

# THE STORY BEAST

For Story Artists, Listeners, and Dreamers

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## BOISTEROUS BLOOMS

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## Bouquet of Flowers

### Odilon Redon French

ca. 1900–1905

#### About the Cover Artist

“As a young man, Redon was fascinated with Darwinian biology and enjoyed a close friendship with Armand Clavaud, the curator of the botanical gardens in his hometown of Bordeaux. In late floral still lifes such as this one, the artist demonstrated a naturalist’s sense of wonder as well as a richly inventive imagination, combining many different types of blooms and foliage in an effervescent display, attended by fluttering butterflies. The vase, which appears in a number of Redon’s flower pictures, was made and presented to him by the ceramicist Marie Botkin around 1900.” Source [The Met](#) - Gallery 813

*Submit your art to  
storybeasteditor@gmail.com to be  
featured in the next issue.*

### **The Story Beast 2026-2027 Themes**

**Summer - Cerulean Sighs** - Due May 15

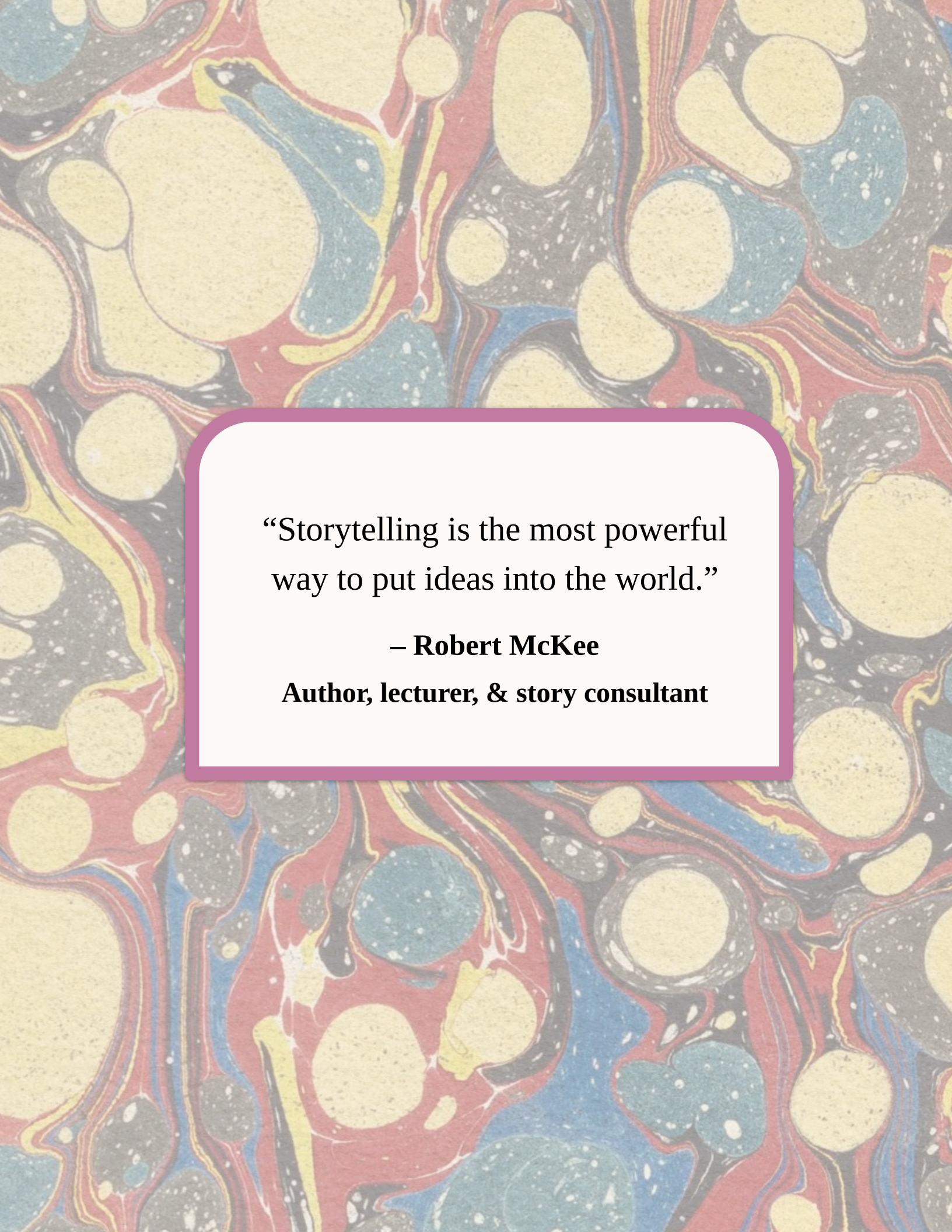
**Fall - Cascading Colors** - Due August 15

**Winter - Merry Musings** - Due Nov 15

**Spring - Waking Whimsy** - Due Feb 15





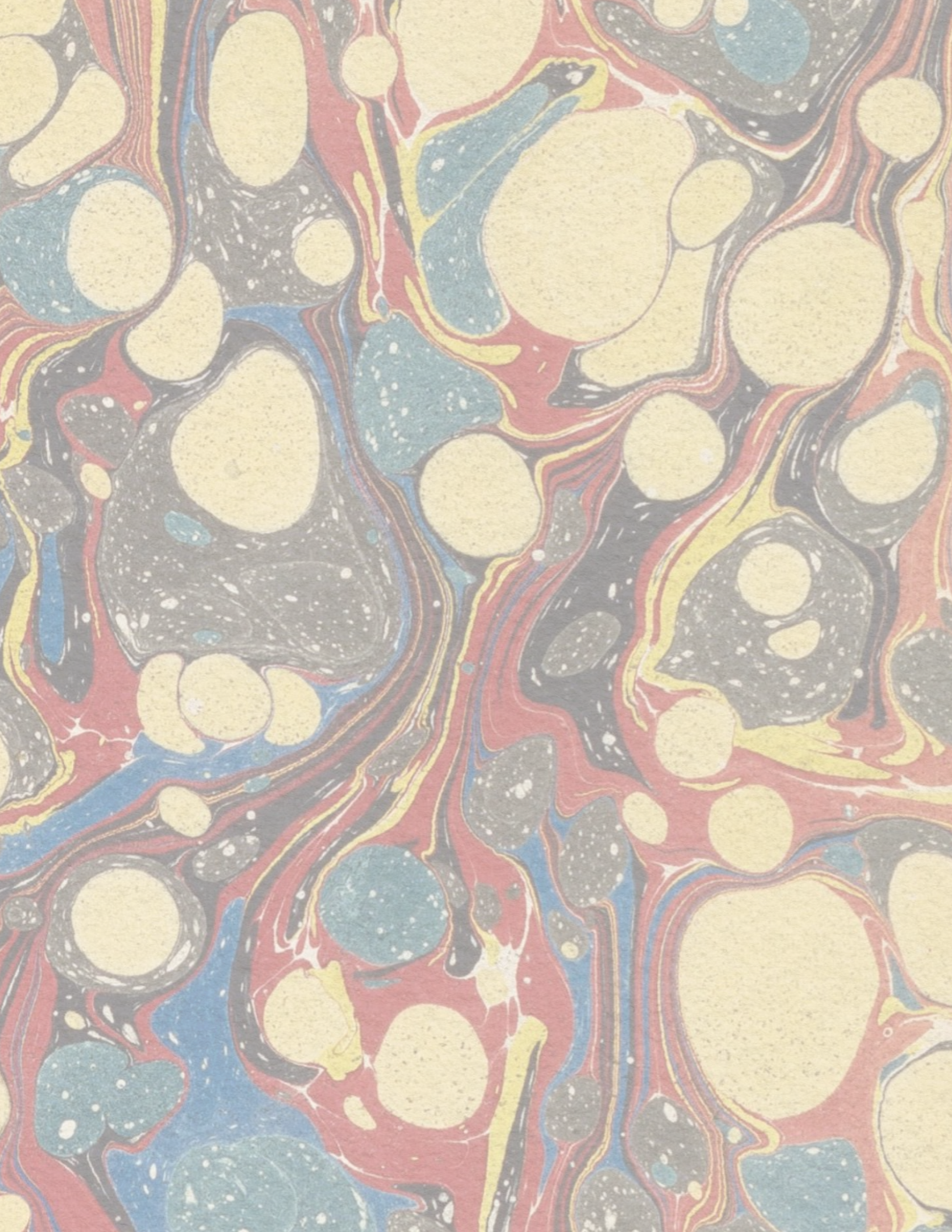
The background of the image is a traditional marbled paper pattern, often called a 'stone' or 'shell' pattern. It features large, irregular, organic shapes in shades of cream, light blue, and reddish-brown, set against a dark charcoal or black base. The colors are blended and swirling, creating a complex, textured visual. In the center of the image is a white rectangular box with rounded corners, outlined by a thin, solid purple border. This box contains the text.

“Storytelling is the most powerful  
way to put ideas into the world.”

– **Robert McKee**

**Author, lecturer, & story consultant**







# THE STORY BEAST

Boisterous Blooms

Vol. 5 ♦ Issue 1

Spring 2026





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**Vol. 5 ♦ Issue 1 ♦ Boisterous Blooms**  
**Spring 2026**

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Mäda Primavesi, Gustav Klimt Austrian 1912–13

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**PULL DOWN**

**LETTERS**

Mail deposited in this box  
will be delivered to the  
Anaheim Post Office  
by 



## March 2026 WELCOME

While Winter is clinging on and the soft smile of Spring is peeking around the corner. It can be difficult to stay positive in the depths of Winter with the darkness, brittle ice, and piles of dirty accumulated snow. In a recent storytelling workshop, I asked the participants what gift did they wish to give to their audiences at the end of their story? Why were they telling them that particular story? With what image, thought, question did they want to leave their audience?

Among the participants was a couple. The wife said that her husband struggled with that question. He grew up in poverty and his story was about how he and his older sister would pull all of their younger siblings around the neighborhood on a sled on Christmas Eve, while they all waited for Santa. His epiphany was that he and his older sister were trying to give hope to their younger siblings. In telling his story, he wished to give hope to his audience.

As storytellers we can give hope to our listeners. When things look dark and bleak, as in the depths of winter, we can offer our listeners the colors, textures, smells, sights, and sounds of better days, of Spring. There is magic and power in words and we are all wondrous magicians. We can give them the gift of hope. We can be the light in the darkness.

The Story Beast is your quarterly e-Publication forum and is your place of community. Please share your creative works -- poems, stories, artwork, or articles with us -- and let your friends know about The Beast. Let us know what you think and send your contributed works to [storybeasteditor@gmail.com](mailto:storybeasteditor@gmail.com).

The deadline for contributions for the next issue of The Story Beast is May 15 for the Summer 2026 issue. The Summer issue's theme is Cerulean Sighs. Thanks for reading.

**Blessings of Spring to us all,  
The Spirits of the Beast  
[storybeasteditor@gmail.com](mailto:storybeasteditor@gmail.com)**





### **Dearest Crone:**

How do you handle a story that seems to fall flat mid-performance? The audience looks confused, distracted, or bored. Do you scrap it, change it on the spot, or trust your instincts to keep going?

### **Floundering Fables & Fidgety Folks**





## Dear Floundering Fables & Fidgety Folks:

Ah, so the story falls flat, does it? Mid-tale, and your carefully crafted words bounce off blank faces like pebbles off a rock. The audience fidgets, glances sideways, or sighs as if your tale were a branch snapping underfoot. How dare they! Or perhaps...how dare you let them unsettle your magic?

Here's the truth: stories are living things. They breathe, shift, and occasionally sneeze mid-performance. You cannot simply wring your hands and declare it dead. Some crones might scrap it on the spot, some might rewrite entire acts in the middle of a scene, and others—foolishly bold, like me—trust in instincts that have been honed by hundreds of years by the roadside.

First, pause. Breathe. Observe the energy in the room without letting it unnerve you. Is someone confused? Distracted? Perhaps they have wandered from their own thoughts and not from your tale. Small adjustments—a sharper gesture, a slower pause, a whimsical aside—can bring them back to the thread. Sometimes, an audience only needs the scent of intrigue, a tiny flicker of curiosity to reconnect.

Oh, the magic of improvisation! It is a delicate dance. You may add a question, a twist, a side comment, or a sudden dramatic gesture. You may lower your voice so that the room leans in—or raise it so that even the back row cannot ignore your presence. You may even poke a little fun at yourself, a wink here, a smile there, to draw the distracted into your web of story. A crone never fears the unexpected; she embraces it.

And yet, do not forget preparation. Improvisation is not chaos—it is intentional responsiveness. You read your audience like an open book, noticing the subtle signs: a hand raised, a brow furrowed, a foot tapping. These clues guide your choices. Sometimes the story is merely waiting for the right nudge, the right seasoning to bring it alive.





If you wish to study the magic further, wander toward these Dewey Decimal numbers and treasures:

- **808.3 – Storytelling:** Jonathan Gottschall’s *The Storytelling Animal* reveals why humans are hardwired for stories.
- **808.5 – Rhetoric and Persuasion:** Observe how subtle shifts in voice, gesture, and tempo can change the fate of a tale. Jay Heinrichs’ *Thank You for Arguing* demonstrates the craft of persuasion in ways that are practical and playful, teaching you to bend attention and curiosity to your will.
- **808.8 – Oral Tradition & Performance Techniques:** Here you may explore the nuances of cadence, rhythm, and timing, discovering how the subtlest inflection can recapture wandering minds and transform a floundering fable into a rapturous moment of connection. Recommended read: *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* by Keith Johnstone – teaches spontaneity, timing, and audience engagement.

Finally, trust yourself. Your audience is a mirror, yes, but it is *your* mirror. A floundering fable is not failure—it is opportunity. It is the chance to practice patience, experiment with creativity, and deepen your connection to those who listen. For a crone, the art lies in the subtle dance: read the signs, adjust, and continue, knowing that a single spark of attention can light the whole hearth.

Remember, even the most distracted listener may return to your tale with wide-eyed wonder if you trust in the invisible thread of story that binds you to them. A crone never frets over lost attention; she bends it, molds it, and transforms it into enchantment. And if, by chance, you find your audience still wandering? Well, oh bother! There are always more tales to tell, more magic to share, and more souls to stir.



***Yours on the Road -  
The Crone of All Crones***



# WANTED



## Content for THE STORY BEAST

Looking for Story in all its exciting forms: traditional, modern or melded!

- Short Stories
- Articles on Storytelling
- Art
- Story Based Activities
- Poems

### Themes for Upcoming Issues:

Summer - June 2026 - Cerulean Sighs - Due May 15

Fall - September 2026 - Cascading Colors - Due August 15

Winter - December 2026 - Merry Musings- Due November 15

Spring - March 2027 - Waking Whimsy - Due February 15

For Submission Guidelines go to [storybeast.org/submissions](https://storybeast.org/submissions)

Submit to [storybeasteditor@gmail.com](mailto:storybeasteditor@gmail.com)





# **-TAMING *the* BEAST-**

**The Art of Crafting Stories**





# Finding Our Creative Rhythm

*By Storyteller Carol McCormick*

There is a natural rhythm in every creative life. It has seasons. It has tides. It has mornings when ideas bounce out of bed before we do, and afternoons when even our imagination asks for a nap.

Creative rhythm includes movement and stillness: Slow days that lead to sudden breakthroughs; quiet stretches that secretly prepare us for bold new work. What looks like "nothing happening" is often something important ripening beneath the surface.

When we slow down enough to match our natural pace, we aren't falling behind; we're building a foundation. We're creating the conditions for our spark to grow instead of flicker. We're making room for joy to influence how we work.

Productivity is a word that tends to show up carrying a clipboard and a stopwatch. Our culture tells us productivity means pushing harder, moving faster, producing more. It suggests that constant output equals worth. If we're not hustling, we must be slacking.

Here's the surprising truth: **Slowing down often helps us move farther and with more ease than rushing ever could.**

Storytellers can see productivity not as a race, but as a rhythm; not as something we chase, but as something that naturally follows alignment. When our creative life feels clear and steady, productivity becomes a side effect, not a stress response.

When we work from love instead of fear, from devotion instead of pressure, something shifts. A better way isn't forced or chased. It reveals itself. Stories deepen through clarity, patience, and curiosity. They unfold when we give them space.

**Slowing down expands vision.** Ideas develop more fully. Intuition sharpens. Innovation feels natural instead of forced. Instead of forcing a story down a path, we sense where it wants to go. (Stories, like cats, prefer suggestion over shoving.) Our storytelling becomes richer.

**Slowing down strengthens clarity.** It reveals nuance and texture. We notice layers we missed. Threads begin to connect. It makes room for play. And play, despite what productivity culture might say, is not a waste of time. It's often where the magic hides.

In today's world -- filled with harsh rhetoric, flashy pitches, and bots that promise everything and deliver confusion -- people are hungry for stories with heart. They want to feel something real. They want to laugh. Cry. Learn. Belong. When we tell a story we genuinely care about, our listeners feel it.

Imagine yourself held in the ocean of time -- not rushed. Not late. Not behind. Just floating along in the right current. (The ocean never panics about its to-do list.)





Our spirit is never stagnant. Even when we feel stuck, something is learning, adjusting, becoming. Nothing is lacking. What we seek is often already present, waiting for our willingness to notice it. It's okay to start before we feel ready. When we understand where we're going, confidence usually shows up after we begin.

The world doesn't need more frantic output. It needs purposeful work. Voices rooted in meaning. Creators who burn steadily, not desperately. We don't have to carry the weight of the world. We only have to tend our own creative spark. From that steady flame, warmth spreads outward—to our work, our listeners, our community.

**Trust that life is quietly arranging moments so they meet us at the right time.** What feels delayed may simply be ripening. Guidance often arrives as subtle nudges, gentle pauses, or a quiet "yes" rising in our chest.

Walk forward gently. The rope bridges will hold. The signs will appear. We do not need to chase what is truly ours.

**Surrender to your creative rhythm, and you will live "Happily ever after."**

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*To be told in educational and professional settings with attribution.*



Carol McCormick has run a storytelling business for more than 35 years. Her clients include festivals, fairs, corporations, professional conferences, early childhood, elementary and high schools, colleges, camps, libraries, museums, hospitals, shopping centers, senior residences, and parks. She is an educational entertainer who has shared stories, programs, and workshops at local, state, and regional storytelling festivals and conferences. Carol has led storytelling, creativity, and writing workshops and been a conference keynote speaker. Before becoming a professional storyteller, Carol was a classroom teacher and corporate trainer. She is the author of the children's book, **A BRIDGE FOR GRANDMA**. [www.carolmccormick.net](http://www.carolmccormick.net)



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# SURVIVING

## My Art

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### **The Day I Refused to Open My Mouth**

*Cherie Karo Schwartz*

I was the storyteller for the Denver Natural History Museum for a decade, starting in the early 1980s. One day, in between my performances around the dinosaur hall, I saw a man with his arm around his maybe 10-year-old son, saying to the child, "Son, do you realize that we are looking at the bones of an animal that never existed?"

Through the museum, I was also the storyteller for all major traveling exhibits, like when we had the Rameses exhibit from Egypt. I did 200 performances in eight months (participatory story narrative mummifications, as well as telling of ancient Egyptian folktales), in the museum and all over Colorado.

One place I traveled to was a tiny town far away, where I encountered John Birch Society posters in the hallways of a school where I was performing. I was in an Egyptian jalabiya with udjat eyes and jewelry for the performances. During the time for questions after an elementary school performance, one of the students asked if I was a real Egyptian. "No," I laughed, "I am a real nice Jewish girl." There was silence. As they were lining up to leave, one kindergarten teacher asked if they could stay to visit for an extra minute. They all surrounded me, and one little girl started patting around the top of my head. Then the teacher looked a little sheepish, and they left. It did not take me long at all to realize why the little girl had been feeling around the top of my head: she was looking for my horns! I never went back there.

I was hired through the museum's outreach program to share ancient Egyptian folktales at a middle school. I came in my Egyptian garb, ready to perform. Then, the librarian entered the packed gym with a TV and said she was going to record my performance, so she could show it to every school in her district. I explained nicely that they had signed a contract for one performance only, but that I would be happy to be hired for other schools. She insisted she was going to record me. I then explained (having just thought of this idea) that the fee for recording my performance was \$1,000 (a very large sum back then), payable before I would start. She refused.



I began pacing around the outer perimeter of the gym, trying to get some balance and figure out a plan. I stopped in front of the librarian and said, "Go ahead. You can film anything you want. But I will not open my mouth to share stories. It is the only protection I have of my art." The other teachers were appalled by the librarian's gall, and they escorted her and the TV out of the gym forcibly, locking the door. The librarian stood outside, banging on the door and yelling, "I can, and I will, record you! I can do anything I want!" The teachers took a piece of paper and blocked the little window.

I looked at the students and other teachers, who were all incredulous about what had just happened. I said, "Let's all take a big breath in, and let it out. Now:

'There were many and many a strange occurrence between heaven and earth a long time ago.' " (an ancient Egyptian ritual story starter.)

I sometimes wonder what ever happened to that librarian....

LOVELY TIME:  
There is magic in Story

I was telling love stories for Valentine's Day at an elementary school in Loveland, Colorado, one year. I introduced myself as Cherie the Storyteller. I was telling "Who Cured the Princess" (Eastern European Jewish, Greek, Turkish, Irish, etc.). As I tell the story, I choose the three princes and the princess from the audience. From their seats, they answer questions and become part of the unfolding story. I never choose a little blonde girl with a pink dress to be the princess. I go for someone who has "story eyes" and shows interest. But, somehow, that day I simply had to make her the princess.

When I chose her, there was a little gasp from the area around where her class was sitting. I continued with the story. At the end, the teacher said that her class had a story for me. They had been studying names at school, and one little girl had been crying. She said that no one had her name, and she hated it. Then the teacher said, "Class: all together on the count of 3, everyone say what her name is. One, two, three: "CHERIE!" and they pointed toward the princess. And the teacher added, "Now, she loves her name!" The little blonde girl and I both blushed and smiled.

*Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work*



Denverite Cherie Karo Schwartz has been a storyteller, author, and educator for over 50 years. She shares spirit-filled Jewish stories, world folktales, sacred, interfaith, personal, and original stories to create a tapestry of tales. Cherie teaches storytelling, educates educators in using storytelling, and trains Spellbinders, elder volunteer storytellers for schools.

[schwartstory@earthlink.net](mailto:schwartstory@earthlink.net)



# An Audience of One

**Barry Stewart Mann**

I was booked by a librarian into a three-library system in South Georgia, doing one library at 10 AM, the main branch at 1 PM, and then a very small satellite at 3:30 PM. Upon arriving that morning, my host informed me that she hadn't realized that the satellite branch wasn't generally open that day of the week, so she wasn't sure who, if anyone, would come.

The site turned out to be a beautiful vintage railroad depot, refurbished with bright colors and lots of natural light. My host opened the library, made a few calls, and reported that the day care center that often attends such events couldn't come, because their van was in the shop, and they weren't permitted to walk the kids across the tracks to get to the branch. There were some kids on a nearby playground in the sweltering heat, but when she invited them in for cool air and stories, they declined.

Finally, a woman came in to use the computer with her 8-year-old son in tow. We invited him over, and the librarian told me to go ahead and do my show. In my old theatre days, doing small shows off-off-off-off-Broadway in New York, we had an unspoken rule that if the cast outnumbered the audience, the show would be canceled. But here we were equal, so the show went on.

It was a program designed for audience participation, with costumes to put on multiple volunteers, plenty of call-and-response, and the like. My audience member – let's call him Dustin – wasn't familiar with storytelling, and didn't seem to have a clue as to what I was doing and why.

As I rolled out each piece – song, poem, or story – he uninhibitedly offered commentary, questions, exhortations. Fairly early in the encounter he shared that he was going into the third grade, and that his cousin, who was a year younger, was skipping second and also going into third. This seemed to be a particularly itchy subject, and it kept coming up as Dustin reflected on the stories in terms of school, reading, writing, and general intelligence.

At first, I felt extremely awkward, almost resentful that the librarian expected me to perform for one lone accidental guest. But as I went on, and as our dialogue deepened, I began to really enjoy the experience of telling the stories to an audience of one: being able to respond to his every whim, offering him opportunities to participate and adapting my plan to his choices, hearing his thoughts on the stories, and helping to support him in his personal drama of inter-familial rivalry. It was really quite rich.

I came away from that odd experience with a renewed commitment to telling my stories not only to the whole audience, but also to each of the individuals within it, thinking of each individual as an audience of one, with the hope of having at least a moment of connection with each and every "Dustin" out there.

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*To be retold in the reteller's own words in educational or professional settings with attribution.*

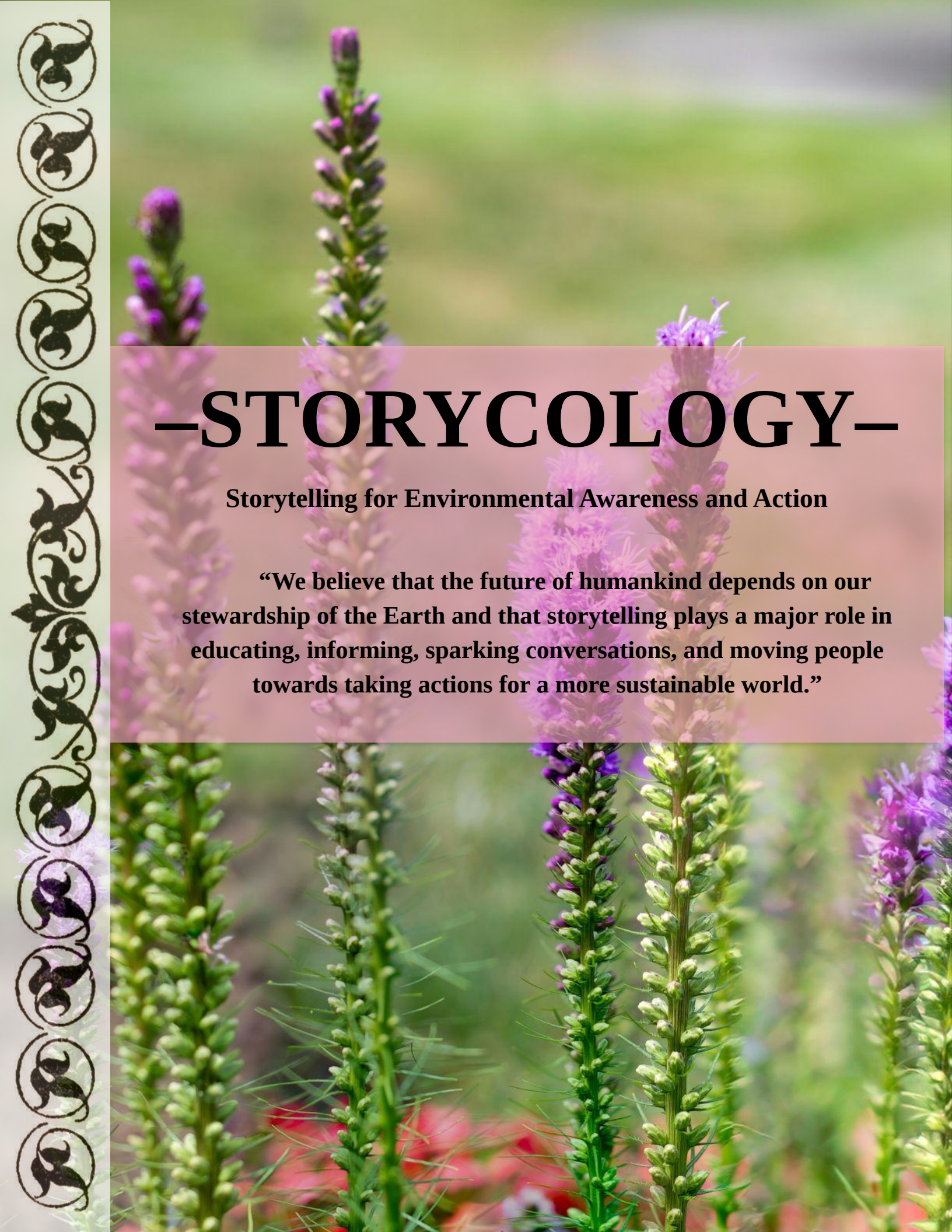


Barry Stewart Mann is an Atlanta-based storyteller, actor and arts educator. He tells in schools, festivals and libraries across the southeast, and tours internationally with Dream On Productions. Barry's latest project, with Deborah Strahorn, is "The Strange Case of Lady Liberty," exploring the little-known racial roots of the iconic monument.

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# **–STORYCOLOGY–**

**Storytelling for Environmental Awareness and Action**

**“We believe that the future of humankind depends on our stewardship of the Earth and that storytelling plays a major role in educating, informing, sparking conversations, and moving people towards taking actions for a more sustainable world.”**



# Tops and Bottoms

by *Bowen Lee*

Bear never shared his food. This was particularly vexing when berries were in season, because Bear never allowed any other animals to eat the berries at the bushes he found. And if Bear said you couldn't eat the berries, you couldn't eat the berries.

Rabbit came up with an idea one day. "Bear," Rabbit said, "why don't we grow our food this year. We'll both prepare the garden and plant the seeds, and we'll each take half of the crop. You can take what grows on top of the ground, and I'll take the bottom, what grows under the soil."

Bear had never grown his food before, so he was excited at the idea. He agreed.

Together, Bear and Rabbit prepared the garden, planted seeds, watered and weeded, and before long, the plants were ready to harvest. Bear was very excited because lush, green tops were growing.

But when they picked the plants out of the ground, the tops were very bitter, and the bottoms were juicy and tasty. They had grown carrots.

"Grrr!" roared Bear, quite upset. "Let's do it again! This time, I get what's growing under the ground, and you get what's growing on top." Rabbit agreed.

Together they prepared the garden, planted seeds, watered, and weeded. The tops of the plants grew big and wide. Bear remembered how big the carrots had been when they were pulled up - when their tops had been narrow and thin. Bear anticipated the best.

But when they picked the plants out of the ground, the roots were bitter, and the tops were heads of lettuce.





"Arrgh!" roared Bear, very angry. "Let's do it again! This time I get both the tops and the bottoms."

"What do I get?" asked Rabbit.

"You get whatever isn't a top or a bottom."

"All right," agreed Rabbit, although this didn't make much sense. "You mean you get the leaves and stems and roots of the plant, and I get whatever isn't a leaf, stem, or root?"

"Yes," said Bear. "And you also don't get any fruit if it's growing on the plant." For the one thing Bear did know about plants was that berries grew on them.

Together, Bear and Rabbit prepared the garden, planted seeds, watered, and weeded. Bear was exceedingly excited to see the plants growing into little bushes. Maybe they would grow fruit!



But no fruit grew on these plants. When they picked them out of the ground, everything about the plant was very, very bitter: the leaves, the stems, the roots. Bear could not even take a taste of it before getting very sick.

But Rabbit dug into the ground where the plants had been pulled up, and he plucked out potatoes that were delicious when cooked.

"I give up!" roared Bear. He walked off into the forest to look for berries.

Meanwhile, Rabbit invited the other forest animals to a feast of carrots, lettuce, and potatoes. They were all gathered round, enjoying the bounty of the garden, when Bear showed up with a big basket.

"Anyone want any berries?"

The animals invited him to the feast.

*From a traditional tale of many cultures.*



If you are like Bear and have never grown your own food, it isn't as difficult as you might think. Before I had any land to grow on, I had window-sill gardens. There is something very satisfying about growing your own food. If nothing else, you appreciate what goes into putting food on your plate.

And you don't need to run to the garden center of the store to grow a window-sill garden. You can grow one entirely from what you normally throw away.

Every day, we throw out containers that can hold soil and water, as well as plastic or ceramic pots. Milk cartons, cans, and yogurt cups can all serve as planters for a windowsill. Just punch a hole in the bottom for drainage and place a drip tray underneath (which can also be something you would discard or recycle, like the lid to a takeout meal). If you don't want the outside of the container to show how much Greek yogurt you've eaten, you can cover it with contact paper.

Buying potting soil is an easy way to fill a container but do consider composting to get your garden soil. Even a small compost bucket will provide plenty of amendments you can add to regular topsoil from the ground. And the brown liquid from composting is a great fertilizer for your window-sill garden.

Okay, it is time to plant. No need to buy seeds. If you buy fresh produce, you have what you need to grow a garden. I always cut the root ends of green onions and plant them, so I have a constant supply of them to cut and grow again whenever I need them. That also happens for my favorite varieties of carrots. I cut off the tops and place them in the soil. You can do this with carrots, beets, turnips, and similar root vegetables. The beauty of this is that you can eat the tops and bottoms of these root vegetables. Beet greens and turnip greens are delicious sautéed, and carrot tops make a tangy pesto.

Have potatoes that are sprouting or shriveling up? Cut them into pieces and plant them. Or, as a neighbor used to do, bury potato peelings, and see if you can grow some baby potatoes.

Every fruit or vegetable you buy that has seeds can become a potential plant for your garden. Save the seeds and try your luck at growing them.

Have fun growing tops and bottoms!



### **Storycology Head Editor**

Bowen Lee divides her time between cities, forests, and the ocean around Monterey, CA. She has been a teacher, a writer, an illustrator, and now, she tells stories, incorporating storytelling into all aspects of teaching. She conducts workshops on storytelling to teach educational content in national and regional education conferences.

**Website:** [storyrex.com](http://storyrex.com)

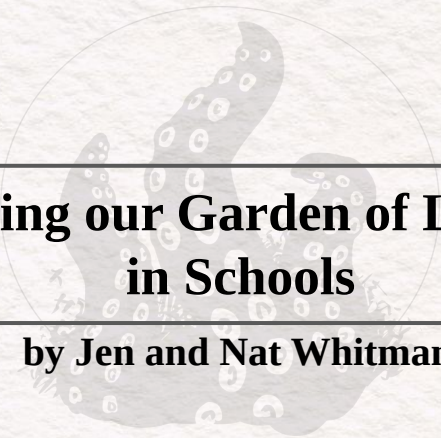
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**-TEACHER TALES &  
TENTACLES-**





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# Cultivating our Garden of Languages in Schools

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by Jen and Nat Whitman

It's Spring! We love the boisterous blooms outside our window this time of year. Garden flowers remind us that schools grow a delightful garden of languages all year long! What languages are spoken in your home? Our multilingual students arrive at school each day with their own kind of superpowers. How can we, as storytellers, support and cultivate each student's language development? We start by considering each child's unique linguistic journey.

The University of Wisconsin's WIDA center has developed a framework for working with multilingual students. (Learn more about their research and tools for educators at [wida.wisc.edu](https://wida.wisc.edu).) WIDA's Principles of Language Development offers a helpful tool for reflecting on how we interact with multilingual learners. They begin with this powerful principle:

***Multilingual learners' languages and cultures are valuable resources to be leveraged for schooling and classroom life; leveraging these assets and challenging biases help develop multilingual learners' independence and encourage their agency in learning.***

(from: <https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/Guiding-Principles-Language-Development-Posters.pdf>)

This is such an important place to start. We view each child as a linguistic and cultural resource for the entire school community. Each student brings a wealth of knowledge about their own language and culture. We want to make sure every child walks into school knowing they are welcome and valued. We want all students to benefit from the beautiful garden of languages and cultures that grow in our schools.

What offers an amazing blend of language and culture in a universally digestible narrative form? Folktales! Folktales are the perfect tool we can use as storytellers to cultivate translanguaging in schools.





## **What is *TRANSLANGUAGING*?**

*Translanguaging* is the concept that students need to think and express themselves not only in the language spoken at school, but also in their own home language(s). In practice, translanguaging encourages students to flow back and forth between the languages they are learning and their home language(s). There is freedom to talk with peers in a comfortable language, write notes in a mixture of languages, and switch back and forth between languages when communicating with others. In schools where translanguaging practices are embraced, multiple languages are visible throughout the environment of the school. You walk down the hallways and see the languages of the students on the walls.

### **Ideas for leaning into translanguaging practices in your work as a storyteller in schools:**

- If you are a visiting teller, find out what languages are spoken in the school community. Try to program a tale or two that will connect directly with these languages. What a joy it is when you introduce a story, “For this next tale, I want to teach you a few words in \_\_\_\_\_” and you hear voices across the auditorium squealing, “That’s MY language!” YES!
- If you are working with a small group, start with a name circle where everyone greets each other in their home language. (Bonjour! Je m’appelle Jen! Hello! My name is Nat!)
- Consider shaping your tales so that you can switch out simple words with a variety of languages. If you have a repeating tale, you can call on different students to share a key word in their home language. For example, “She opened the door” becomes “She opened la puerta.” You could also have students create vocabulary cards in their home languages for these key words.
- Maximize your audience participation opportunities! Choose a few easy phrases in a different language to teach students in advance and then have them join you throughout the tale. We often have students chanting at us in the hallways short phrases from the tales we’ve told, such as “En Route, Mr. Whitman!”
- Sing a song! If you are comfortable, music can amplify the cultural significance of your story. Some tellers can craft an entire tale around the bones of a song or rhythm from their childhood. One of our favorite folktales was taught to us by Dr. Wajuppa Tossa in Thailand and includes a short tune in the Isaan dialect. Years later, we still remember the words in Isaan because of the music.
- If you are working with one group of students over time, make it a goal to share a tale from each child’s linguistic and cultural background. Ask students to bring in their favorite stories to share with the class.
- Encourage your students to explore language through their own storytelling. Teach them a simple tale in English (like the one below) and have them play with it in their own languages.
- Pair up with a friend who speaks another language and tell a tale in tandem translation. If you’re interested in thinking more about storytelling in translation, head to your local library and check out Margaret Read MacDonald’s **Tell the World: Storytelling Across Language Barriers**. For this resource book, she asked tellers around the world to share their thoughts about multilingual telling. The result is a collection of essays that highlights different approaches from a variety of voices in the storytelling community.



We'll close with a short tale that's great fun to tell with a storytelling partner in translation.

Reshaped from Eastern European and Russian folklore traditions by Margaret Read MacDonald. Used with permission. You can find a more elaborate version of this tale in Margaret's **Peace Tales: World Folktales to Talk About**. The version below is adapted from the book we wrote together called **Teaching with Story: Classroom Connections to Storytelling**. If you compare the two versions, you can see that Margaret really pared down the language over time to make it easy to use with translators on her travels. This telling is extremely sparse and lends itself to call and response with the audience in English and also to telling with another teller-translator. You say one line in English (or another language!) and your partner echoes in a second language. We could also imagine having a line of older students all telling this in their own languages in rapid succession! For an idea of what this story looks like in translation, visit "Two Goats on a Bridge, Margaret Read MacDonald and Wajuppa Tossa" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzbK9Bu8LIA>) to see a delightful recording of the tale in English & Lao.

## **TWO GOATS ON A BRIDGE (Ask audience to repeat everything you say and do!) Story Number One**

Hill. (hold up RIGHT fist)

Hill. (hold up LEFT fist)

Goat. (hold up RIGHT index finger)

Goat. (hold up LEFT index finger)

Bridge! (make a small bridge with two fingers together)

One Day. (hold up RIGHT index finger)

Goat Came Down. (Move RIGHT index finger down))

Crossed the Bridge. (Move RIGHT finger across your waist)

Ate the Grass. (RIGHT finger "nibbles")

Nom Nom Nom.

Went Back. (RIGHT Finger goes back up)

One Day. (Hold up LEFT index finger)

Goat Came Down. (Move LEFT index finger down)

Crossed the Bridge. (Move LEFT finger across your waist)

Ate the Grass. (LEFT finger "nibbles")

Nom Nom Nom.

Went Back. (LEFT Finger goes back up)

One Day. (Hold BOTH fingers up)

BOTH Goats Came Down. (Move LEFT AND RIGHT index fingers down)

BOTH goats crossed the bridge. (Left and Right Fingers Meet and PUSH!)

"Out of My Way!"

"Out of MY Way!"

RRRRRRR-Splash! (fingers fight and fall down)



## Story Number Two

Hill. (Hold up RIGHT fist)

Hill. (Hold up LEFT fist)

Goat. (Hold up RIGHT index finger)

Goat. (Hold up LEFT index finger)

Bridge! (Make a small bridge with two fingers together)

One Day. (Hold up RIGHT index finger)

Goat Came Down. (Move RIGHT index finger down))

Crossed the Bridge.

Ate the Grass. (RIGHT finger goes down, crosses bridge, nibbles, and returns.)

Nom Nom Nom.

Went Back.

One Day. (Hold up LEFT index finger)

Goat Came Down. (Move LEFT index finger down)

Crossed the Bridge.

Ate the Grass. (LEFT finger goes down, crosses bridge, nibbles, and returns.)

Nom Nom Nom.

Went Back.

One Day. (Hold up BOTH fingers)

BOTH Goats Came Down (Move LEFT and RIGHT index fingers down)

BOTH goats crossed the bridge (Left and Right Fingers Meet)

“Hmmm...” (fingers wiggle as goats talk)

“Hmmm...”

“We have a problem!”

“What can we do?”

“Maybe...”

“If we both squeeze...”

“WE DID IT!” (The two fingers pass each other and cheer)

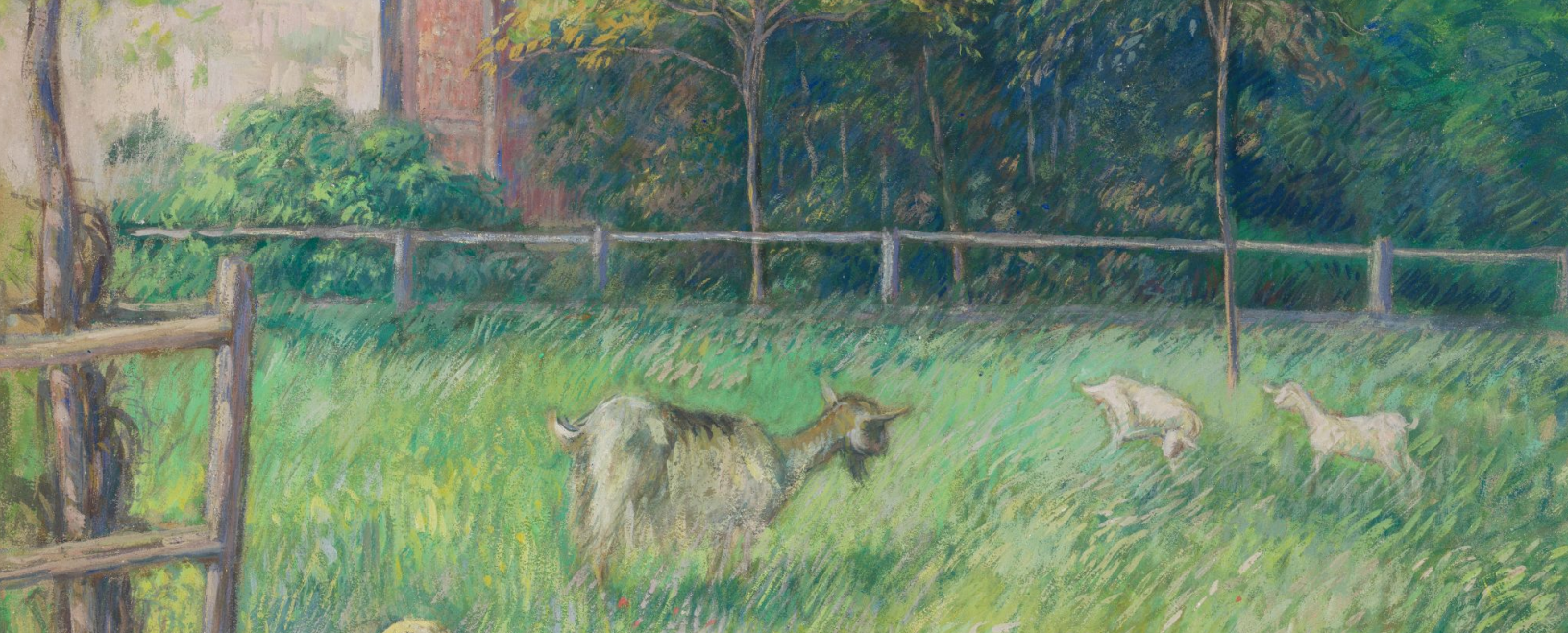
Ate the grass (Two fingers nibble)

NOM NOM NOM

And Said...

” What a Cooperative GOAT!” (BOTH fingers talking)





**Now, the question is...**

**Which kind of goat are YOU?**

Well, we know YOU are the kind of goat who will work cooperatively with other tellers to share stories in many languages! We hope you enjoy creating a bouquet of stories from the garden of languages in YOUR community.

*To be told in educational and professional settings with attribution.*



### **About the Authors**

Jen and Nat Whitman recently moved back to the United States after 23 years teaching and telling in international schools in Thailand, Germany, and Hong Kong. Jen is an Early Childhood teacher and Nat is an Elementary Librarian. They teamed with Margaret Read MacDonald to write a “How-To” guide for using stories in the classroom called, *Teaching with Story: Classroom Connections to Storytelling*. Jen and Nat perform in tandem together as The Whitman Tellers. They are currently sharing stories of political cooperation across the 50 States with a series of social media shorts called “Purple Minutes” for the Purple Points Project. You can learn more about the Whitmans at [www.whitmantellers.com](http://www.whitmantellers.com).





# -STORY FEAST-

A bounty to share





# STORY FEAST

by Karen Chace



After a long, frozen winter here in the United States, we are looking forward to Boisterous Blooms! With that in mind, I begin with stories about the beautiful buds about to spring forth.

[Echo and Narcissus](#) - Greece

[The Legend of the Cempasúchil Flower](#) – Mexico

[Lily and the Lion](#) – Grimm/Germany

[Little Ida's Flowers](#) – Hans Christian Andersen/Denmark

[The Maiden with the Rose on her Forehead](#) – Portugal

[The Pink](#) – Grimm/Germany

[The Princess Lily](#) – China

[The Princess Peony](#) – Japan

[A Riddling Tale](#) – Grimm/Germany

[Snow White and Rose Red](#) – Grimm/Germany

[Thumbelina](#) – Hans Christian Andersen/Denmark

[The Two Cakes](#) - Italian



The Fairy Queen And Her Lambs  
by Warwick Goble, 1910

Spring by Louise Imogen Guiney,  
1884

Again the bloom, the northward flight,  
The fount freed at its silver height,  
And down the deep woods to the  
lowest,  
The fragrant shadows scarred with  
light.  
O inescapable joy of spring!  
For thee the world shall leap and sing;  
But by her darkened door thou goest  
Forever as a spectral thing.



## CALENDAR STORIES

It is said that everyone is Irish on St. Patrick's Day, **March 17**. Now pour yourself a Guinness or hot toddy, sit back and enjoy these books from long ago. Éirinn go Brách! (Ireland forever!)

[\*\*The Fireside Stories of Ireland\*\*](#) by Patrick Kennedy, 1870.

[\*\*Folk-Lore and Legends: Legends, Myths and Fairy Tales\*\*](#) by Cathryn Wallace, 1910.

[\*\*Irish Fairy Tales\*\*](#) - Brought to you by James Stephens all the way from 1920; beginning with The Story of Tuan Mac Cairill and ending with Mongan's Frenzy.

[\*\*Irish Fairy Tales, Folklore and Legend\*\*](#) - Illustrated by Geoffrey Strahan and published in 1904 this book offers a variety of English, Scottish and Irish folk-lore.

**March 20** is World Storytelling Day. With that in mind, I am sharing eight of my older blogs centered on specific countries and the continent of Africa.

[\*\*Celebrating the Continent of Africa\*\*](#)

[\*\*Celebrating the Country of China\*\*](#)

[\*\*Celebrating the Country of Germany\*\*](#)

[\*\*Celebrating the Country of India\*\*](#)

[\*\*Celebrating the Country of Russia\*\*](#)

[\*\*Celebrating the Country of Scotland\*\*](#)

[\*\*Celebrating the Country of Turkey\*\*](#)

[\*\*Celebrating the Country of Ukraine\*\*](#)

**April 14** is Sibling Day, and I bring you stories to help you celebrate those wonderful brothers and sisters in your life. And if you don't have any biological siblings, those who are a sister or brother from another mother!

[\*\*Alenoushka and Her Brother\*\*](#) – Russia

[\*\*The Brother and Sister\*\*](#) – Turkey

[\*\*The Brother and His Sisters\*\*](#) – West Africa

[\*\*The Enchanted Stag\*\*](#) - Grimm/Germany

[\*\*The Icon's Warm Bread\*\*](#) - Greece

[\*\*Little Brother and Little Sister\*\*](#) - Germany

[\*\*The Little Sister: The Story of Suyettar and the Nine Brothers\*\*](#) - Finland

[\*\*Sivka-Burka\*\*](#) - Russian

[\*\*Sister and Brother\*\*](#) - Turkey

[\*\*The Three Brothers\*\*](#) - Serbia

[\*\*The Two Sisters\*\*](#) - England



Spring is also the season for hens to begin birthing their fluffy little chicks and Easter Egg hunts are all the rage in the United States. With that in mind, I offer you some EGGcellent stories!

[The Boiled Eggs](#) - Denmark

[The Fool and the Mare's Egg](#) – Fourteen variations of the story from around the world. Compiled by D.L.Ashliman.

[Gollywopper's Eggs](#) - New England Legend

[The Goose With the Golden Eggs](#) - Aesop

[The Magic Egg](#) - Ukraine

[The Ostrich-Egg Wife](#) - South Africa

[Rumble-Mumble Goose-Egg](#) - Norway

[Story of the Duck with the Golden Eggs](#) - Russia

[The Story of Swet-Basanta](#) - Bengal

[The Talking Eggs](#) - Creole/United States



#### **Resources Provided By Karen Chace**

Karen Chace is an award-winning storyteller, teaching artist, workshop leader, and author. Since 2002, she has taught the art of storytelling to over six hundred students. She is the recipient of the LANES Brother Blue-Ruth Hill Storytelling Award and the National Storytelling Network ORACLE Service and Leadership Award.

[storybug.net](http://storybug.net)

### **SOMETHING EXTRA**

#### [15 Ancient Greek Flowers: Legends and Myths](#)

[Floral Folklore](#) – “In Portsmouth Natural History Museum there are four herbarium sheets mounted in a display upstairs, which present four different wild plants: Mugwort, Yarrow, Feverfew and Fleabane. All the plants displayed have folklore associated with them in the UK and can be found growing here today.”

#### [Flowers: Legends and Lore](#)

[A Host of Golden Daffodils](#) – The story of a springtime favourite.





# **-JOURNEYS-**

**“What marks do you leave in the places you go?**

**Who sees them?**

**Don’t you ever wonder?”**





# Italian Taxis: Roaming Ruins & the Long Road Home

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*by John Shockley*



Overlooking Lake Como, Italy

In my life, I've been taken for a ride many times by taxi drivers. They come from everywhere and come in all kinds of cars with all kinds of faces. Some of them have really galled me with their under-handed tricks to make a few dollars. I guess I'm just jaded by the kind of treatment I've had. Let me start this tale with an up-beat story about a high school friend of mine who is a San Francisco cabbie.

Peter Von Weigant, a lanky kid, left Hawaii right after he graduated high school in 1965 for San Francisco during the Flower Power years. He stayed through the acid years. Matter of fact, he still drives a cab in the city today. Peter has filled out the lankiness after 45 years in a cab, likes to "dress up" so that you cannot miss him. He likes psychedelic art and creates photo collages. He has a valuable collection of posters and flyers from the Haight-Ashbury era. He calls himself "Le Craze."



High school reunions bring back many characters from those wonderful formative years. You get to find out “what happened” with young kids who long since have separated after the graduation curtain has fallen. Larry Davis played high school basketball for Radford High, a school near Pearl Harbor. He kept up with Le Craze and they have been life-long friends. My wife Rita and I visited Larry many times as we passed through San Jose on the way to San Francisco where my oldest sister, Marylou, lives.

“Hey! You guys wanna go up to San Francisco and spend a day with Peter? He says he wants to take you on a city tour.” We couldn’t believe what we were hearing. Le Craze is truly an edgy guy, long thin hair, and exuberant — maybe to a fault. He had just come off one of his 14-hour shift days with Yellow Cab. Driving people around on a day off? Crazy!

“He says he wants to do it!” We got in Larry’s car and headed into San Francisco to Peter’s apartment. It was there that Peter showed us parts of his poster and flyer collection. I wanted to know how he ended up in a cab...mainly, it was money.

Peter came to San Francisco with no skills to speak of but was a good street survivor. He passed out flyers and free press newspapers, did odd jobs, attended all of the concert events going on in the city parks, and basically just hung out. After the flowers turned to acid and worse, he stayed with what he knew — the City. He is an independent operator for Yellow Cab, which means he basically rents his hack from the dispatch yard and stays on the beat to make the rent and profit for the day.

Peter opened up his “costume closet” that seemed to me like a psychedelic blaze of color and black coats. His favorite accent? A chimney sweep hat with a crushed top and curved brim. Peter’s city tour was like none other! We drove to the highest hill — too bad the fog and clouds blocked part of the majestic view. He showed us the hangouts and homes of the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, and countless other iconic San Francisco bands. He even showed us the buffalo in Golden Gate Park!

Peter talked about his youth and the town that he roamed as a young man. He showed us the places that only a Haight-Asbury local would know. It’s hard to thank someone for a tour like that. Quite a “cab ride!”



Oakland Bay Bridge, San Francisco, CA





The Liberty Bell, Philadelphia, PA

We left the airport and got on some freeway, and I wished I had taken the time to get a map of the city so I knew the proximity of the airport to the docks. Too late now...he got off the phone and pulled off on one of the exits that dropped us directly into an Asian third world. It looked Vietnamese...or maybe Thai...or maybe Indonesian. We passed block after block of shop signs, many of them with no mention of what they were in English. We were worried — no dock in sight.

“So, how soon to the docks?”

“Pretty soon!” At least he gave me an answer to calm my nerves.

I started a conversation with him, mainly to find out what he was up to. He talked with an Indian accent and mentioned he was a Hindu Sikh. To keep the conversation going, I asked him about the difference between the Hindus and Sikhs. Sikhs disain the caste system and the strict rules of main-stream Hindu thought. They believe in one god — not pantheistic and idol-related adulation.

We headed downhill to the dock area in what seemed like a back road. Were we taken for a long ride? I’ll never know — but it seemed like it. The main thing is that we weren’t taken down a dark road and “disappeared”....

Philadelphia, the city of Brotherly Love, as well as a great historical tourist destination, has its cabbies. I can only speak about our cab ride in that city -- and it puts a stain on humanity, charity, and compassion.

We’ve had other cab rides that were not like the Le Craze tour but were sometimes just as crazy — in a dark kind of way. In Vancouver, BC, Canada, we landed at the airport and needed a ride to a cruise ship. The cabs were queued up and we went to the lead cab. The cabbie wore a purple turban and with dark eyes upon us, loaded our suitcases in his trunk as we stepped into the back of the car. He didn’t say a word to us — just drove off.

“He didn’t ask where we’re going,” I whispered to Rita. He picked up his cell phone and began speaking in some kind of Indian dialect that sounded Pakistani to me. Still, no asking us of our destination. “We’re headed to the cruise ship docks!” I blurted out. No response. He kept driving and talking.



Liberty Hall, Philadelphia, PA



Rita and I were doing our first East Coast tour that began in Washington DC. We were going to take trains from the Capitol through Philadelphia and New York City to reach Boston, where we planned to rent a car out of the Logan Airport and where we would eventually fly back home.

Washington DC was a great place to begin our open-ended East Coast tour. We had never been there so everything was new: The Smithsonian museums, the monuments, Arlington, outlying Mount Vernon, and the subway system. We found we got around very well with public transportation. When we left DC, we departed through the Grand Central Train Station. What a vast building with a huge food court and lots of rail tracks! Since that time, we've seen many other train stations both in the U.S. and Europe. Still, Washington's Grand Central stands out as the most grand. Our first train stop was in Philadelphia.

We had made hotel reservations based on our transportation. When we got off the train and stepped onto the street, the cabs were lined up. We went to the front of the queue and were greeted by a pleasant Black driver who knew exactly where we were going. That was a relief. We jumped onto the freeway, got a panoramic view of the city, swung around and soon we were on surface streets with our hotel marquee in sight. We paid our fare and tip and went to check in. The hotel clerk showed us the brochures of the city sights including the Betsy Ross House, Franklin's house, Liberty Hall, the Philadelphia Mint, etc. What I really wanted to see was the original home of the Philly Steak sandwich, and it was within walking distance.

After checking out the sights of the city we were ready to head back to the railroad station to reach our next destination — New York City.

"Can you call us a cab? We're trying to get back to the railroad station."

The clerk smiled, shaking his head. "You know, you can just walk to the end of this block and turn right, and you'll be at the station - unless you really want a cab." The short walk to the station was a bitter one — we were taken for a ride.

On another trip, we were with another couple taking the train from Boston to New York City. We had just gotten off an autumn cruise in New England. The cruise was nice, but we didn't get to see the fall colors they had touted. We were standing in a long line waiting for a taxi ride to our hotel just outside Boston when a guy with a home-made cardboard sign came walking up the line. CITY TOUR OF BOSTON. Nobody was inquiring about details until he passed us. "If we take the tour, can you drop us off at our hotel?" He said it would be no problem. The tour cost less than a regular taxi ride. The guy was a retired person making a few bucks on the side.

We had a great little tour of Boston and then he drove us to our hotel. On the way there, we asked about the train to New York City. He said the local train stop was about six blocks from the hotel.

Next morning, we had breakfast and got a cab. "Take us to the local train stop. It should be six blocks from here."







“No problem, Mon!” The cabby was a Jamaican who seemed honest. We started driving away from the hotel...and kept on driving. “Shouldn’t we be at the train stop soon?” “No Problem, Mon!” He kept on driving. He drove way past the six blocks. He drove us all the way back into the city to the main train station. I was boiling mad as I figured what he was doing.

“What? No tip, Mon?”

“You would have had a good tip if you didn’t rip us off driving back to the city instead of the local train stop...Mon!”

Paris — Rita and I search for good deals. On this particular trip, it was a package deal that included airfare and a hotel room for five days. The price was \$599 per person through a French air charter that made a refueling stop in Los Angeles between Tahiti and Paris. The deal was there because the airline wanted to fill all the seats on the flight.

Rita and I were going to visit my older sister who was studying for her PhD at Oxford, England. Our plan was to fly to Paris, spend five days there, take the Chunnel Bullet-Train to England, visit my sister for a couple of weeks and take a return flight from Paris back to Los Angeles. The plan worked great! Well, there were some glitches.

One of them was when we took the Paris subway across the city at night. We had gotten pretty good on the Metro traveling during the daytime so this would be our first “night ride.” We were going to see the huge white arc called La Defense that lit up the sky across town from the Bastille Opera House near where our hotel was. When we got off at our stop, we noticed...not much crowd. Actually, NO CROWD. All there was at the station stop was a guy sleeping on one of the benches. The subway stopped service! We were panicked. Across the way from the metro was the national railroad called the PER which had all night service between main railway stops. Our hotel, Numero 8, Rue Bonmarche, was in the area of the Gare de Lyon train stop. We hopped on the train. At Gare de Lyon we jumped off. It was well after midnight. There was a fat old bus driver dosing in the driver seat at the parking lot with his front door open. In my best broken French, I asked where the Bastille Opera House was. Our hotel was close by. “La bas!” He pointed down a dark side street and went back to sleep.

Rita and I began walking down the dark street. No street lights—NO LIGHTS at all in the City of Lights. In the distance we saw a neon light. That walk was cold and a little scary. As we got closer to the light, it was a porno shop. We turned on to what looked like a wider street and just like magic, a French taxi cab drove by. We hailed. He stopped. Once again, in my broken French from my high school and college years, 35 years in the past, I ventured “Nous voudron alle au numero huit, Rue Bon Marche, s’il vous plait.” The cabby couldn’t turn us away. We were already in his car. He smiled and threw up his service flag with a chuckle.

We drove about four hundred yards and the cab stopped at our hotel. “Quatre francs, monsieur.” This was before the advent of the Euro. Four francs was about eighty cents. I over-tipped him — glad he didn’t take us for a ride.





The Medici Chapel, Florence, Italy

This brings us to autumn in Italy, 2011: another adventure where Rita and I took stand-by flights to reach Milan, Italy, from Los Angeles. We were on a 16-day “do it yourself” kind of tour where we made no hotel reservations. When we landed in Malpense (which translates to “bad thought”) Airport just outside of Milan, our plan was to rent a car and just do a drive-about in Northern Italy. As it turned out, the car rental companies would not honor the Internet deal we made because we could not actually confirm it because our flights were stand-by. They wanted almost double the Internet cost: 800 Euro. That converts to about \$1,100 American pesos.



In Verona, the statue of Juliet in the courtyard of the rival Capulet Family—*Romeo & Juliet*

We decided to take trains to our destinations. We made the right decision. Eight dollar a gallon for gas, turnpike fees, parking problems, and the fact that we would be trying to find our way around without speaking Italian were great reasons to just hop on the trains between cities.

We went from Milan to Lake Como, then on to Verona, Venice, Florence, Tuscany, Pisa, and ended up on the Mediterranean coastline known as the Cinque Terras. We simply looked for the tourist information offices at each train stop destination where we picked up information on bed-and-breakfast or hotels in the area. Sometimes, the offices were hard to find, but we got by quite well.

Our trip was ending. We had really made only one hotel reservation for the trip. It was reserved for the night before our airplane connections from Milan-JFK New York-Los Angeles-Honolulu were set. We could not afford to not have a near-by place to stay with our early morning flight scheduled to go. The place was called the Idea Hotel — less than four kilometers from the Malpense airport.

We arrived at Malpense from the Milan Central railroad station at about 2:30 PM. Rita and I went to the information office at the airport to locate our hotel. The young lady at the information office spoke English but we knew it was definitely a second language for her. “Idea hotel...very close to here but they have no shuttle service until 6 PM.” We could wait three and a half hours at the airport, try to walk to the hotel, or take a taxi. “Hmm...you can’t walk there...it’s not direct.”



I went to the taxi area and was greeted by an old Italian with a potbelly and gray hair. “Parle English?” I asked. “Oh yes!” the hack-driver smiled. “Where you go?” I told him we needed a lift to the Idea Hotel and wanted to first know how much it would cost. “Oh...It’s forty kilometer from dis place...costa 16 Euro.” Sixteen Euro is about \$22 dollars. I had spent down our Euros to two Euro and 21 cents. I smiled and gave the guy a sharp look. “Forty kilometers?” I walked away. Rita and I headed back to the information office.

“The taxi man said the Idea Hotel was 40 kilometers away and would cost 16 Euros.” The young woman behind the information desk was shocked. “No -- I don’t think so. That would almost take you back to Milan and back.” We both knew the hack was trying to take us for a ride. “OK. Let’s say we try to walk there...” She looked at us and smiled. “You would like an adventure, yes?” We really didn’t want an adventure, but we knew if the hotel was less than two miles away, we could surely walk there in less than two-and-a-half hours.

She gave us directions: Take the free bus shuttle that goes between the international Terminal 1 to the domestic Terminal 2. We were supposed to get off on the third stop between the terminals, look for the police station as a guide, then find a small street and make a series of “destras” (rights) and “sinistres”(lefts) and we would find the Idea Hotel, right behind the Holiday Inn. It was complicated but we decided to go for it.

We hopped on the bus. I asked the driver where the Idea Hotel was...he didn’t speak English. There was an Italian stewardess on the bus. I asked her if she knew about the hotel.” Try the next stop...” It was only the second stop, but we decided to jump off the bus.

The road between Terminal 1 and Terminal 2 is a two-lane road with fencing on both sides. It has no sidewalks — just over-grown weeds on the shoulder of the road. Nothing else. Rita saw the top of the Holiday Inn relatively close by. However, there was no direct way to get there and we weren’t going to try hopping the chain-link fence with the barbed wire on top. We waited the ten minutes for the next free shuttle. Maybe the third stop was the best route. At the third stop, we watched the shuttle bus drive off. Over-grown grass shoulder on both sides of the road. If we were going to walk with our roller-suitcases, it would have to be on the paved roadway...they drive fast in Italy.



Main Train Station, Milan, Italy



Waiting for a train, Milan, Italy



A hundred yards down the road, Rita noted two police cars crossing the barren intersection. Across the road was the shuttle bus stop that would take us back to Terminal 1. The chain-link barbed wire fence was the border of the Italian Army base that probably served as security for the airport. I went to the guard gate. I knew that wasn't the way to get to the Idea Hotel. Rita and I were down to our last option: Back to Terminal 1 and wait for the 6 p.m. shuttle to the hotel.

We stood there waiting for the return of the shuttle bus — no traffic on the road. We must have looked pretty discouraged or lost. A taxi cab came down the road and stopped. “Hey, where you go?” It was a handsome young man about 25 who stepped out of his cab. “We don't have any Euros...thank you so we can't afford to ride your cab.”

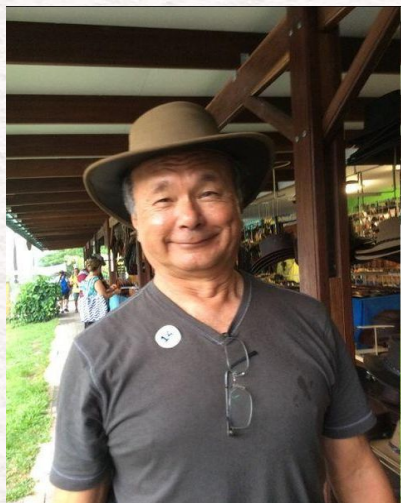
“Where you go?” Rita showed him our hotel reservation paper. He looked at it. “Get in!” I told him we didn't have any Euros. He opened his trunk and loaded our suitcases into the car, and we got in...it felt like we were going for another ride. About two hundred yards back in the direction of Terminal 1, there was a small road that looked more like a driveway than a street. He turned. We were in what looked like a tough work-a-day kind of apartment-filled neighborhood. Rita and I looked at each other....

The cab made three quick turns and there it was, The Idea Hotel! The cabbie got out of the car and took out our suitcases. We got out of the car, and I tried to insist he take the last two Euros I had left. He wouldn't take the money. As he stepped in his cab he said, “Alla I want you to do is remember me.” He drove off in a flash.

How could we forget that nameless young man who stopped to help two lost strangers for nothing more than the goodness of his heart? Any bad feelings I'd had about cab drivers in general melted. In this world, just like in a cab, there are diamonds that shine through the muddy darkness...yes, Rita and I will remember this cab driver. And I hope you'll remember him too!

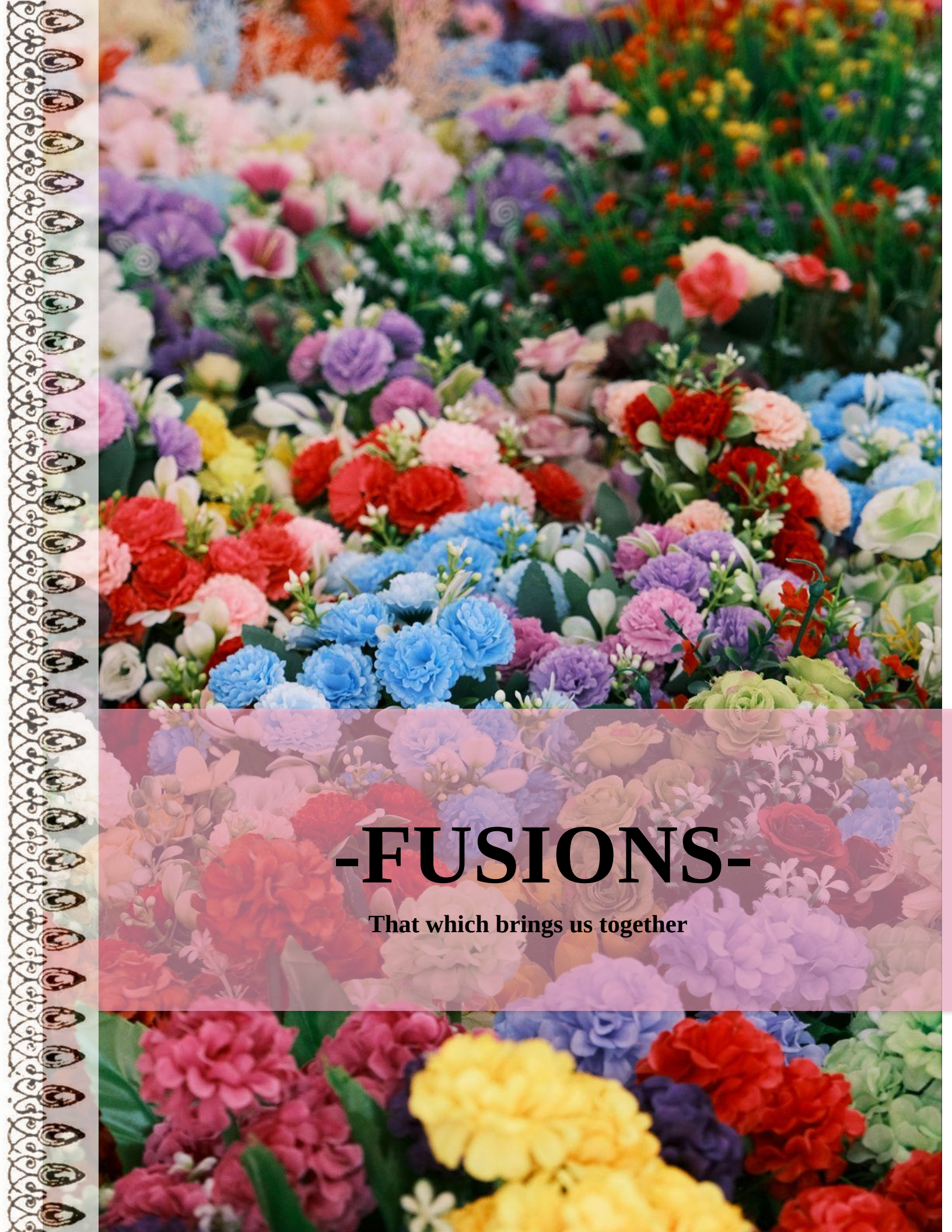
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*Contributor to be contacted regarding  
permission to tell this work*



**About the Author-** John Shockley is a freelance writer specializing in short-story fiction, non-fiction, and biographies. He coordinates the Free Access Coalition (FAC), a non-profit organization, whose goal is free public access to beaches, recreational areas, housing, and employment in Hawaii. Shockley graduated from University of Hawaii with a Journalism major. He worked at Anheuser-Busch Inc. for 27 years ending his career at the Los Angeles Brewery as the Plant Manager's assistant in charge of Brewery Communications. His wife, Rita, supports his work with the FAC.





# **-FUSIONS-**

**That which brings us together**



# If Not Now, When?

by Nancy Wang, *Eth-Noh-Tec*

“If not now, when?”

We have all heard this saying in our lives, maybe from our teachers, a mentor, friends, associates, and even from ourselves. I know I have said it to myself when faced with a difficult choice.

Every day, right now, there are news releases that attack my sense of justice, fairness. Disgust with the human race vomits from deep in my belly. It is easy to just collapse into despair and hopelessness.

But I ask myself -- what are my choices to be a part of the solution?

Nancy, figure it out!

“If not now, when?”

Recently, in order to understand the dynamics of the human behavior we are witnessing daily, I have researched “projection of our worse thoughts,” that leads to “fear and blame” to living in “survival mode,” which I think ultimately leads to what we are experiencing today.

But even as I understand one mechanism of the many horrors of our world, particularly in the United States, what can I do? I’m just a little storyteller! Are my stories enough? And if I speak a truth that might offend, how do I navigate that?

Now I recall two other stories I wrote. One is Red Altar -- the multi-media presentation of the first three generations of my family that started the fishing industry in the Monterey Bay Area of California in 1850. It covers not just the successes and the opportunities afforded my family, but also the discrimination and the laws passed against them, and what was happening around the country that impacted the Chinese. My family had to reinvent themselves over and over again with each law that was passed to render the Chinese incapable of making a living and thus hoping they would go away. One such law: “Chinese are forbidden to fish during the day.” We fished at night for squid. Ingenuity, persistence.

But, after one performance in northern rural California, I received a letter stating, “How would you like to sit through over an hour of what the Chinese did to white people?” In earnest, that story might be at the most one minute long: “Once upon a time, Chinese came onto the shores of America to make a living for themselves and their families. They did this in many ways -- mining, logging, fishing, cooking, laundering -- all in their own villages, staying safe and strong in numbers. They did this due to the comfort of “birds of a feather” and to withstand the animosity it often rendered. But they never retaliated ... hmmm... the end.”

In my “Takashi’s Dream” story about an atom bomb survivor’s journey from rage and revenge to forgiveness, a Michigan audience member wrote: “Perhaps you noticed that my row of women did not give you a standing ovation. My brother lies at the bottom of Pearl Harbor!”

Despite these responses, now I have created “Strong Like Bamboo,” because bamboo is flexible yet when several stalks of bamboo are tied together, they are strong and cannot be broken.





We must come together.

Tellers for “Strong Like Bamboo” share their stories of discrimination; how each met the challenge and came through it. These stories must not only inspire but inform. These stories must let those out there know they are not alone, and by sharing their own stories, the burden of discrimination can be lifted. When that burden is lifted, energy used to carry the burden that is now lighter is available to continue life with hope.

And hopefully, like the concentric circles that ripple out when a lone pebble is tossed into a body of water, your story will cast concentric rings rippling with hope that will have its own lone pebble with its own circles. Imagine numerous “one pebble” tosses on each concentric ring that your story has provided, and that on each of your concentric rings there are numerous lone pebbles with their own concentric circles, and those rings have their own pebbles with concentric rings and so on and so on. Ripples through time. Ripples that inspire. Ripples that inform. Ripples that make a difference one person, one story at a time.

Uncomfortable responses to our stories always present an opportunity to dialogue and inspire mutual understanding. We must dare to speak truth, but truth that inspires. The possibility of the power of one meaningful -- even difficult -- story, is a choice whose time is here more than ever.

I have challenged myself to be BOLD!

“If not now, when?”

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*Contributor to be contacted regarding  
permission to tell this work*



In the 1970s, Nancy Wang began as a dancer, choreographer, and teacher of modern dance under her mentor Gloria Unti, SF Performing Arts Workshop, who taught her to create work that is meaningful and addresses the burning issues of our time. In 1981, she began her partnership with Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo with the first Southern Filipino traditional Kulintang music and dance school of Northern California. In 1987, they began their unique style of movement storytelling as Eth-Noh-Tec, focusing on pan-Asian folktales and contemporary Asian American stories. Nancy is also an author, event producer, a retired psychotherapist, mother of two and grandma of one! Her next event is her third and multicultural Strong Like Bamboo on May 2nd and May 3rd, 2026. For more information: [www.ethnohtec.org](http://www.ethnohtec.org)



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# Storytellers for Social Justice: An Open International Gathering of Concerned Artists

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*by Jo Radner*

Last summer at the National Storytelling Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, a large group of storytellers met at lunchtime to express frustration with the U.S. government's policies and the world's horrors and to consider how we could use our powerful art form to foster justice. Despite the chaos in that noisy cafeteria, it was clear that our passions, worries, and priorities are strong and wide and that we all are seeking ways to engage as storytellers at this hard point in our history.

Since that time, an open group has formed online, instituted a secure listserv to enable discussions, resource sharing, and announcements, and initiated a series of Zoom meetings on the last Sunday of each month to exchange experiences and ideas. We are still discovering new ways to support each other and share resources.

SSJ welcomes all storytellers who share our concerns and interests. If you would like to receive notices of our monthly gatherings and share in our online discussions and sharing of resources, we would be glad to add you to the listserv; just send a message to Jo Radner ([jradner@american.edu](mailto:jradner@american.edu)).

We look forward to the work of this powerful collaboration –

*Contributor to be contacted regarding  
permission to tell this work*

*Judith Black  
Laura Simms  
Jo Radner*

## Mission Statement

Storytellers for Social Justice is an ad hoc group of professional storytellers from around the globe. We want to use our art to promote issues of human, animal, and earth rights and justice. As Václav Havel said, let us “illuminate, waken, liberate” for a better world.

We function on two levels:

We collectively gather stories that address these issues and make them available to the membership; and

We maintain a community commons where we gather for mutual support, contemplation, and discussion of various techniques and experiences that can move our mission.

These are our community norms:

- Listening with an open heart and mind to everyone's input.
- Stepping up and stepping back to allow everyone to participate.
- Maintaining respect and confidentiality for people's personal stories and experiences, not sharing them outside the group except with permission from the teller.



## About the Author

Jo Radner has been studying, teaching, telling, and collecting stories most of her life, and has performed from Maine to Hawaii to Finland. Professor emerita at American University, Jo returned to Maine as a freelance storyteller and oral historian. She is past president of the American Folklore Society and the National Storytelling Network. **Website:**

[joradner.com](http://joradner.com)



A vibrant yellow bird with a black cap and wings is perched on a thin stem of a pink cosmos flower. The bird is facing left. The background is a soft-focus field of many pink cosmos flowers under a clear blue sky. A semi-transparent pink banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text.

**-THE HALL *of the* BARD-**



# River Town Barge and the Long Walk Home

by Joan Leotta

Watching from our small house on the hill,  
I see them trudging home  
in early evening haze and cool dark from  
building roads, laying pipes, toiling in factories.  
Peering through the waning light, I  
am seeking my dad's weary step, work-  
blackened face. Scanning the scene,  
my eyes feast on the houseboat barge  
docked beside the well-worn path.  
It's been there several days.  
Yesterday, before light began to pale,  
I slipped away from Mother's  
watchful eye, ran down the hill  
to see for myself what treasure  
lurked within the barge-house rooms.  
When I arrived, there was no gangplank.  
So, I called out, two women came out,  
laid a plank, and invited me to board this wonder,  
a mansion of many rooms  
floating on the river—peopled by  
ladies dressed in red crinolines and  
silks—high skirts, low tops  
revealing breasts that could feed a  
hundred babes or more.  
These ladies invited me  
to partake of sarsaparilla, to peruse glittery  
rooms, some with beds, some with green felt  
tables.  
“For cards and other games,” they told me.  
On board, river's dampness was dispelled.  
Instead a festive glow pervaded.  
I wanted to ask why the men  
trudging home don't stop for this hospitality,  
why the plank remains withdrawn during  
early evening, but I do not. Instead, I see the  
glow of dusk beginning and take my leave  
before those first workers can  
begin their pilgrimage to home,  
before my mother realizes I am gone.

My new friends helped me back to shore,  
where I regained the muddy path,  
trudging home, considering their advice  
not to seek them out again.  
“Besides,” one woman told me,  
“In a few days we'll be gone. The sheriff sees to it,  
that we keep moving”  
So, tonight as I watch the path,  
Wondering when I'll spot my dear father, I  
think about when the boat's light will  
be off, when it sails off, taking with it all  
evening light along my view of the river path.

*Previously Published in Gargoyle , Issue 75, 2022*







"Growing up, the only story poems I knew about were lengthy folk ballads that used rhyme as aids to memory and performance or the occasional country music song. Then, I began to realize that many poems, including free verse, are stories -- some have a more complete arc than others. This one came to me from seeing a painting of a barge moored along a river and thinking about my own hometown of Pittsburgh where hills are managed with sets of stairs that once led from tenement houses (now mansions!) to the streets below and to the river itself.

I had read something about barges that were floating brothels and so the tale of a young child (boy or girl, take your pick, I left it vague on purpose!) who sees one while watching for her dad to mount the steps to the road on the top of the hill and home, is curious, and investigates. I'm curious about most things and one of the best things about writing poems and stories is that when there is no precise intersection between facts and observation, I can invent my own.

*Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work*



About the Author- Joan Leotta an award-winning teller and writer, encourages with words through pen and performance. Her folk tale performances have delighted many over the years and recently she has begun to do one-woman shows. Her latest show features Louisa May Alcott, writer and Civil War Nurse. Joan's performance has been deemed a success by both civil war history buffs and literary folk. She has versions for children, for nurses, for seamstresses, and for lovers of literature, for nurses, and for civil war historians.

Contact her at [joanleotta@gmail.com](mailto:joanleotta@gmail.com)



# The Man Who Drew Walls

*By Jim Kissane*



From Urschel Laboratories demonstration film, circa 1939, Valparaiso, Indiana

Let me take you to a cold Indiana morning, late in 1938.

You're standing behind a small brick warehouse in Valparaiso, Indiana. The ground is half-frozen, a scab of mud over gravel. Your breath hangs in the air in quick white puffs, and the wind knifes through your coat as it slides down from the rail yard. Coal smoke lies low over the town, tangled with the sour, wet smell of fresh cement from somewhere close by. From inside the warehouse comes the rattle of belts, the clank of steel on steel, and the stubborn whine of a motor dragging itself up to speed.

And then you see it.

In the middle of the scruffy lot stands a tall steel mast, bolted into a rough concrete footing. From its side, a long, jointed arm reaches out, like the hand of some giant clock that forgot how to tell time and decided to build instead. At the far end of that arm hangs a steel box as big as a steamer trunk, all slots and paddles and spinning disks, shuddering as the machine shivers awake. Beside it, a man with round glasses and a grease-stained work coat wipes his hands on a rag, squints at the contraption, and mutters, "All right. Let's see if you'll build a wall."

That man is William E. Urschel, gooseberry-snipper, slicer-maker, head of a small laboratory of misfit machines in Valparaiso. He's spent thirty years turning tedious human motions into the work of gears and shafts: snipping berries, slicing vegetables, cutting ice cream bars. Today, his target is older than history itself. Brick on brick, trowel on mortar, he's watched masons inch their walls skyward, and it has begun to offend him. The country is still shaking off the Great Depression, families are doubling up in tired houses, and walls are still being stacked as pharaohs did.



So, in his notebooks, he sketched a different rhythm. One point fixed in the earth; one arm sweeping around it like a compass. No bricks, no blocks, just a continuous strip of compressed concrete, drawn onto the ground in smooth, rising circles. If you could print a building the way you draw a circle, why shouldn't a machine do the drawing?

Inside the shop, the first trials were ugly. The mix was wrong: too dry, then too wet. Dust burst from the steelhead in choking clouds; grit stung eyes and throats. The machine coughed, stalled, chattered like it might shake itself apart. Strips of concrete fell from the mouth of the box and collapsed into sorry heaps. The crew laughed, the way men laugh when the boss's dream looks like a joke. Somewhere under the failure, on a short, accidental stretch where moisture and timing aligned, the material came out different: tight, smooth, stubborn as stone.

That small success is why you're here, in the wind, behind the brick warehouse this morning.

They've scraped the lot clean, leveled a patch of frozen mud, and dusted a perfect circle in white lime on the ground, twenty feet across, enough for a little round building. The mast stands planted in the exact center. The boom hovers over the chalk like a divining rod, its steel head poised a few inches above the earth. Off to one side, a gasoline engine coughs, catches, and settles into a steady grind. Belts twitch, then race. The box at the end of the arm begins to tremble with a hard, mechanical pulse.

Urschel tips the first shovels full of his dry, sandy mix into the hopper. It rattles down to the spinning paddles. For a heartbeat, nothing happens. Then the machine finds its voice.

Thump-thump-thump, the tampers inside the head start their brutal music. A higher, insect buzz rises as plates vibrate, shaking grains of aggregate tighter together. Slowly, almost shyly at first, the boom begins to creep along the circle, driven by hidden gears at the mast's base. And from the lower lip of that steel mouth, something new in the world appears: a compact, rectangular strip of concrete, laid right onto the chalk line, firm enough that when a worker pokes it with his thumb, it doesn't sag.

You walk beside the moving arm, coat collar up, glove resting on the metal. The boom hums under your hand like a big cat purring. Boots crunch on gravel as the men fall in behind, eyes glued to the growing strip. One chuckles, not quite willing to believe. Another lets out a low, "Well, I'll be..." as the chalk vanishes under an unbroken concrete ring.

"Do another pass," someone calls.

A lever creaks; the boom lifts a few inches. Now the head lays a second strip directly on top of the first. The tampers not only compact the fresh material but also drive it into the course below, knitting the layers into a dense, seamless wall. If you sliced it open, you'd see faint, compressed bands like tree rings pressed flat, history accumulating not year by year, but revolution by revolution.

Round and round the boom swings, hour after hour. The yard fills with the taste of dust and gasoline, the steady heartbeat of the tampers, the soft hiss of concrete sliding free. At knee height, the ring feels like a boundary. At waist height, it feels like a room. By the time the wall reaches your shoulder, the space inside that circle has turned into a place you could inhabit; no blueprint, no bricklayer's line, just a machine's patient spiral and a man's refusal to accept that walls must always be stacked.

By season's end, a complete circular building stands behind the little warehouse, born out of motion and rhythm instead of trowels and bricks. It looks modest enough: a squat ring of gray, open to the sky. But it's also a quiet act of rebellion. It says, clearly, physically: a wall can be drawn.



In October 1941, Urschel captures the idea in the driest possible poetry, claims and figures, cross-sections and elevations, and sends his “Machine for Building Walls” off to the U.S. Patent Office. While the paperwork crawls through Washington, history roars past. Pearl Harbor burns, the country pivots to war, and Washington comes knocking in Valparaiso: forget experimental houses, we need precision parts. Urschel Laboratories pivots with it, shifting from clever food-machinery to shell-loading devices and aircraft components.

Out back, the lonely round building just endures rain and snow.

On January 25, 1944, the patent finally arrives, crisp and official: William E. Urschel has, on paper, invented a new way to build walls. On the ground, America is busy fighting on two oceans, and no one in power is eager to rewrite building codes for round, machine-drawn concrete shells. After the war, the building boom comes, but it marches in straight lines, timber frames, brick veneers, concrete blocks, row after row of familiar geometry.

Engineers and officials come to see the strange machine. They squint through the dust, nod, murmur, calculate the headaches: permits, insurance, roofs on circles, subdivisions of squares. Banks like what they already understand; this spinning arm looks like trouble. So the wall-building machine never leaves the experimental yard. The patent lapses into history. The ring of concrete weather-stains and sun-bleaches. Urschel’s company thrives on slicers and dicers instead, until its equipment becomes an invisible backbone of food processing around the world.

And yet, that odd little round building behind the warehouse refuses to vanish from the story. Decades before anyone utters the phrase “3-D printed house,” this machine had already traced shelter from thin air, one compressed course at a time. It stands as a monument not to profit, but to audacity, the audacity to look at the most ordinary thing in the world, a wall, and say: what if we did it completely differently?

So when you think of William E. Urschel, don’t just picture the man who mechanized gooseberries and vegetables. Picture him on that raw Indiana morning, hand on the shivering boom, watching a continuous strip of concrete follow a chalk line and become a room. Hear the tamper’s heartbeat in your chest. Feel the dry mix between your fingers. And ask yourself: in our own age of housing crises and cautious institutions, what are we still building brick by brick, not because we must, but because we’re afraid to imagine that a wall could be drawn instead of stacked?

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*Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work*



#### **About the Author**

Imagine stepping back into a “time machine” transporting you to a bygone industrial era. That’s what Jim is best known for. A historic storyteller and published author, he breathes new life into forgotten accounts, and obscure individuals of Industrial America [1850s-1950s], painting vivid portraits of a colorful bygone America. **Website:** [JimKissane.com](http://JimKissane.com)



# Feets of Courage

by Judith Heineman

*Inspired by Mocacine by Paolo Nazareth*

Taking one painful  
Step at a time  
Feet burning  
Ankles swollen  
Toes tingling  
Loss of all feeling  
Relentlessly  
Lifting one leg after the other  
Each footfall placed  
Precisely  
Judiciously  
Avoiding  
Jagged rocks  
And loose stones  
Not making a sound  
Trudging onward  
Gaining a yard  
A mile an inch  
When your body cries out  
It cannot take another step  
You climb higher  
There are no paths  
You forge your own route  
Bordering freedom  
Flimsy footwear  
Disintegrates  
You arrive barefoot  
At journey's end  
And wash the dust off  
Your feet



## About the Author

Judith Heineman is an international award winning storyteller, Chicago Moth winner, 20-year producer of Chicago's Tellabration!, co-chair of the National Storytelling Conference in Chicago in 2003, and presenter of numerous workshops at regional and national conferences. Judith is a co-founder of the Los Angeles Women's Theatre Festival and toured with the NY Poetry Performance Ensemble for years.

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tg



# Almost Haiku

By John Shockley

There was light, dimmed by the greens and browns. And looking up, I saw, between the greens, the deep blue. From the blue, light tumbled down. All the while, calls of the sparrow filled the air.

And in the light, upon the brown, a small flower sprouted. And the light tumbled, the sparrow called, and the flower bloomed.

Slow, ever so slowly, as it always does, gray drifted over the blue and covered the light. And the greens and the browns turned sullen.

The flower sighed, “Maybe another time” and slumbered in the shadow.

And the sparrow sat quietly and waited for the light to return again.

## Haiku

By John Shockley

Over barren fields  
Hot and dry rocky hills  
Dreams go wandering still

*Contributor to be contacted regarding  
permission to tell this work*



**About the Author-** John Shockley is a freelance writer specializing in short-story fiction, non-fiction, and biographies. He coordinates the Free Access Coalition (FAC), a non-profit organization, whose goal is free public access to beaches, recreational areas, housing, and employment in Hawaii. Shockley graduated from University of Hawaii with a Journalism major. He worked at Anheuser-Busch Inc. for 27 years ending his career at the Los Angeles Brewery as the Plant Manager's assistant in charge of Brewery Communications. His wife, Rita, supports his work with the FAC.



The image features a decorative border on the left side with a repeating black and white floral pattern. The background is a vibrant blue sky with several yellow and pink cosmos flowers in various stages of bloom. A semi-transparent purple horizontal band is positioned across the middle of the image, serving as a backdrop for the text.

# **-HEALING SPRINGS-**



# Christmas 1999

*by Rob Morton*



Of the many jobs I've had over the years, few bring so many opinions from people as did the time I spent working as a child welfare worker in Florida. I did that for four years, starting in August of 1999. I worked out of Columbia County, Florida, but I got to see roughly half the state by the time I moved back to the forensic psychiatric hospital I worked at later (different stories for another time).

Yes, I was *THAT* kind of child welfare worker. The Man, HRS (Health and Rehabilitation Services), DCF (Department of Children and Families), and my personal favorite -- government agent. I worked with the people who took other people's kids away from them. Sometimes, I had to do the taking. Usually I was the one trying to help people get their kids back. Sometimes we succeeded. Sometimes we didn't.

I'd get one of three responses when I told people what I was doing for work. For those who had the wit and wisdom to keep their negative opinions (see above) to themselves, most people would either just smile and change the subject, or they would tell me how much they admired that I did such a needed and difficult job. I was never comfortable with the people who were "proud" of me, because I never felt like they knew what the really hard parts of the job were. Everybody thinks that the close contact with so much pain and harm is what burns people out, but honestly it was the sheer volume of work that got to most of us. Not enough workers, too many kids. Never enough time.

The foster parents in each county organized into foster parent associations, often to coordinate events for the kids in their care. They were a very important part of our work, and before I say another word, I want to say that I met some of the best people that I've ever met who were our foster parents. This becomes relevant later in the story.



I started the job in August. By December I had my own caseload of about 20 kids (it grew to 35 in later years) in a position where twelve was supposed to be the maximum caseload per worker, according to federal guidelines. Some of the kids on my caseload were in family placements instead of licensed foster homes, but I still had all the badass teenagers because I was 6' tall. Social work works differently at some altitudes, and I was often called upon a lot in times of conflict.

On the morning of December 10, I was in my office watching paperwork grow on my desk like an invasive life form when one of our supervisors came to my door and announced that we were going to have an emergency staff meeting in five minutes. Even as dramatic as our jobs could be, this was unusual.

When I got to the meeting, all twelve of us case workers were there, also an unusual event (half of us in the field at any one time was common). The boss got right to the point of her meeting, and the news was bad. She informed us that the local foster parent association, which had reliably arranged and conducted the annual foster care Christmas party since roughly 11 B.C.E., had completely dropped the ball. There was no Christmas party planned. No venue, no food, no presents, no nothing. The kids in care had already been told that their party was going to be on the Saturday before Christmas—about 10 days away. We had a total of sixty kids in care at that time, 24 over the age of 12, expecting a party.

We spent the next half hour doing some of the best social work we could muster. I was still in grad school taking night classes twice a week as were several of us. Trying to think, think, who has stuff? Who would give us stuff? Everyone had at least one “lead” they wanted to check on and we agreed to get started figuring out who to beg from and how. We had no money, there was no Christmas fund or check we could apply for, in the ten days we had.

I remembered seeing some collection cans on a counter at a gym that was near where I lived, an hour away in Gainesville. I said I would find out about getting us some space there. Even if we got a few dollars in time, it would be something. I later found out, however, that this was a no-go, and the gym owner was moving the cans that were already there. However, I did get a lead about a gym member who did charity work at her (expensive) private middle / high school, with students, as a class. The next day we spoke on the phone, and I explained the situation, including the fact that these kids were from another community. She asked me to meet with her at her school the following morning to discuss some options they might have to help us.

As I was driving to the school, I noticed that there was another school on the same property, an elementary school. I parked and met with the teacher right on time. She had great news: their charity fund needed a spend-down before the end of the year. A \$500 spend down. As she and I spoke we agreed that they would focus on the 24 teenagers we had on our party list. I thought that, if any of my coworkers made a strike like this, it would be easier to find stuff for little kids too. This was in 1999, \$500 would buy each kid a fuzzy hoodie and a music CD apiece. The students would tell us the items (they'd know what was cool) and we would have them ready to pick up the Thursday before the party. I walked back to my car, kinda shocked. Wow! I just did Christmas shopping for 24 foster kids.

As I was leaving, I almost passed the elementary school. I pulled in on a whim, feeling like the dice were hot in my hand. Maybe they could collect a few toys or something.



I went to the office, and the three little office ladies took me straight to the principal's office. Hmm. I have a master's degree, how am I still ending up in the principal's office? But he was very nice and eager to help once I'd told him the story thus far. I reinforced to him that we had roughly a week to get this together, and any little help would still be a real help. Obviously, there's no charity club in an elementary school, but then he remembered that their Christmas newsletter was going to the printer in an hour. He offered to put in a small piece with our story and see if anyone pitched in. I left feeling really good about the morning's work.

As time went on and the Thursday before Party Day drew closer, every one of my coworkers had met with outrageous successes. The response we got from that community was nothing short of epic. A venue, catering, gifts from three different stores -- all fell into place for us. We had to ask for help from our legal department to keep track of the cash donations. We got enough non-gift, in kind donations of kid stuff that we were able to establish and stock an entire empty office as a clothes closet with non-perishable food and baby items including formula. I worked there until July of 2003 and I never saw that pantry empty. That Thursday morning, my unit had probably the highest morale we'd had in ages.

That morning, I drove to the high school. As I passed the elementary school, I reminded myself to stop by and see if their newsletter had got us anything. The Key Club teacher at the high school met me with two dozen CDs and two dozen sweaters, which went into the trunk of my car. I remember being distinctly glad I'd cleaned the car out the night before. The packages all fit easily into the trunk. I thanked the teacher profusely and promised her an update on the party at the start of the new year.

I drove up and parked right in front of the elementary school. It was the last day of the semester for them too, and there were people coming and going. The front office, which had been modestly decorated for the holidays, now looked exactly like the inside of Santa's bag. Presents were everywhere -- piled on desks and tables and bookcases, all along the walls on the floor. I saw other piles in the back office on a table. When the little office lady saw me gaping, she said, "Oh, thank GOD you're here! Let me go get some help!" And off she went, coming back with the other two office ladies and a maintenance guy. That's when I realized what I was looking at: all of these presents, real presents and not decorations, were for our kids. I saw some tags, "BOY, AGE 3-5", and "GIRL AGE 4-6". It probably wasn't two hundred presents but there were easily one hundred small ones stacked off together around the tree in addition to bigger presents.



They proceeded to fill my car with packages. They filled the rest of the trunk. They filled the back seat to the point where I had to build a little tunnel in them to see out the rearview mirror. They filled the passenger's seat, to eye level with me as I sat in the driver's seat.

As the last of the presents were tucked away, the principal came out. He said, "We got that word out for you, and here's what they said," pointing to my car. He then handed me an envelope. I looked inside. Inside was \$112 in paper money and what was later counted to be \$16 in quarters. I was speechless, but he saw me looking at the envelope, curious about all the change.

He said, "The kids were told to tell their parents about your foster kids so they could donate. The kids themselves took turns giving their milk money all week."

I am one hundred percent sure I said something with the appropriate gratitude and professionalism, but I couldn't tell you a word today. I was stunned. Fished with dynamite stunned. I kept looking around the car all the way to the office. I was glad I was alone for the ride into work. I now had at least three presents for every kid in foster care in Columbia County, Florida, in my car. All chosen and provided by kids and families that didn't even live in their city, but who knew that their own Christmas was taken care of, and methodically saw to it that the kids I worked with were taken care of, too.

I got to the office and rounded up several of my coworkers, who were assembling our collected Christmas. One of the ladies was Fran, who was a few years older than some of us but liked to think she was wise and crusty.

Fran, upon seeing me: "Well damn, Rob, what took ya so long?"

Me: "Shut up, YOU were crying. Come help me get this stuff out of the car."

So we went out to my car. I don't remember who said what first, but they all lost it when they realized what I had. I do recall Fran saying, "Jeeesus, Rob, did you rob the Grinch after he knocked off the Whos?!?"

The party went off without a hitch. The people who were there all agreed that it was the best Christmas party that any of these kids had ever seen. By a lot. Future iterations of the local foster parent association spent years throwing awesome parties in later years, trying to live down how a bunch of social workers threw a bash. Several of my coworkers and three different foster moms invited me to our party, and I declined all. Last thing those kids needed was to see a grown man cry for Christmas.

Once the school year resumed, I made it a point to call the folks at these schools to express everyone's gratitude. The teacher at the high school asked me if I could come by the next morning to tell the kids how their \$500 was used. Of course, I thought. Class club will have like 30 kids, right? No sweat. Most of my public speaking at that time was in a courtroom. A classroom would be a nice change of venue.

The next morning, I pulled up to the school (waving as I did ever after when passing by the elementary school) and parked near the classroom where her office had been. She came and walked me, instead, through a door marked, "AUDITORIUM".

The entire school, which I was later told consisted of just over 600 students grades 7-12, was filing into the auditorium. I was going to say thank you on behalf of five dozen kids to six hundred other kids. I don't remember a lot of whatever I said to them that day, but I do remember comparing these real world events with Christmas miracles, and I emphasized how much good had come from one thought to ask one more question in a situation that needed it.



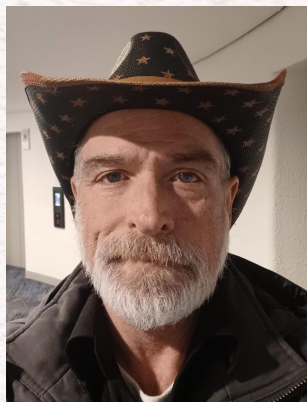
Think about this for a minute. Remember what my job was when I wasn't involved in saving Christmas? This here was January, baby, and here I was in front of over 600 kids (and probably another 50 teachers and staff) who knew EXACTLY what my job was. "HRS" and "DCF" being whispered by kids who learned to whisper in sawmills. Remember hearing about the kid who threatens to call an abuse hotline because he couldn't have the last cookie? And the mom or dad says, "GO AHEAD! CALL EM! HERE, I'LL DIAL THE NUMBER!" (Editorial Note: I tried that with my mom because I had to stand in the corner when I was five, and even I laughed at it an hour later) Well here I was, the guy at the other end of that call. To talk to them about a party for sixty other kids who'd already had the misfortune of meeting me. For whom they helped sponsor Christmas.

Then I invited them to ask me questions. This was another of the many things I was doing this morning with a shocking lack of preparation.

Hands popped up, few at first, then more. I talked to those kids for about fifteen minutes, being honest but steering away from anything too heavy for the room. They were intensely curious, and once they realized that I was not going to take them by the hand and put them in my car and take them away forever and ever and ever, the questions were mostly concerning the kids who got the presents, and how they were doing.

I managed to get out of there before I said anything inexcusably stupid and went back to the office. The day went on like it did, and the days went on like they do.

*Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work*



Rob Morton is a middle aged social worker currently living in the Adirondack park in upstate New York. He grew up in Massachusetts in a haunted house and lived in Florida until 2021. Recently, he remarried to a lovely engineer, who lives to travel. He has two adult children and a cat that high-fives for treats. [robert.morton.02571@gmail.com](mailto:robert.morton.02571@gmail.com) He is also on Facebook and Instagram





# REMEMBERING ALEX FYFE



*by Liz Weir MBE*



Twenty five years ago I bought an old cottage with derelict farm buildings with a view to turning it into a space where people could join me for storytelling.

After a lot of blood sweat and tears, I created the studio at Ballyeamon, where every Saturday night we would host music and storytelling sessions .

The beauty of our live sessions was that, as well as foreign guests staying at my Hostel accommodation, local people came to share stories and music. One of those people was Alex Fyfe. Every week this octogenarian turned up with a twinkle in his eye, clutching his beloved banjo mandolin, and play a range of tunes. Alex also had a sweet voice and sang songs including “I Couldn’t, No I Couldn’t,” “If I was the Man in the Moon,” and “The Blue Hills of Antrim.”

Alex became a firm favorite. Many of my guests would have photographs taken with him and talked about him long after they had returned home.

Then came COVID. All such in person activities had to stop, but I discovered Zoom. For the last six years, we have been zooming every Saturday night from Ballyeamon Barn across the world.



When we started zooming Alex went international and became a beloved character at Ballyeamon Barn. His family got him set up and from that day six years ago until three weeks before his death, Alex joined our online community of people from around the world for our Saturday night sessions.

Usually every week Alex would open the session with a tune on his banjo mandolin. Often he was joined by his son Brendan, a fine musician, singer, and songwriter. Occasionally, we even had Alex's grandchildren Aran and Isla joining us online, showing that musical talent spanned three generations.

Alex and his wife Patricia used to run a post office in the nearby village of Cargan. They had a shop, when I first moved here and Patricia was a woman, who loved poetry. It was so sad when she was diagnosed with dementia. Alex cared for her till her death.

Just before Christmas we heard with concern that Alex was in hospital and on 5th January he left us at the age of 91. Many Barn friends attended his funeral and the priest at his funeral even referred to his weekly attendance at the Barn sessions. One of our regular Barn attendees. Joan Leotta wrote a lovely poem about Alex showing the community spirit of the Barn session.

Some people say you can't create community on Zoom, but we did and continue to do so every Saturday night. Everyone is welcome.

We need listeners, as well as performers. It's great to see local people, as well as as well established names, being treated equally and receiving equal applause. Long may it continue.

---

*Contributor to be contacted regarding  
permission to tell this work*



Liz Weir is an Irish storyteller and was the first winner of the International Story Bridge Award from NSN. She has told her stories to people of all ages on five continents. Liz owns the Ballyeamon Barn, a tourist hostel and cultural centre located in the beautiful Glens of Antrim in Northern Ireland. She is the director of the Glens Storytelling Festival, a committee member of the Cape Clear International Storytelling Festival, and of Storytellers of Ireland. In 2019, Liz was awarded an MBE (Member of the British Empire) for her services to the arts and to education.



# Listening for Alex Fyfe This Morning (or I Hear His Music in the Fog)

*by Joan Leotta*

Having lived where the fog  
is so thick you cannot see  
a medieval cathedral in the piazza  
I've learned to listen in it,  
I've learned fog is more than a simple  
vapor curtain draping over damp  
sometimes snowy streets, cutting  
off familiar sights, sounds.  
I've learned fog  
is a privileged bit of weather,  
obscuring the ordinary,  
opening a way to see and hear  
at least shadows and sounds  
of other worlds. I've learned  
those on the other side  
rush to the fog curtains  
to peer at us, listen to us,  
sometimes call out to us, and if we  
are fortunate we can almost see  
departed loved ones and  
very often we can hear  
them talk, hear them sing to us  
through fog's gauzy shroud.

Strumming the strings, smiling  
out at all of us, Alex would pluck  
tunes that opened the gates  
of fairy land. Each week  
for many years, his banjo mandolin  
playing opened each Saturday's  
Ballyeamon Barn storytelling session.  
In my dreams I see the curve of his smile  
gracing cherubic creases, a touch of mischief  
as his own eyes danced to the music that  
put my head to nodding,  
fingers tapping with the rhythm, and  
tempted my feet to dance around the room.  
I'm sure his pure renditions  
of tunes from times long past  
encouraged even heavenly choirs to stop  
to listen, sure that his playing brought a  
smile and a nod of head to the rhythm from  
God Himself, High King of all Kings.





Yes, weekly, his fingers  
faithfully sent our ears  
old songs and ballads,  
to prepare us for a time of telling  
stories old and new, words  
also capable of bridging worlds.

I stood in the fog this morning,  
listening, listening, listening  
until my ears caught the  
plink, plink, plink,  
of his banjo mandolin.

In the fog, behind that thin barrier,  
his music still floats down  
from heaven where he now has  
assumed his place as Fiddler to the King.  
How do I know the barrier is thin?  
I know, because I heard Alex  
playing this morning through  
fog's lace curtain.  
Wherever there are people who love,  
appreciate his work, the sounds are there.  
We just need to listen in the fog.

Note: Indeed, once we've left this earth, time and space are no barrier  
to music played, stories told, to all things done and appreciated in love.  
I look forward to an eternity of being blessed by the music of Alex Fyfe (October 10, 1934 to  
January 5, 2026), who played the banjo mandolin in Ballyeamon Barn and elsewhere  
while on this earth and now plays in heaven so the angels and fairies can dance to his tunes.



*Contributor to be contacted regarding permission  
to tell this work*



About the Author- Joan Leotta an award-winning teller and writer, encourages with words through pen and performance. Her folk tale performances have delighted many over the years and recently she has begun to do one-woman shows. Her latest show features Louisa May Alcott, writer and Civil War Nurse. Joan's performance has been deemed a success by both civil war history buffs and literary folk. She has versions for children, for nurses, for seamstresses, and for lovers of literature, for nurses, and for civil war historians.  
Contact her at [joanletota@gmail.com](mailto:joanletota@gmail.com)



# How Carol Esterreicher Changed Me for the Better

by Rachel Hedman



Carol Esterreicher was a steadfast and luminous presence in the storytelling community. Her influence reached far beyond Utah, shaping storytellers, strengthening organizations, and elevating storytelling as a respected performing art.

In 2011, Carol received the National Storytelling Network ORACLE Award for Service and Leadership in the Western Region, honoring the profound and lasting impact of her dedication. She did not simply tell stories—she built platforms for others to tell theirs.

Carol was my “Story Buddy,” while I earned my Storytelling Masters at East Tennessee State University. Her feedback was detailed, encouraging, and exacting. She celebrated what was working, while carefully guiding me toward refinement. She understood that excellence required both courage and craft. Because of Carol, I grew not only in confidence—but in discipline.

One of her most transformative contributions was her workshop, NLP Storytelling: Circle of Excellence. As a Master Practitioner of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Carol adapted this process specifically for storytellers. Participants created a multi-sensory “virtual circle” they could step into before performance to access confidence, clarity, and memories of excellence. She often referenced the embedded circle from the original Ryman stage now housed at the Grand Ole Opry—a powerful symbol of stepping into legacy and excellence.

Every time I place my signature cap on my head before telling a story, I step into my Circle of Excellence. That practice is part of me now. That is Carol’s legacy in my life.

Carol faithfully supported youth storytelling, serving as a judge for Utah showcases that advanced tellers to national stages. She helped plan Story Swap gatherings, presented workshops and performances across multiple states, and shared folk tales from around the world with school and family audiences.



She was also a tireless advocate. When NowPlayingUtah.com lacked a Storytelling category, Carol persistently worked until “Storytelling” was added under Written and Spoken Word—ensuring storytellers could be recognized alongside other performing artists. What may have seemed small was, in truth, structural recognition for the art form she loved.

Carol’s emails and letters (always including the names of all my family members) carried her warmth and wit—once wrapping a DVD recording from my Eleanor Roosevelt 1-hour performance in “special bubble paper with good vibes” saved from her ORACLE Award packaging. She revised her stories with precision, showed up consistently, and believed deeply in the potential of others.

Her legacy lives on in the storytellers she mentored, the youth she encouraged, the stages she strengthened, and the circles of excellence she helped create.

And every time I step into mine, she stands there with me.







**-THAT'S AMAZING!-**

**Behind the scenes of great performers.**





# Six Feet Apart Productions: A Story of Connection

by Claire Hennessy and Regina Stoops

## THE TEAM



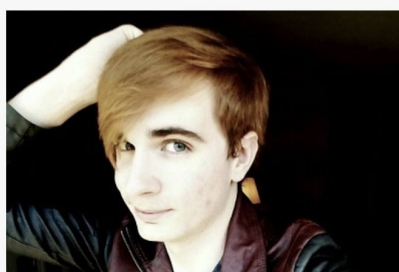
**Claire Hennessy**  
*Producer*



**Regina Stoops**  
*Producer*



**Mark "Bug" Hennessy**  
*Technical Guru*



**Tom Breese**  
*Graphic Design*

Six Feet Apart Productions was born out of a never-ending need to entertain and be entertained. Armed only with a Zoom account, a sketchy internet connection, and the combined technical knowledge of an eight-year-old, we (Claire Hennessy and Regina Stoops) decided to turn Shelter-in-Place into Entertainment-in-Place.

It was March of 2020, and the world went quiet almost overnight. Stages went dark, festivals vanished from calendars, and storytelling suddenly had nowhere to land. Like so many others, we were isolated, unsure, and dismayed, not only about what was happening in the world, but also with the loss of connection.

The idea for Six Feet Apart Productions came from a mutual friend who helped get us started and then sent us off on our own. We barely knew each other, but we knew storytelling, and we wanted to find a way to keep stories alive, so we decided to march boldly—and somewhat blindly—forward.





At the time, Claire was more familiar with the broader storytelling world, having attended festivals and seen nationally known tellers. Regina's experience leaned toward comedy and true personal storytelling. We brought different strengths, different aesthetics, and different levels of comfort with risk. What we shared was curiosity, stubborn optimism, and a willingness to learn in public.

One of our very first shows was a Bil Lepp special. Claire had seen him perform at a festival and simply asked, "Why not?" We're still not entirely sure Bil knew what he was agreeing to, but he said yes—and just like that, Six Feet Apart Productions had stepped onto the national virtual stage.

The early days were scrappy. Production values were... aspirational. But with the help of Claire's husband, Mark, the Tech Guru, and artistic son, Tom, we figured out a logo, adverts, borders and curtains, lighting and sound. Then we added our own theme song, courtesy of the immensely talented Julia Mark. Each show taught us something new, usually the hard way. But we were "on air," we were learning, and we were connecting people who wanted to be telling stories together.

During that first year, we hosted personal story open mics alongside curated shows featuring stories of all genres. We welcomed storytellers at every stage of their journey—from Moth GrandSlam winners like Nestor Gomez to people telling a story onstage for the very first time. Our virtual stage included internationally known tellers such as Andy Offutt Irwin, Sheila Arnold, Kim Weitkamp, Donna Washington, Megan Wells, Regi Carpenter, Paul Strickland, and award-winning folk tale storytellers including Diane Ferlatte, Charlotte Blake Alston, Liz Weir, Odds Bodkin and many more.

We were up for anything. We produced themed shows like *Black Stories Matter*, supported authors whose book launches suddenly had no bookstores, produced a show with the California Coalition of Women Prisoners and Drop LWOP (life without parole sentences), and created our monthly Open Mic StorySlam, where audiences voted for their favorite stories and winners advanced to our Stellar StorySlam. We said yes often, learned constantly, and trusted that the work would tell us where to go next.

Along the way, a community formed. Audiences returned week after week. Tellers became collaborators, cheerleaders, and friends. We launched WorkShop StorySwaps as a free space for anyone to test a story and receive thoughtful feedback. Watching storytellers grow—hearing a story evolve over months and then welcoming that teller onto a curated show—has been one of the great joys of Six Feet Apart Productions.

As our reach expanded, so did our partnerships. Six Feet Apart co-produces the Bay Area Storytelling Festival with the Storytelling Association of California and collaborates with organizations such as Better Said Than Done and FEAST. While the world shut down, ours opened up, introducing us to professional storytellers and producers from across the country and around the globe.

As years passed and in-person events returned, online storytelling became less prominent. The audience shrank. Energy shifted. We scaled back production while continuing our open mics and curated shows. It was hard to break even financially and more than once asked ourselves, "Why are we doing this?" The answer usually came during the show itself—when people logged on, laughed together, leaned in, and reminded us that community doesn't disappear just because the room is virtual.



We may no longer draw pandemic-era numbers, but what we have now is loyalty. Our audience feels like a group of friends gathering across time zones, showing up for stories because they matter.

In 2022, Claire signed Six Feet Apart up to help bring back the Bay Area Storytelling Festival, which had been on a pause for a few years. Obviously, she had no idea how much work it was going to be! Despite the long hours and stress, it has been an absolute joy to see how this much-loved Festival brings the storytelling community together by bringing nationally renowned storytellers to the Bay Area.

In 2024, Six Feet Apart Productions was honored with the National Storytelling Network's Oracle Award for Regional Service and Leadership Excellence. The recognition was deeply meaningful, not just as an acknowledgment of our work, but as validation that what we created had lasting value.

Recently, we've taken another step forward by launching an in-person show, *The Story Shuffle*, an open mic that doesn't only showcase true, personal stories, but welcomes all storytelling genres. We wanted to create space for traditional tales, folk tales, and stories that don't always fit neatly into existing formats. *The Story Shuffle* reflects what has always mattered to us—variety, inclusion, and honoring the full spectrum of storytelling.

Six Feet Apart Productions started because we didn't want stories to stop. It's still going because people keep showing up—for the stories, for each other, and for that feeling you get when something meaningful is shared out loud.

As we look to the future, we plan to continue producing both virtual and in-person events, nurturing new voices while celebrating established ones, and finding creative ways to keep storytelling accessible, friendly and fun, vibrant, and human. We don't know exactly where the road leads—but if there's one thing this journey has taught us, it's that all you really need to begin is a story, a willingness to listen, and a sketchy Internet connection!



British-born Claire Hennessy tells humorous true and made-up stories about her life and family and has won The Moth and the National Storytelling Festival Slam. She has been a featured teller at St Louis Storytelling Festival, Women's Storytelling Festival and Sacramento Valley Storytelling Festival. She's Board Member of SAC and helps organize the Bay Area Storytelling Festival. Regina Stoops is an award-winning storyteller, comedian, writer, and co-producer at Six Feet Apart Productions. She has been heard on the Risk! Podcast, The Moth Stage, NPR's Story Borealis, and the National Storytelling Festival Exchange Place. Regina tells stories infused with humor that illuminate the struggles and strengths of the human condition.

[sixfeetapartproductions@gmail.com](mailto:sixfeetapartproductions@gmail.com)



# -PUZZLES and GAMES-

"Curiouser and curiouser!"

## A Riddle For You

What is that which is  
The beginning of eternity,  
The end of time and space,  
The beginning of every end,  
The end of every race?

-SB



Last Issue's Answer: A Kiss



# LOST WORD SOCIETY

by Carmen Agra Deedy

Although it may not feel like it, rest assured that Spring is lurking about, waiting to strut and fret its hour upon the stage. In our desire for instant messaging and even swifter gratification, we may be losing our words. What if there was a Shakespearean AI Autocorrect? Perhaps it might give us back the luxury of words and the rapturous pleasure of sumptuous skewering.

“WTF?” becomes “Verily, I hath witnessed a spectacle so witless, mine very soul hath packed its belongings and fled mine body. ‘Tis as though reason itself hath tripped over a turnip and perished.”

“Forget you!” becomes “I do desire we may be better strangers.”

“Shut up!” becomes “More of your conversation would infect my brain.”

“Idiot!” becomes “You scullion! You rampallian! You fustilarian!”

“To be morally bankrupt” becomes “There is no more faith in thee than in a stewed prune.”

And to end an argument there is always, “You are not worth another word, else I’d call you knave. Would thou wert clean enough to spit upon. Out of my sight! Thou dost infect mine eyes.”

In each issue we will give you an archaic, obsolete, or otherwise “lost” word. We will make up three silly definitions for the word to amuse ourselves and hopefully you, dear reader. Your job is to make up your own definition for the lost word, just for fun. Next month, we will publish the true definition of the “lost” word and provide you with another one. Enjoy!

**FLYPE (v.) 17th century.** -If you were in charge of the world, what would this word mean?

1) “And yet you stand gawking, flypeing about like an errant school boy. Away, you three inch fool and go impress your sofa and hamster.”

2) “That trunk of humours, that bolting-hutch of beastliness, that swollen parcel of dropsies, that huge bombard of sack, that stuffed cloak-bag of guts, that grey Iniquity, that father ruffian--how dare he flype about hall as if he never left so many years ago?”

3) “I must tell you friendly in your ear, sell and flype when you can, you are not for all markets.”

Last Month’s Lost Word:

**CARRIWITCHET (n.) Archaic.**- a riddling question.

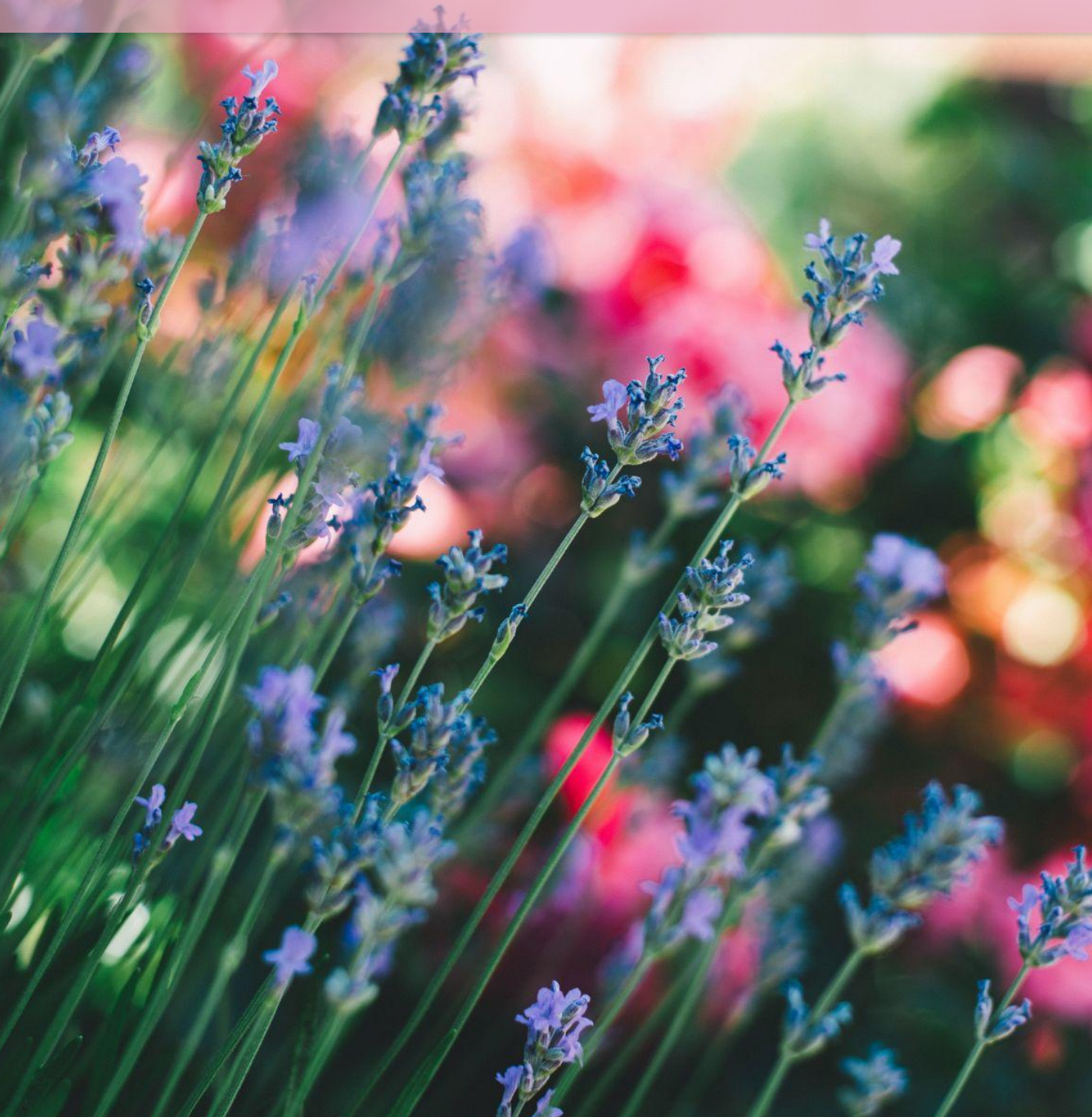


For more fun explore:  
**Carmen Agra Deedy’s LOST WORD SOCIETY**  
at [facebook.com/carmenagradeedy](https://facebook.com/carmenagradeedy)  
for new words every weekend!



# -STORY SIGHTINGS-

**What's going on?**  
**Organizations, Events, People and Much More**





SCHOOLS ~ LIBRARIES ~ MUSEUMS ~ EVENTS



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# Stages: My Life in Stories

by Jessica Piscitelli Robinson

## Stages

My Life in Stories



Jessica Piscitelli Robinson

At first glance, *Stages* is a memoir, a collection of amusing, moving stories that follow the author through her life.

As you reach the end of the book, of course, you see the larger picture, like an image arising out of mosaics.

It's also a masterclass on storytelling, and Jessica Piscitelli Robinson a master storyteller.

-author, Anne Janzer

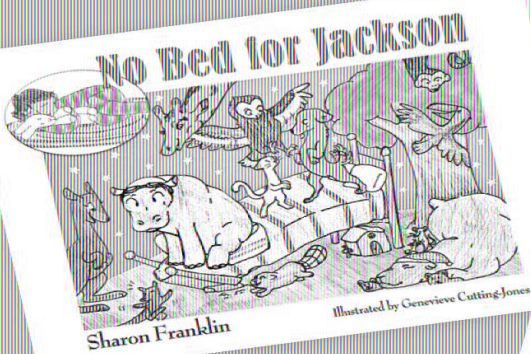
TUCKER



P R E S S

[jessicapiscitellirobinson.com](http://jessicapiscitellirobinson.com)





ISBN #979-8-218-31363-0

"Best story for kids who want to..." — Lori, 8-10  
 "I like this little..." — 8-10

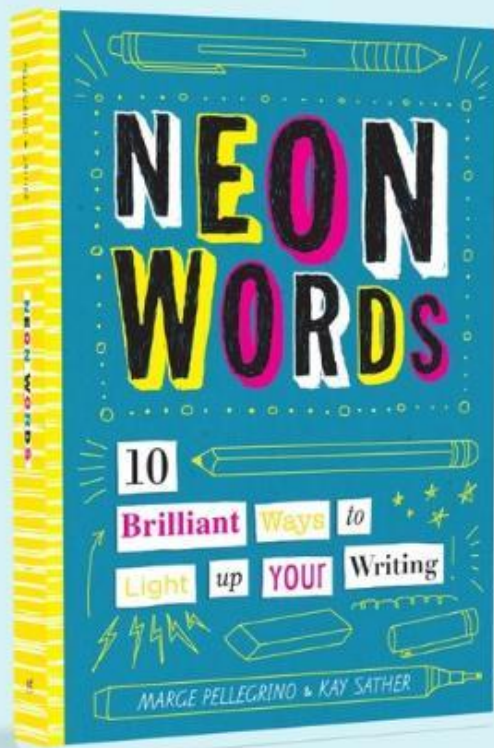
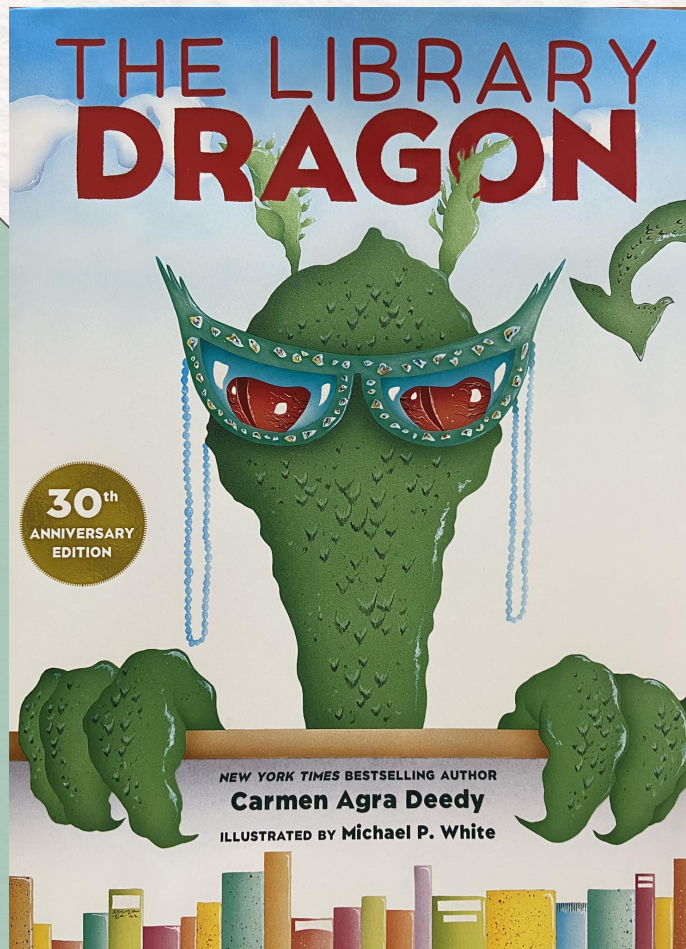
## The Strange Case of Lady Liberty



A long-form tandem  
theatrical storytelling  
investigation

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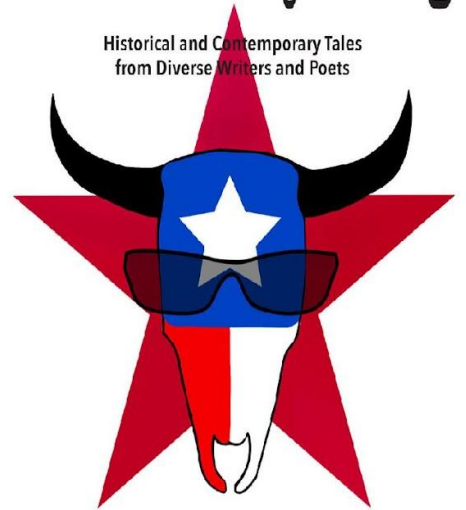
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"Many of the tellers have won a John Henry Faulk award. I smiled when I saw that, as I knew John Henry and his British-born wife Elizabeth when I first lived in Texas in my early twenties. I know that he would have loved these stories—many written for the ear and not the eyes, so you can almost hear them being told. He would have reveled in their charm, their variety, and poignancy. And so did I. I thoroughly recommend this marvelous book."

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The TSA Fortieth Anniversary Book Committee of Jaye McLaughlin, Hank Roubicek, Peggy Helmick-Richardson, and Chester Weems would like to make a special tribute to Parkhurst Brothers Publishers, for its part in development of *Forty Years of Texas Storytelling*. To them, this was more than a business project.

Ted Parkhurst has been a longtime supporter of the Tejas Storytelling Association. He has provided exhibits, moderated sessions, and given overall support for many years, and not just to Tejas, but storytelling across the nation. Ted and his wife, Linda, the lead graphic designer on this project, have gone an extra mile to see this book through to completion. We appreciate them.



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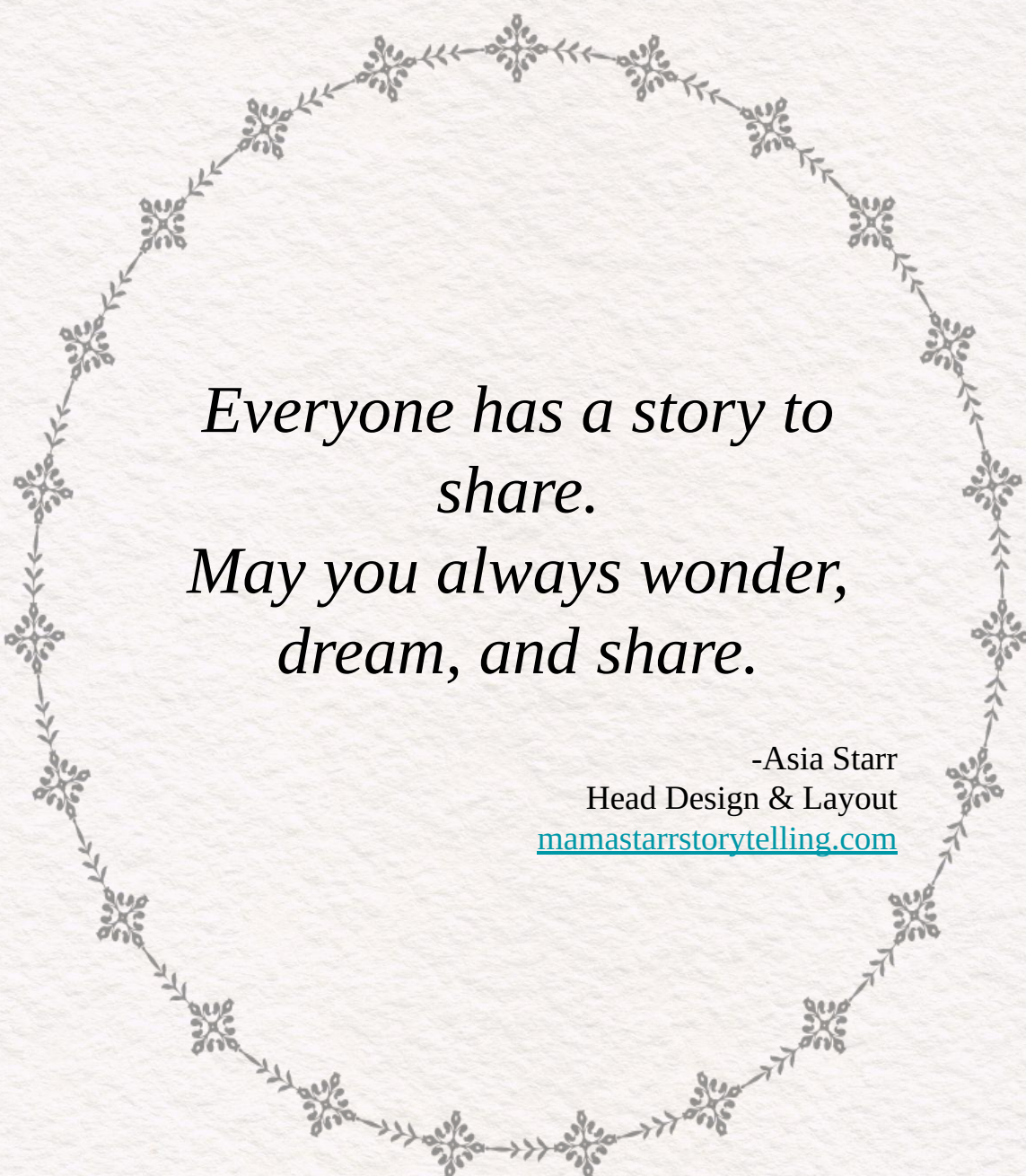
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dream, and share.*

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