluck to withstand the attention of the spotlight. The squeaks of the littlest and the grunts of their seniors chimed together in a dirge as they peeled back to let the rabbit through. His bed was waiting for him. Crisp, white sheets, fresh smelling, stuffed with new eiderdown: the rabbit collapsed and was asleep in minutes and snoring loudly in ten. The rabbit dreamed of his adventures, pretentious to the frog, taking credit for the meeting, mastering the need for food. The dreams were more real than the events he actually attended were. And here we leave the rabbit and go follow the frog to his return. Modest, deferential, accommodating, the frog realized much had to be done to install the big changes about to be suggested to his compatriots, fellows, and friends.

A robin was standing on the well when the frog ambled up. There are no worms here, said the frog. I am just welcoming you home. All the others are busy with their day, and I thought you need some cheering for a hero's return. Well, they do not have wings to see me coming like you do. Are all the birds going to join the League? asked the frog. Some are; some are not. Among birds, small and large make a difference. Well, why don't you join in two groups, small and large, then? That's a good idea. That should keep us from each other and keep us together at the same time. By the way, that spider told me it wanted to see you when you return. It has something to tell you about. Thank you, said the frog. I'll just go into the well. It's awfully dry up here; my skin is parched. So down into the well went the frog and found the spider on the underside of the wooden housing for the well. You look mighty pretty this morning, said the frog to the spider. The whole well has missed you, said the spider. There have been mounting tensions. All of us feel so different from one another. There's no place to rest. And some have threatened to go back to the old ways before the League. I'm so worried, because when I have my babies, there will be too many. Thank you for telling me, said the frog. Yes, when we don't eat each other, there could be overpopulation. But the reason you have so many babies is so some will survive, you know? All this will work itself out. When we don't have to work all day for our food, building webs, lying in wait, we will develop as we need and be much happier, live longer and richer lives, because we talk with each other instead of watching us eat each other. That sounds very good, said the spider, but the animals are known by what they do. What will I do if I do not make a web? You can still make a web if you want, said the frog. You can still come out at night. You can still see the other animals do what they do, complain and admire. The insects have banded together to join the League. When they are together, they do not compete. They know your web and will not get caught because they protect each other. But everything will go on as before, just no violence, killing. But let me hurry to get everyone together, because the key thing is to agree on the same food for all of us. We must convince them there will always be enough.

I don't even know what it's made of, said the frog. How can I convince them there will be enough? I know I'm supposed to wait for a sample, but what if stirring the conversation to the amount can be a kind of implicit promotion? So when the sample arrives, everyone is already inclined to favor it? Oh, this is all so complicated when you think all the groups have to be persuaded by someone like me, who isn't too confident in the first place. I better prepare a speech. Then I can go to the head of the well and speak down. The echoing will give authority, maybe. No, better not to play trickster. Look! There's a cricket. Let's speak to him. He's an old friend. Cricket, I've just come back from an important meeting of the League. Now, I've heard of that, said the cricket, they want crickets to make less noise so people can sleep. No, no. I want to ask you if we should, all of us who live in the well, come together to talk, or should I just pass the word along, or post a bill to read? How should I communicate with others? Everybody here knows what you are going to say. We are just waiting for the sample to arrive tomorrow, so we can taste it. We know your ideas about making life easier for us. We are willing to try . . . How do you know that? asked the frog. There was a black-and-white bandana that floated up with all your words in its knot. It came here two days ago, untied itself, and let all your words down the well. Your arrival

was an anticlimax and one that had no interest, even though we like you and picked you to go to the meeting. You couldn't make us more eager to taste the stew, no matter what you said. This is wonderful, announced the frog. Do you know who sent the bandana? It must have been the spirit of the demos, said the cricket. What we are doing is interesting to more than just ourselves.

The sincerity of the demos was brought into question. Was it equal to the frog's intentions? Were the intentions general enough with all parties truly under consideration as, in fact, the spirits' were? Still, if the story of the bandana could be believed, the intention of the spirit was surely mindful of all interests. Our frog was not so sure of his own. Did he hope to organize everything according to his own values? How could he be sure? He certainly believed in the spirit as much as he believed in mathematics. How long would it take for his belief to show itself worthwhile, worth having? Who would organize the groups of animals, or was this a natural division, the patterns, obvious? Was it so obvious that an insect living in his well would be happier with the well group than with some other insects? In some way it did not matter once the general food was accepted. At that point everyone would be together. The groups were only necessary to get the food accepted, to reach the animals inside some structure that broke down their numbers and gave a chance for them to talk things over. Of course, the original intention of the League was to legislate, something very necessary when everyone and everything was so disjointed from their habits of pursuing separate agendas. Once all animals were one, perhaps another agenda would form, but it was too soon to think about what that might be, or even if it was necessary. The rest of the animals just went on as usual, generally not taking on the great issues at stake. Still they knew what was going on, and that knowledge gave them what looked like peace of mind. Let's leave them like this and allow our frog to jump in and behave similarly until the great moment when the stew arrives. We may even visit the chef and hear what he has to say, so we will be in a position to watch what happens, at least with an understanding coming from how the stew was made!

The chef lived in a very high place. It was even above the mountains. The only access was by a state of mind everyone has, but still must be attained. The chef was not an animal in the true sense. If you said "equipment," it would not be entirely wrong to describe the chef. But usually "equipment" is used to describe mechanical things made of metal and plastic. Also that equipment is used by something for something is not correct, in the sense that the chef did this internally. So when you asked, What do rabbits eat? the chef would reach inside and pull out grass. In fact, the chef has everything every animal eats inside. And when you asked the chef to produce a dish frogs would like, the chef could hand it to you. So it is in this sense you can say "equipment." It would have nothing to say about how the chef was made or of what. Without doubt, future researchers will arrive who will be very eager to know everything, but at the present, the marvelous interest is in whether the chef can come up with a single food which will satisfy all the animals' needs and tastes. Let's ask the chef about this. The chef says, We have to consider food, what it is, where it came from, who's behind it, all these things. There was once a world without food, the chef says. It was a darkish world from our point of view. Were there animals in it? I asked. No, not if you go back far enough, said the chef. Did animals and food come at the same time, then?

It's hard to tell. We are not Sibyls or forensic scientists. But intuition tells me food came before animals. You can tell this because even the simplest animal can tell the difference between what's food and what's not. Some people ask what made animals. It would not be so surprising if it was food, their food. After all, why is it that something tastes good? The most delicious dishes seem preordained, don't they?

But let's get down to the issue of a universal food for animals. They have asked me. They have entrusted me with that job. How they knew I was here is mystery itself, but there has to be a this and a that. Their need, or the fact that the need for them has been born, must mean I am here, you know what I mean? And the truth was, when I heard their request, I knew they were coming to the right person. Now, what they are requesting is not food at all. But I will give them something as if it were food. I will look into every detail of every request, create something which will do more than they ask. The way these things work is, a request is acknowledged along with its intent, but I am not responsible from there. All this was planned out in the future. The future knows what it takes and doesn't take. It's not my job. But I can imbue my creation with what will satisfy the smallest, most insignificant animal with what they need to get along. It may or may not taste to them like what they want, but what they want is what they must have. You see, I must know what my job is even if it is described to me in language not recognizable as facts.

Well, what are you going to make the food out of? I asked. Astonishing question. You know, I don't know everything, even if I know a lot more than you. What would you make their food out of? Well, of course, I thought of everything the animals eat and said, "Snails, bat wings, grubs, earthworm bellies . . . , things like that." Oh no, this is not possible. Where would tomorrow's food come from if we used up everything today? asked the chef. They wouldn't come to me to get food like that. They wouldn't need to. We must find a source of the ingredients which is inexhaustible on the one hand and endlessly replenishable on the other. Mushrooms! Not just any kind of mushrooms, but ones that have this destiny assigned to them for centuries. They are known to themselves as what they are, a seldom-achieved focus. These mushrooms have the capacity to morph according to the needs and tastes of others, and they are modest and unassuming, so being eaten is like breathing air for the rest of us. And when they are eliminated, they are just the same, or almost, as before they were eaten. Now, it is my job to present them in a way which appeals. Luckily, my close relation to this food gives me a deep understanding of them. It is through understanding I cook. And how can you feed all the animals all over the whole world when it's mealtime? I asked. Another good question, said the chef.

That remains to be seen. Normalcy cries louder the more it's squeezed. We won't know if the animals don't get their food until they tell us—it's like that. Partly the mushrooms have the answer to the question. Shall we ask them? Oh yes, I said. I've been wanting to meet a mushroom, see one, I mean. Well, I wish I could parade them for you, but I am more their servant. They tell me what to do. OK, I said. Have they told you anything yet? That's my main problem, said the chef. I see them as saviors, but they come available on another level. I don't even know if they got the message about the animals, who need them to be

their food. They don't call me chef for nothing. I'm the one who needs to be contacted, you see. Are we supposed to just wait, then? I asked. No, I just sent out a message with this stick. Here comes one now. You know, they are quite powerful. When they get angry at something, they can envelop the world. Nothing can stop them. They are neutral, which is a state from which they can see everything good and bad, dispassionately. You called? said the mushroom. Who is this with you? An observer, said the chef, meaning me. We have trouble finding conditions ready to answer your needs for us, said the mushroom to the chef. Continuity disparages progress accordingly. What form should we offer? The chef, who did not expect things to go that easily, said, The mobile form that takes from motility the breath, expanse, and dimensionless nature of true food, is all. There is not disruption, nothing to ask, just an expansion through love this time, not anger. You will be happy. No one needs to thank you, and your thank-you is time when all this is happening, measured the way you want! Very good, said the mushroom. Here's what you ask. Let this observer take a sample back to the animals living in the well. I want to know what they think. They can tell in an instant how to make the food better. Thanks to you, chef, the messages can be understood.

The chef welcomed this praise, as he knew there was no space or time to give it meaning or reference. The chef did not have to be self-effacing, diplomatic, or politic. What made the chef happy was seeing all was in motion, like being in a restaurant in a skyscraper and feeling everything was OK, and coming through the floors below—even not knowing why! I just stood there being absent, but now I had a job, I thought. The mushroom told me. The chef hadn't disagreed or changed the order. It's true I don't know what to do. When there's no time, it doesn't hurt to wait. It's more like what you're supposed to do. I liked that, having never felt I was doing the right thing my whole life. There was a nudge at my shoulder; it wasn't anything. Still, I knew it was a sign we were entering another reality where I was to do the job the mushroom had given me. In fact, the "nudge" was this type of food. All the intentions as well as the food could be contained in this nudge—even my surrender and good feeling. I merely thought of the well, and I was standing in front of it. There was one last level of reality to cross before I could give the food. It was as if I had been given the job to figure out how to do this. I thought and thought. That didn't help. I looked around. I saw everything on my side had a particularly unformed presence, like unbleached cotton sheets blowing in the wind. They saw my dilemma. One approached, recognizing I was different. Can we help? I need to enter the reality of animals. Can you show me how to do it? I asked. We cannot do it, but you and I can do it together. See how the light coming off me makes a light? You just have to go through it, and you're in the land of animals. The sheet was kind enough to hold itself just right; a kind of window created by the reflected light appeared, and I went through. Goodbye, said the sheet. I didn't know why this extra obstacle was put in my way—who did it or why?

The frog took the food. He had bumps all over his back from anxiety—I didn't know if they were permanent. Turning away, the world was in front of the frog. Down, down the well he went through the water. Waiting at the bottom was a loudspeaker the frog used to announce the arrival of everyone's new food. The first to try were very small insects that

had managed to live underwater. Umm, smells, tastes good, they said, such variety from one morsel to the next. Then came a turtle. I just want a little bit, it said politely. I know this is just a sample. There doesn't look like there is enough to go around. We have to know if it's filling, said the frog. So take as big a bite as you need. Umm, good, said the turtle. And it went on like this until universally the food was cherished, relished, and admired. The animals talked to each other. What did yours taste like? said the snail to the moth larvae. Worth more than a hundred rings—perfect! And to you? the larvae said to the snail. Like floating bio-freezers, security, and secular daisy-dos. No two spiders disagreed. Food made just for us (though each one ate differently). The water itself was delighted. It carried on its job with new buoyancy and was a degree or two cooler, to everyone's liking. There was a hearty cry as everyone asked when their actual food was on the way. No one wanted to go back to their normal food-getting life, even forgetting in such a short time how to do it! The truth is, said the frog, we can't start until all the animals everywhere are heard from. We have to send representatives to the League's headquarters. Someone will be selected to go up and talk to the chef. There will be a new question: Do we really want to get along with each other? It's a very important question, because once all animals are together, they have to defend themselves. As chosen, we have to recognize each other in order to recognize we are a group. It was then I understood what had made it difficult for me to enter the reality of animals. What made them recognize their group was what had made their group. There was no telling how much control was going on. It was to someone else's advantage all animals get along. Who was this and why did they want something the animals themselves, even though they benefited by the endless supply of quality food, could hardly understand? Who among them actually saw what was happening to them? It was all so confusing. There were so many players, who each had a different job to do, but they were somehow, mysteriously, entwined and acting as one, except for the one who was the one!

There was a giraffe in the neighborhood. With its long, long neck it could look for the will behind all the animals' togetherness. I don't see anything, but there is a strange blue light just on the horizon. My feet are too stuck in mud to go there, and my voice, too weak. Why don't you take this wheeled vehicle going in that direction? Who was the giraffe talking to? How did it even know the question? Nothing knows the question except what asked it. There must be general states that are so unexceptional that form questions the same way words are formed from sound. But answers must be found, not formed. The poor giraffe knew this, sending the general question state off to the horizon. It was a marvelous day for the wheeled vehicle, hardly to know why it was so capable of picking up this rider.

On and on went the wheeled vehicle. It seemed the closer it got, the farther away appeared the pale blue. Then, suddenly, they were upon it, all glossy and seemingly waiting for them. The general question was thrilled, particularly responding to the silvery shine that seemed to come from nowhere. Ah, this is where answers come from. I'm in love. Do I dare speak? But, as they say, love conquers all, so trembling a little, the general question asked, Do you know what wants all the animals together, please? There was a hiccup and a little, tiny voice showed itself like the lip of a clam saying, Yes, I do. It's the other over there. Oh, I

have to take this message back, said the general question. Thank you very much! Don't you want to ask why? said the wheeled vehicle. Oh, yes, of course. That's very important to know why, and I don't want to come back here again just to find that out! I don't know why, said the lip. Ask the other over there. Everyone looked but could see nothing in this reality. A tree suddenly appeared, growing up just where they were standing, and took the general question, the wheeled vehicle, and the lip, all, up with it to the towering sky. I did, said the towering sky. You may see me flat and plane, but I am ripples and undulations under which are answers enough for you and all. The animals have just passed one step toward existence. Actually, not yet. They have a lot to do for themselves before they are allowed into next-existence. But you cannot tell them this. It's not a game we are playing—nothing is certain, and we do not find out what's beyond the door until we open it ourselves. I am just telling you this, because I like you. Whether you go back and tell them is a matter of choice. The few who are interested like to know answers. They will never change, even if you tell them, for it is good for them. They live in their questions. They would not be happy if they knew I have more answers than they have questions.

What am I supposed to tell them? asked the general question. You must go to all the groups of animals wherever they are in this world and make them understand, the reason for living together peacefully is not an end for them. Let's go see how the rabbits down there are doing. It's not that things are going to happen automatically; there has to be a will at work. So all three, the towering sky, the general question, and the wheeled vehicle, but not the lip, went to the rabbit hutch. There they found turmoil, confusion, discontent, and mayhem. The rabbit who had met the frog had woken up and was giving orders the others could not understand, for they could not be understood. The rabbit lassoed a little bunny and said, If you don't eat your food, there will not be enough for others. But I did eat my food, said the bunny, where's my mummy? There's no throwing out food when it hasn't come yet, cried the rabbit. We're not missing enough to cancel weights and measures, said the other rabbits, trying to keep up. The towering sky put up a blue wall and invited all the rabbits to come on one side except the leader rabbit. Now, who's going to run the show around here when there's no show? asked the towering sky. We should have more respect for rabbits, said the rabbit. Who are you going to make into a rabbit? asked the towering sky. Every animal to the last insect. Everyone should be a rabbit. That is the solution. If we can make all the animals eat the same food, we can make all the animals into rabbits. In my dream, I heard all the animals speak: We all want to be rabbits! What's wrong with that? asked the general question. Too many to fit in one vehicle, I'll say, said the wheeled vehicle. Of course, it's fine, said towering sky, everything's fine, but you need something perfect. Rabbits sleep at night. You need an animal that doesn't. Even all the animals together are not perfect yet. We need them to figure out how to become perfect, and they need to come together and put their minds on who and why something less than perfect can make the difference. It's not a life form we're looking for. They will figure it out if they can come together. There's more in it for all of them than one of them.

So the light-blue wall became penetrable, and there was no more division. One of the younger rabbits thought to approach a fox to see what it had, and the rabbit didn't have to

make it closer to perfect than the rabbit was already. Are you crazy, the rabbit's friends said, foxes eat rabbits. We are enemies. All that doesn't matter. Foxes eat the same food we do. That's what I will ask the fox: Do you like your food? The foxes live with the dogs, otters, and turtles now. The towering sky was listening and said, I know where they live. And the wheeled vehicle said, I can take you there. And the general question said, I can help. So they all went off to the fox's lair. Now we are getting somewhere, said the towering sky. I wish lip were here. Here comes lip, said general question. Who's lip? asked the young rabbit. We have a romantic interest, said the general question. Lip gives answers. We might need lip to help the fox, for fox may never have had to think that way. Now they were five traveling together in the most lugubrious landscape. Their companionship was like a magic light, though. If they could be seen, one would think this is how it happens. Everything is on schedule, and the young rabbit led the way.

The fox was waiting for them outside the lair. My, what a tasty-looking little rabbit coming my way. I'm not for eating, said the rabbit. I'm here to ask you how you like your food? The new food? Oh that, said fox, I thought you said chopped-up rabbits. So you like it then? Just as much as chopped-up rabbits. You could jump right in and no one could tell the difference. Well, I'm so happy for all my rabbit friends who did not jump right in. And how do you feel about all the other animals? Great! But they're not as pretty as me. I wish they were; I would like them more for that, said the fox, showing its profile. Do you know what is special about you, something that no other animal has? Like a literary taste or a proclivity for parachutes? No, I do chew my nails when I am nervous, but I hear dogs do that, too, so we're all in the same pack. Are you asking what makes me not fit into this pack, all the various animals living together now in this lair? Because it just happened one day—animals not like foxes started moving in. They were all kind of the same . . . , furry, five pounds or under, lots of energy. So now you are asking, why am I NOT like these. The hair around my neck is very thick, more than coyote over there. But it may be my memory. I can remember my failures—go way back. Every time this paw was on the ground, I remember. This way I never pay for my mistakes. I don't know any other animal that knows how to use their mistakes. Memory is almost the way I think. Towering sky said under its voice so only the rabbit could hear, The fox is so in love with itself, no one else could compete. In quality after quality, singularity wins, though it lasts longer than what's needed. We must find qualities like this in all the animals and set them in motion. You can praise the fox for not eating you, and tell it to join us. Why don't you speak so general question, lip, and wheeled vehicle can hear? asked rabbit. Because they're not animals—that's why, towering sky concluded.

Well, off they went. If you had seen them, you would have laughed to see such an ungainly crew ardently striding off into the unknown. But it wasn't an unknown to them. They were looking for every animal. And even though this might have seemed aggressive, overtly rigorous, it wasn't, for each member knew it had to take the time it took. One had better look for ideas of time that matched one's expectations than be disappointed with what one's got. The biggest problem was to choose an animal to look for or a place where to find one. The landscape was a checkerboard of blues, mostly in lighter and medium hues. It

could be consulted to find all the places that exist. In one consultation, one could arbitrarily choose another place, find if any animals were there, and go. This was a kind of service open to all. The group decided to let fox be the first to use the service. The first three places fox chose had no animals, but the fourth did. What kind of animals are there? asked lip. They are pigs of all kinds, wild, domesticated, pets, little and giant, some hairy, some plain, said fox. Who is their leader? asked wheeled vehicle. It is a bristly, black-haired, short-nosed pig from the Solomon Islands. They chose this pig because it is so threatening, not fat and lazy like pigs are thought to be, said fox. Well, can this pig speak for all the pigs as their authority? asked little lip. Let's tie it up, hold it down, and act friendly, suggested general question. Good idea, they all agreed. Most wouldn't even consider me a pig, said pig. I never learned good manners. On the contrary, I learned bad manners, so I understand why you are all standing around staring at me. All these other pigs started out just like me, so if you want to know about pigs, I can tell. Only until you get to whales will you find an ear that is so tiny and hears so well. The snort all pigs have—some say “oink”—could only come from ears that hear so much. That's very true, said towering sky. An edge between listening and making sound is just what we need. The scent of this edge will get all animals closer to perfection. If we take off the rope, will you give us this scent as thank-you and come along with us? We needed a little bit of perfume, rabbit enthused, and sat right next to pig, who found aggression and finding favor were all bound into one scent. Off they went to the next treat, chattering and chipping away at happy intervals with their illustrious fortune.

The fox curved in against the wall of them all wanting to be the leader. Oh, if we can only keep down our egos for a while, said towering sky. But fox said he was their natural leader, and what's more he knew where they were going next. Where? everyone asked. Under the sea to see the fishes, said fox. But we are not fish, they all agreed. He's right, said towering sky, fish are animals, and they are all eating the mushroom food. Couldn't we just ask them to come to the edge? said wheeled vehicle, I would like to meet them. That depends on where they are staying, said lip, do you know, fox? I don't even see any water around here. Fox was perplexed. He never thought it would be a problem. Animals live in air, water, and earth, but not in fire. Fire knows! fox said, Let's ask fire. I'm afraid of fire, they all said, even towering sky. That's just the point, said fox, because fire is afraid of water. You can empty out a can of water and let fire in. Fire will tell you everything gratefully. I just happen to have a can of water, said pig. Fire was soon with them and told exactly where all the fish were together. They create such an energy coming together they are very approachable and welcome visitors from other situations. A compass will help. If you walk half a mile, north by northwest, you will come to a place where they can be met. Lucky for you, one of these places is near. Now I will extinguish myself and try moving with a heart of flame to help other animals trying to unify. The fox was so impressed it gave the leadership back to rabbit, feeling a need for rest and some time off.