

## Tails of the Secret Peacock

“The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom.” Proverbs 9:10

### Prologue

It was a warm summer day when fifteen-year-old Sagesse first wandered out of her family’s walled garden. Sagesse lived on a large medieval estate in Southern England in a coastal town named Serenity. Her mansion, built in the seventeenth century, was the center point of the village. Located in a valley, it seemed the rest of the town had been built on the hills around her home just to serve her family’s needs. And just behind her home stood a large, dense forest from which she would hear one type of woodland animals during the day and another at night. Today she was being drawn into the forest by the peacocks.

She watched the sun-dappled pathway as it wound through the forest. She was enchanted by the smells of lavender and the sounds of peacocks far off, their sad longing expressed in their calls. She imagined she was one of them as she held her arms out trailing along behind her like the long tails of the peacock. She smiled and lifted her face to the sun. How beautiful this day was. She let out a long peacock call, a sound like “Eeeowwww!” Her call was answered, to her delight. She waited. She called again. In the distance her call was answered. She continued to do this as she wandered further and further into the forest, and further and further from her home. The path she was following led her by a little pool where she stopped to watch her reflection dancing along the ripples of the water. Suddenly next to her reflection were the unmistakable black-and-white stripes of the face of the peacock. Startled, she turned quickly. Her feet tangled and she fell to the ground. She found herself face-to-face with the beautiful bird. “Were you the one answering me?” she asked.

Sagesse stared into the deep brown eyes of the peacock. Was it her imagination or did it seem to understand her? She felt a mixture of fear and awe at being so close to such a beautiful, exotic creature. For a few moments she sat very still, studying its features. She was entranced by its luminescent feathers. They seemed to change color with the breeze. It seemed to be waiting.

“Do you... want something?” Sagesse asked. It lowered its head slightly, as if nodding. Then it slowly turned, walking away a few steps. It turned again and looked back at her as if bidding her to follow. Sagesse slowly rose to her feet and stepped toward the creature. It kept a steady gaze on her and as she followed, it walked several more steps deeper into the woods. In a trance she began to follow the creature wherever it led. In her heart she felt there was a very important mission waiting for her somewhere deep in the woods.

Sagesse watched the light from the entrance of the forest behind her grow smaller and smaller until it disappeared. She was now entirely alone with the peacock, entrusting herself to it. She imagined that she was following a majestic queen as she walked through her courts, her elegant train trailing along behind her. How she longed to reach out and touch one of the beautiful feathers brushing the

ground just in front of her feet. The peacock must have sensed this because it gave a slight twitch of its tail as if to say, "Don't touch!"

The path they were following disappeared and they were now walking blindly through the woods. Sagesse noted that she would not be able to find her own way back. She also noticed that the peacock maintained a steady pace as if it had traveled this way many times. Sagesse thought it odd and wonderful that she felt quite at home here. But how? The trees were not familiar. The smells and sounds were strange to her. And yet, she felt an almost-home sense of excitement that was quite unexplainable.

The sunlight in front of them began to grow as they came to a clearing. The temperature became cooler and she felt a mist on her face. Her senses were becoming heightened as she traveled through the woods. She could smell water. Had she ever noticed that before? She heard a beautiful, soft sound like the swishing of fancy dresses. Where was she?

The peacock suddenly stopped. From behind, Sagesse watched as it cocked its head to the side and let out three loud calls. The piercing sound reverberated through the quiet forest, echoing off the trees and the rocks, coming back as if several more peacocks were answering it. It stood motionless as if listening. From somewhere far ahead and above them Sagesse heard a similar call, higher in pitch. The peacock took a step forward and called again. Again the answer. Sagesse stood transfixed watching the exchange. It was a few moments before she realized the bird had taken a few steps back and was now watching her. It was waiting for her to walk forward. Sagesse took three tentative steps toward the water and the sound that she had heard. Branches blocked her view and she gently pushed them away as she walked through. She was in a clearing and the sudden light blinded her, the roaring water deafened her. She shielded her eyes, and as they adjusted, she began to make out the scene before her.

Sagesse was at the edge of the woods at the banks of a wide river. Before her were three large waterfalls and over those, a green archway topped with a wooden bridge.

This forest was inhabited.

As Sagesse looked on, a figure slowly emerged from the woods and walked onto the bridge. She felt a thrill of excitement run through her. Was this the source of the peacock calls? Sagesse squinted to get a better look. The figure was illuminated by the sun behind her. Her form was in deep shadow as rays of light seemed to emanate from her very being. Who is this majestic creature?

Sagesse could not make out features. She seemed completely human, and yet she held Sagesse completely spellbound. She could not speak even if she wanted to. Somehow, though, they both knew each other's thoughts. Sagesse only had this familiarity with people she had known her whole life. Her rational mind wondered how she could already feel this with this creature.

The figure glided to the center of the bridge, and Sagesse longed to cross the river to her.

***Take the footpath,*** she heard inside her mind.

Sagesse was startled. She heard the Voice as if it were standing right next to her. It didn't have a human quality. It had a feeling. The Voice felt like Joy, Revelation, Peace and Gratitude.

Sagesse looked about and spied a small, rocky footpath concealed among the wildflowers at her feet. She walked slowly along the path as it followed the edge of the shore. It seemed to end into the river, but as she looked into the water she saw large, smooth rocks submerged just below the surface. Surely this is how the figure had gotten to the other side. But it was so well-hidden, she was sure no one else would have found it if they had not been guided.

Sagesse put both her arms out straight as she had once seen a tightrope walker do in a circus. She laughed nervously as the words *Sagesse the Magnificent!* floated into her mind. The figure on the bridge laughed too, which caused Sagesse to look up and lose her footing slightly. She called out briefly and wheeled her arms around in circles to catch her balance. "Oh!" she exclaimed as one of her slipped feet dipped into the cold water. Quickly, she put both her arms out again and straightened. She lifted her chin. She would not let this river get the best of her. She was determined to make it to the other side and investigate this curious creature.

She stepped carefully onto each rock, putting one foot down and then the other, like a child negotiating stairs. She sensed the creature watching her from above and longed to look up at her. ***You're doing fine child.*** The creature's words calmed her and she steadily completed the last of the stones. It occurred to her as she reached the other shore that the watery bridge had been put there as a kind of faith test. ***Perceptive.*** She looked up to the bridge. She was on the bank now from which the three waterfalls emanated. They seemed to come out of the side of the green cliff in front of her. The waterfalls called to her as much as the figure on the bridge and mesmerized, she walked toward them. How could they be coming out of the cliff? Where was their source? Momentarily Sagesse forgot about the figure and walked closer. She realized the bank was forming a narrow pathway. There was a wall of earth on her right and the river on her left. The sound of rushing water became louder as she approached the falls.

***Go in! In? In where?*** If she went into the waterfalls she would be surely swept away. She looked down at her feet. She put one directly in front of the other and slowly walked the bank. It was now one-foot wide and she placed both her hands on the green wall to her right to steady herself. She willed herself not to look to the left as even the movement of her head could send her careening down into the churning waters of the waterfall. ***Stay focused. Look forward and nowhere else.*** As she continued to walk she realized the wall she was sliding along was moving inward. She was now walking a path *behind* the three waterfalls. She allowed her hands to slide along the wall's contours and found she now had a much wider path to walk. The wall curved in sharply and in a moment she was standing in a large cave. ***This cave is hidden completely by the waterfalls. Who even knows it is here?*** It was very dim, and she could not make out where the cave ended. But from what she could see she imagined it was the size of a grand ballroom. As she walked toward the back wall the sound from the waterfalls became much quieter. She put out her hands and touched the cold, moist earth. There appeared to be breaks in the walls that led to

passageways. *Maybe one of these halls holds the source of the three waterfalls!* She took a step toward one of the dark doorways.

***Not today. That is not why you are here.***

Sagesse wheeled around. The Voice seemed to come from behind her. But no one was there.

“Who was that? Where are you?” she whispered. Suddenly she felt cold and a bit frightened.

***I am here. There is no need to fear.***

Sagesse backed up toward the waterfalls. She didn’t like that she could hear this voice but not see its source. She started inching toward the narrow path that led back to the exit.

***You can see me. But you must focus.***

Sagesse stopped. She glanced toward the waterfalls. The light sparkling off the water seemed to calm her. She realized there was warmth in the light. She slowly turned back toward the Voice. There was a peace that she hadn’t felt even a moment before. In the distance she heard a peacock.

“Please. Where are you?” she whispered.

***Use your heart, not your eyes.*** She sensed a smile.

Sagesse closed her eyes. She sensed a presence. Good. Welcoming. Why had she not sensed this before?

Then she felt warmth. It was like a stove or a sunbeam. She walked toward the source and put her hands out. Her nervous mind formed a picture of playing “Blindfolded Butler”.

***I am not hiding from you, Sagesse.***

“How did you know what I was thinking? Am I imagining this?”

***I am more real than that which you can see.***

As she walked closer to the warmth, her fingertips brushed something soft. Was it hair? Or fur?

***You may use your senses now.***

Sagesse opened her eyes. For a moment she did not see anything but the wall of the cave with its green and orange moss and long vines. But as she continued to focus she noticed that the vines were braided like a woman’s hair. And the moss was patterned.

This figure had been standing in front of her the whole time. It blended in perfectly with the cave wall behind it. If Sagesse had not been led to it she would have stumbled right over it. How could this creature have been so close to her in the cave and she not seen it?

***I am always here. But people need to slow down to sense me.***

“How do you know my thoughts?”

***Because I have been with you since you were born.***

This statement confused Sagesse. She was acquainted with all of her aunts and her uncles. She knew all of her parents’ friends. How could someone claim to know her whom she had never met?

As she stood pondering this thought a smell came to her from the moss on the creature. But it did not smell like the musty moss in the great oak trees she climbed at home. This smell was... sweet.

Her mind reeled.  
Where had she smelled this before?

She closed her eyes to concentrate. As her mind worked she was slowly taken back to when she was a little child in her backyard. It was a fresh spring morning and she was hiding in her Sacred Space. That was what she called the little stone seat in a corner of her mother's garden that was quite cut off from the rest of the world. No one could see her from anywhere else. The stone seat sat in a corner, sheltered by climbing roses on trellises that formed a circle around her. She loved this Sacred Space. She would go there when she was troubled or when she was happy. She would bring her sketchbook when she felt inspired to capture something in a drawing. On this morning, she sat in the sunshine, watching butterflies flutter around her. It seemed they would gather when they saw her coming to the garden. This species was the Tigerwing, or *Mechanitis Polymnia*, as they were called. She looked them up in a book once because she was so captivated by the metallic gold cocoons that they created. Once she saw them build a string of cocoons around the neck of a statue that stood in the center of the Sacred Space. The figure looked as though she were wearing a fiery necklace of gold.

A breeze blew softly and the smells of green grass mixed with the sounds of the delicate wind chimes her mother collected. She loved this time of day. No one else was awake and the world itself seemed open to her. She took a deep breath in and suddenly a quite different smell came to her on the breeze. "Mama must be baking!" she exclaimed, and tossed her sketchbook aside as she ran out of the Sacred Space and over to the window of their kitchen. She climbed up on a rock and put both her hands on the side of her face to help her see in. But as she looked she found no one there. The kitchen was dark, vacant. Puzzled, she walked slowly back to her Sacred Space sniffing the air. She shrugged, picked up her sketchbook and pencil and sat down. She heard the wind chimes and the smell came to her again. It was faint at first but grew steadily until it filled the entire circle around her. She smiled as she hugged her sketchbook taking the moment in. *Oh, I never want to leave this place.*

And she never gave the strange occurrence another thought.  
Until now.

Sagesse was startled back to the present moment. She realized in an instant that the odd occurrence had been the beginning of her morning ritual. From that day she began to go to her Sacred Space every morning hoping to be greeted again by the strange, sweet smell. She would sit and close her eyes. She would take deep breaths in. She would pray for it to happen again. It never did. Not that she could remember.

Until now.

Sagesse opened her eyes. She stared at the creature before her. She was back in the cave behind the waterfalls. Back with the green and orange moss. Back to the muted sound of water. Back to the smell of the sweetness.

"It was YOU?!!?"

The creature smiled.

"You HAVE been with me, almost since the beginning!"

***Before the beginning.***

“How is that possible? Before the beginning?”

***You created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother’s womb.***

Sagesse’s favorite Psalm 139. She pictured the well-worn bible in her mother’s parlor. In her mind she again was there opening it up to the words of David. She often liked to sneak into the parlor to read long passages and talk to God. This Psalm had become her favorite over the years.

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” She continued the verse.

***Exactly!*** The creature smiled and gave a satisfied nod.

As the realization began to sink in, Sagesse slowly began to inch toward the exit. She needed to gain some perspective on what was transpiring here in the cave.

“Are you saying that you are...” her words trailed off as she shook her head slowly.

***I AM. Yes.***

“You are – *WHAT??*”

***Just - I AM.***

Sagesse panicked and turned quickly. As she did, her foot stumbled on a rock on the floor of the cave. She had only one thought as she fell into the waterfalls.

*This CANNOT be happening.*