

Art and illustrations by Anna Schroeder

Copy Editor Susannah Ortega

Formatting by David McCormack, Anna Schroeder, and David Kelch
File assembly by Naomi Onaga

© 2014 by David McCormack and Shared Grace Publications

All rights reserved. Published 2015.

No part may be printed or electronically
reproduced or digitally shared in any
manner whatsoever without written
consent of David McCormack.

ISBN# 978-0-9862671-1-6

The Majestic World of Gracious Gifts Bestowed

David E. McCormack

Introduction

The Majestic World is about a universe that is unnoticed by most adults in our modern world since many of us feel obliged to scurry about in order to fulfill our busy lives. Lost in the hurried shuffle is our consciousness of the immense universe contained inside us and inside other creatures. Once upon a time we could sense and be aware of this.

When one is very young it is apparent that there is *life* going on in the back yard as well as inside of us and we are in wonder of it. Ants and trees are friends and companions because their being is felt without distraction. One day we may come back to the understanding contained in our childhood intuition and in the understanding humans had in times long ago: the understanding that the world inside us is vast and that so is the inner world of plants and animals—that they also have societies and an inner life with each other and other species. *The Majestic World* depicts the reality of life: that nothing is separate one from another. Everything experiences a constant gift of life and is inextricably tied together.

In these tales one is witness to this world and the gracious gifts with which it has been bestowed.

Preface

I was encouraged to write many times over many years but still I have to admit none of these stories can be attributed to “me”. In what sense do I say that? The gift of my mind and the pen and paper were gifts I had nothing to do with making; that they and David exist cannot be denied as did instinct from birth to learn words and walk, etc. The flesh of my hands and arms were built by plants and animals that I ate. I had nothing to do with their existence and they lent me strength to live and write. Such is the grace of the Most Loving. Even the initiative to move my hands and mind to create was at times unexpected when I was quiet or feeling inspired. My wife Margaret’s understanding of how the world really works and the material support to do the writing have been a huge gift, not to mention the birth of our children and their needs. When I would get too far into the writer’s fantasy world she pulled me back over and over as if to say - you need worldly results to show for your work. I love you Margaret.

When I tried over and over again to go a direction away from writing I was blocked by external events. The inspiration received to carry this through has been a joy to carry out despite my being a hard case that is easily puffed up and prone to laziness; so for all the help I have received from the top down, visible and otherwise, thanks. Huge thanks to Anna for bringing this to life and for wonderful suggestions. I ask forgiveness of the readers for blunders, omissions and impatience that in any way shortchanged the story and the other many mistakes towards any and all.

Last and yet in the fore, thank you Y.M. Bapak and family.

David McCormack

“The Majestic World of Gracious Gifts Bestowed”

Ordering of the Tales: from yesterday to today

The Stairway in the Woods

The Boy Who Sought Wisdom

The Wondrous Toadstool

The Wise Owl and the Holy Cricket

The Frog Prince

Ascent of the Ant

The Turtle and the Hummingbird

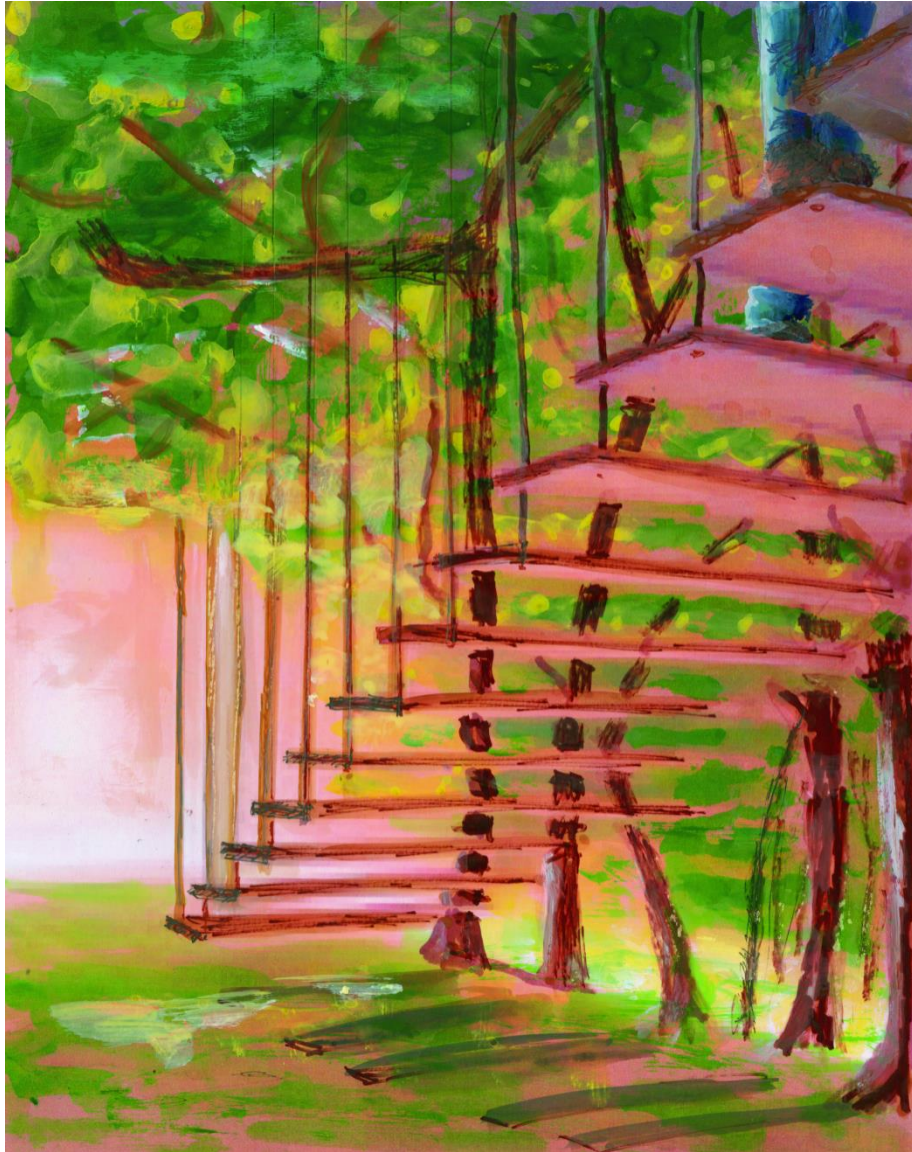
Tick Tack Toe (Oneness upon the doe)

The Polar Bear

Imprudent Purchase

The Little Piper

Stairway in the Woods



Once a carpenter went into the woods to find a tree with which to make a staircase he had been commissioned to build. At length he found the one he wanted and took hold of his axe. As he began to raise the ax he heard from behind, "choose me."

He turned around, but there was no one. When he raised his axe again he heard, “Choose me. Choose me and you will never regret what you build, for I have powers to help.”

Was this the tree behind him talking or were the words only in his head? Should he walk away or chop down the tree from which the words emanated? He decided to speak. “Special powers? What kind of special powers?”

“To inspire your work and make it unique—so excellent you will become admired.”

“I hear your voice in my head,” said the carpenter, “but I am not a fool. And any case, why would you want to be made into planks and why would you want to help me?”

“I’m not at liberty to say, but if there is just one man who admires your staircase and understands it, I will be free and released from mistakes that have bound me up here.”

The carpenter thought it over. His natural disposition was to help. “We’ll see,” the carpenter said aloud as he swung his axe upon the tree, and the tree made no sound as he cut it down.

The next day at home the carpenter began to hew the tree into planks while he thought about the staircase he would build for the wealthy client. He was beginning to believe the experience from yesterday was his imagination. As he made the planks and planned the design he was inspired to create a truly superior staircase that no one had seen before: elegant and superior in strength and not overly difficult to build. The wealthy man would be pleased and perhaps others would notice.

The next morning he put the planks and tools in the wagon, hitched his oxen up, and went to the man’s home. When he arrived the man came out before he could knock. “I’m sorry,” he said, “I’ve changed my mind about the stairs.”

“I’ve already cut some of the pieces and made a design. If I may be so bold, why did you change your mind?”

“My wife became ill about noon yesterday and the doctors want everything to remain quiet here.” The wealthy man gave him a small stipend for future work and sent him away.

The carpenter was unhappy because he was very much looking forward to building the excellent design. As he walked slowly towards home he realized that

the lady of the house had become ill yesterday at about the same time that he had chopped down the tree. Perhaps he was cursed.

When he reached the forest the oxen turned left, stubbornly following the path into the forest. He finally stopped at a clearing. Then and there an urge to build the stairs came over the carpenter, yet his mind was aware that everyone would laugh at him and his wife might wonder where he spent his time. So he tugged at the ox, but the animal would not budge. He patiently waited, talking to the creature as they stood there. An hour later the ox lay down. He had never done this before. The carpenter sat down in disgust on the planks in the cart. “Keep your promises,” he heard. Was *this* his imagination or were the planks he sat upon talking to him?

No matter. Even if they were talking there was really nothing to do but wait upon the ox and yet perhaps out of boredom he began building.

As daylight waned the ox stood up and led the carpenter home. His wife asked him how the job was going and he said simply, “Better not ask.” She accepted the answer in silence and went to bed.

The next day the carpenter led the ox and cart towards town to see if he could find some work. Once again the ox insisted on going down the forest path. Even though he had no client, deep down the carpenter relished working on the stairs. He decided to go against his father’s advice to never work for free and continued to build the staircase. By the end of the day he felt satisfied with his work and the ox readily got up. Why didn’t he feel foolish? When he arrived home his wife was singing. She asked for no money and asked no questions.

The next day, as the carpenter was resuming his work in the forest, a man came by and asked, “What are you building?” What could he say? “A staircase.” “Wouldn’t it be better to build a house first?” the man inquired. There was no chuckle concealed in the man’s words or feeling of hidden humor in his tone or demeanor, just curiosity.

“Yes, of course. But this will be something unique and excellent with a purpose out of the ordinary.” The man just accepted the words and went on. The next day the man returned, intrigued, and watched. Later another traveler came by and watched. By the third day word of the staircase had spread and a small crowd gathered to watch the “magic staircase” being built. The sixth day was a holiday and the crowd swelled. The staircase had just been finished. Some put their hands on it and admired its uniqueness and superior quality and new design. The fact that the staircase led nowhere only seemed to please people. One by one the

carpenter allowed them to climb it. His wife eventually found him and was pleased at the respect with which people were addressing him.

The planks, however, were not satisfied—because no one understood the purpose for the staircase.

At twilight the crowds diminished. The carpenter sat on the bottom step and wondered at the whole experience. He was alone and it occurred to him to wonder why he shouldn't also climb the beautiful stairs? So he did. Each step felt more wonderful than the last and when he reached the seventh step he felt light and full of joy. Along with the joy was satisfaction in what he had created. He felt exceedingly glad he had not built this for someone else for pay but to please himself and others.

Suddenly the carpenter was surprised to find the planks he was standing upon were rumbling. In fact they began shaking so much that he fell off and he was knocked unconscious. While he was in that state a man appeared, and thanked the carpenter for his release.

The carpenter asked the man, “Who are you?”

The man answered, “Your great, great, great grandfather. I used my ability hurriedly and for profit. When I passed on I found myself trapped inside this tree, a tree I had once spared.”

The man hugged his descendent joyfully and walked up the stairs and then continued on, climbing invisible stairs and whistling happily. His distant grandson became conscious and gave thanks the rest of the day, all the time feeling very fortunate, light, and happy.

The Boy Who Sought Wisdom



Long ago there was a little boy who sought to be a wise person. One day he went from his home and sat on a grassy hill hoping to find a way to do this. After several hours the sun set and in the dark he sang to himself and wondered what it meant to be wise.

The moon rose high and he found himself mesmerized by the round shape and the light he was bathed in. In his heart the little boy wondered about the moon. Was it alive?

“Yes, I am. It’s good you can see.” It was as if the moon had answered his question.

“How do I know you have a life, Mr. Moon?”

“Well, you can ask me something.”

“Why do you go away when the sun is out?” The moon answered, “I don't always. Sometimes I only demur and you can see me for a good part of the day. Isn't it so?”

The little boy thought to himself about the time he saw the faded moon in the afternoon. Yes, it is true, he thought. The moon began again. “If you could learn to use your sight more and your eyes less you would feel me during the daytime. The oceans do.”

“Oh you are very wise, aren't you?”

“Some say so”, replied the moon. “Well then, will you tell me how to become wise? My parents say humans are born foolish.”

“If you were a pebble my wisdom might satisfy you. Ask the walnut tree, for though I am older he is also in your feelings. You ate some of his children today before I rose up high. That's my wisdom for you.”

The little boy saw a walnut tree close by. He looked at it with an empty feeling he held peacefully. A long time went by. The boy sat in the peace and quiet but soon was aware of the walnuts dancing in his stomach. He was glad of them. He felt the strength they lent to him. “They are glad to help you.” “Oh!” said the boy. “Who are you?”

“I'm the walnut tree.”

“I didn't know your little ones could dance, Mr. Tree.” “Most of you are unaware.” “Yes, it certainly does seem so most days,” agreed the boy.

“What would you like to know, for I believe you have a question?”

The boy nodded. “How does one become truly wise?”

“I can share the little wisdom I possess with you, but you must realize that while to a blade of grass I might seem incredibly wise for your needs I would recommend another. Perhaps you should ask Cow. He may be closer to your feelings than I am.” “Oh,” I didn't know.” “You'll see. Goodnight.”

The boy didn't see a cow anywhere. There was nothing to do but to go home. He continued to sit there for a while anyway, feeling peaceful and nice. His desire to look for wisdom was waning. “We will help you go home if you want to.” “Who said that?” wondered the boy, startled. The offer seemed to come from within his heart. “Are you the walnut tree?”

“No, this is the beef broth you ate at lunch. Perhaps I can help. What can I do?”

“How does a person become wise?”

“You are more peaceful and harmonious than some, so perhaps you will accept what I can share. What I have to say would be the epitome of wisdom to a jellyfish, but you’re more than a jellyfish. True wisdom from a human is a gift and very rare. Perhaps you should ask your mother, for she may be closer within your feelings than I am. That’s my advice. I leave it to you and will continue with chatter if you choose.”

The boy thanked the beef broth and decided he would go home to his mother. As he stood up, he felt very peaceful. That was followed in time by a feeling of emptiness, followed by such a heavenly state that he could not bring himself to move. A long time went by, but he had no faculties to be aware of time. From his heart he heard his mother's voice. “Who has summoned me from my dream?”

“I didn’t realize, mother. Perhaps I called you because I want to become a wise person.”

“Well, I confess that to a small orphan girl I might seem to be one of the wisest people on the earth, but to be truly wise is a gift. Perhaps you should ask your grandfather Adam. Adam was the first grandfather on earth.”

“Wow, he must have lived a *long* time ago.”

“Not so long ago, really, and he is related to everyone.”

The boy thanked his mother and wondered how he could approach the first grandfather. As the boy sat there his doubts faded and he experienced a feeling of unearthly bliss. He understood that it was all right if he didn’t meet Adam or become wise.

The predawn arrived and the moon was waning. From emptiness the boy heard a song being sung. “What would you like, my grandson?” said a voice.

“Are you Adam?”

“Yes.” The boy forgot why he had wanted to see Adam. “You’ve forgotten why you wanted to see me. That’s fine. A wish is fine, but giving up a wish can be fine as well.”

Adam took the boy on a journey through his future life. When it was over, the boy felt grateful, because he had seen that his destiny was perfectly suited to his need. He already was living out his life according to the One that is ultimately wise. His memory of the night’s events was wiped clean.

Adam spoke to the boy's sleeping mother, and said: "He is fortunate." The moon, the trees, and the animals praised the One. His mother awoke with a start. Desperately she tried to remember her dream without success. The boy eventually was able to stumble to his house from his perch on the hill. He had no recollection of the night before. The boy was empty and had forgotten why he had left his house.

The experience came to his awareness again hundreds of years later.

They were in harmony together. At this sight the piper found himself crying because he was made to remember the prayer from his youth for harmony up and down the beach. It had been answered beyond his expectations and he had learned a little of friendship and having a mate. The young man could feel this as he stroked him with a small tatter of blanket curled around his finger. The piper's, the gulls, and pelicans on the beach felt this as well.

In August the piper and the boy were sitting with their backs to the beach and a small tsunami erased the sandy beach and took them to their respective places in the eternal life. Though mostly deserted rocks today one will experience there the feeling of peace and harmony as an answer to his prayer and the piper's spontaneous happiness at having his prayer fulfilled.