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THE BEGINNING

BABLA MEETS WHITE SWAN

Once upon a time there was a four-year-old girl with curly blond hair and big blue eyes. She was called Babla. She lived in the Forest of Life with no real home. All the comings and goings in the forest, all the strange sounds were very confusing to her. Loving and giving, she would have given away her very clothes if someone had asked for them. And yet, she wasn't happy. Most of the time she was so scared and lost that she felt like a tiny mouse in a maze looking for cheese—running from one potential happiness to another, never getting anywhere. Often, when she was smiling and taking care of others, she would think how unfair life was. Here she was so loving and so giving, with hardly any reward for it, yet feeling as miserable as ever. But somehow, she couldn't stop giving.

"Oh, well," she thought. "I guess being loving and giving is my nature. So, what can I do?"

One day, as she sat huddled in a corner with her Teddy and little Leo, hiding from the big cruel world and sure that nobody cared about her, Babla heard the sound of wings. When she looked up, she saw a big white swan flying towards her—graceful, powerful, and free.

The amazing bird landed smoothly in front of Babla and looked deeply into her eyes. Babla stared back in awe. She couldn't understand what was in the swan's eyes, but something soothing and calming came into her being. Gradually, she started to relax, taking some deep breaths.

White Swan told Babla about the Place Beyond Paradise, where Beings loved each other and treated each other equally no matter what their type, age, or size; where they laughed and cried together and celebrated life. "Only by living fully can you find true happiness," said the beautiful creature.

Babla wanted to know more about this place. How could she get there?

White Swan offered her a ride. As Babla climbed onto its back, she felt soft, white feathers brush against her arms and legs. "These aren't just soft swan feathers," she thought. "Their special touch goes way beyond my skin, right to my bones."

When Babla was safely seated, White Swan took off, gliding high into the sky. After flying for what seemed like a lifetime, the two drifted down and started floating

on the Big Sea. Flying in the air had been wonderful for Babla. The infinite sky had helped her little heart open. As she breathed deeply, her whole chest began to feel spacious from the inside.

Coming down to float on the Big Sea was a totally different experience. White Swan was moving in total harmony with the water, and the rhythm of the sea created a gentle rocking for Babla. After a while, as the soothing motion spread into her body, she started smiling, then giggling, then laughing—with no reason at all. She felt waves of joy moving through her.

Then White Swan took off into the air again, and Babla felt the laughter enter her heart. It was as if all of her body were laughing.

At last they came to the Place Beyond Paradise. White Swan was right. The Beings here had an inner glow about them that Babla had never seen before. Babla started to cry and laugh with them. At the end of tears laughter appeared, and at the end of laughter there were tears. After a while, however, she had moments where the crying and laughing stopped, and she was silent. At those times, the whole world seemed different to her; the colors were more vibrant, and nature seemed more alive.

One day, White Swan announced that it was time to leave this wonderful land. Babla must now put the things she had learned there into practice. Babla climbed onto the swan's back and they easily took off, heading back to where they had first met.

When they arrived in the forest, Babla climbed down and nestled close to her friend. White Swan looked deeply into her eyes, gently touched her forehead, and said, "Remember one thing: surrender to Love. Never surrender to another Being; surrender only to Love. I'll be with you and I love you." From its wing feathers, the white bird took out a small golden key on a chain and put it around Babla's neck. With a nod, the swan took off, its enormous wings carrying it higher and higher. For a while, it made circles and spirals around Babla, then finally flew away.

Babla was speechless. She didn't know what to make of this all, yet something had changed. Somehow her heart was feeling lighter. "Surrender to Love, surrender to Love," she repeated, touching the key around her neck. "I wonder what it means."

CHAPTER 1

BABLA'S FIRST INSIGHTS IN LIFE

RAM-MAN: Learning To Laugh

Time passed. Babla was still unhappy and often scared, yet never as deeply as before she had met White Swan. One day, sitting in the corner of the forest that life had given her, feeling that her lot was unfair, she couldn't stand it any longer.

She called out loud, "White Swan, I need your help!" After a moment's silence, she heard the sound of wings coming closer. When she looked up, she saw the beloved bird preparing to land.

"I'm here, Babla."

Babla cried in anguish, "Oh, White Swan! I want to understand what 'surrender to Love' means. I feel so confused."

White Swan looked deeply into Babla's eyes. It could have been for a moment or for an eternity. For Babla, time stopped. At last, the awesome bird responded. "You need to find the Contented Sage and be with him for a while. Before you can surrender to Love, you must understand his teaching. I love you. I'm always here for you."

And Babla knew that what White Swan had said was true. For the first time, she knew how Love felt. This sweet fragrance coming into her was real Love, indeed.

The swan's beak moved into what could be called a smile, and Babla felt a wing touch her heart. Then, off it flew, circling above the stunned little girl, lifting higher and higher into the sky.

Babla's mind, now as empty as the clear blue sky, allowed just one statement to come through. "One day, I'll be able to fly with you, White Swan." Although she couldn't fully understand it yet, she had tapped into a wise part of herself.

Babla got up from her corner of life to search for Contented Sage. She walked at

random, thinking of White Swan's words and asking people she met on the path to find this Being. Nobody seemed to know.

Not sure what else to do, she decided to focus on White Swan's parting words: "I love you." When she took these words and the sweet fragrance that came along with them into her heart, they seemed to warm her. This made her feel calm and peaceful, and she liked it.

One day Babla met Ram-Man, who was half ram and half man. He had four strong legs, the trunk of a man, two beautiful horns, and very green eyes that sparkled. She asked him about Contented Sage.

To her surprise, Ram-Man answered, "Oh, yes. I know how to find him. His place is right on my way. Why don't you jump on my back and I'll give you a ride."

And that's what Babla did. It was so wondrous to ride on Ram-Man. When they stopped to rest at the end of each day, he taught her things he had learned in his travels. He showed her how to have fun, smile at the sun, talk to the moon, pick flowers, and chase after birds. Laughter was important in his life.

One morning, Ram-Man said, "At the end of this day, we will arrive at Contented Sage's home. I very much enjoyed giving you a ride." And Babla told him that she had enjoyed everything he had taught her.

As the sun sank in the sky, they came to an intersection; one path was going into a forest, one path into a meadow, one into the desert, one into the mountains, and a fifth path was going into the sea. Right at the intersection was a huge stone cave. Ram-Man pointed ahead. "Contented Sage lives here. I need to continue my journey into the forest. Be well."

They gave each other a long hug. As Babla approached the cave, Ram-Man waved one last time and disappeared into the forest.

CONTENTED SAGE: Bonding with Rabia, the Adult Self

The cave had a wooden door. Babla knocked. It opened and a smiling woman said, "Welcome," and let Babla in.

The cave was bigger than it had seemed from the outside. It was full of all kinds of little Beings: girls, boys, wolf cubs, bunnies, fawns, baby fairies, cherubs, lion cubs, young birds, and many other Beings, and even some that Babla had never seen before.

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