

THE STORY BEAST

For Story Artists, Listeners, and Dreamers

PEACEFUL PONDERINGS





About the Cover Artist Asia Starr

Asia Starr is a Storyteller in the Johnson County Kansas Area, the Head of Design & Layout for [The Story Beast](#) and recipient of the 2023 [J.J. Reneaux Emerging Artist Award](#). Asia specializes in fairytales, folk and humorous stories, with the occasionally Spooky story. You can usually find her telling her stories to an audience of children ranging from preschool to high school. She loves to tell to Adults as well. She hopes to bring that childlike wonder and magic to all that have a chance to stay awhile and listen. mamastarrstorytelling.com/

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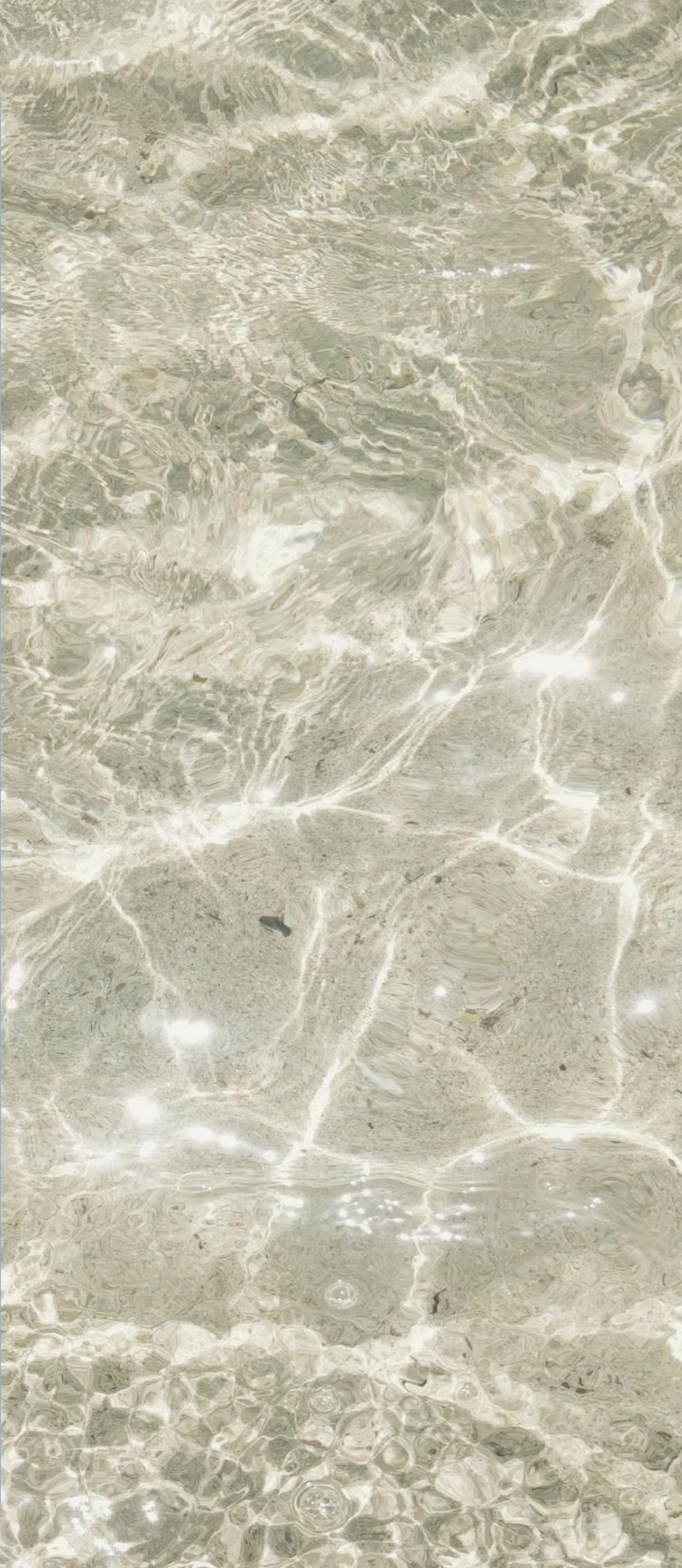
The Story Beast 2024 Themes

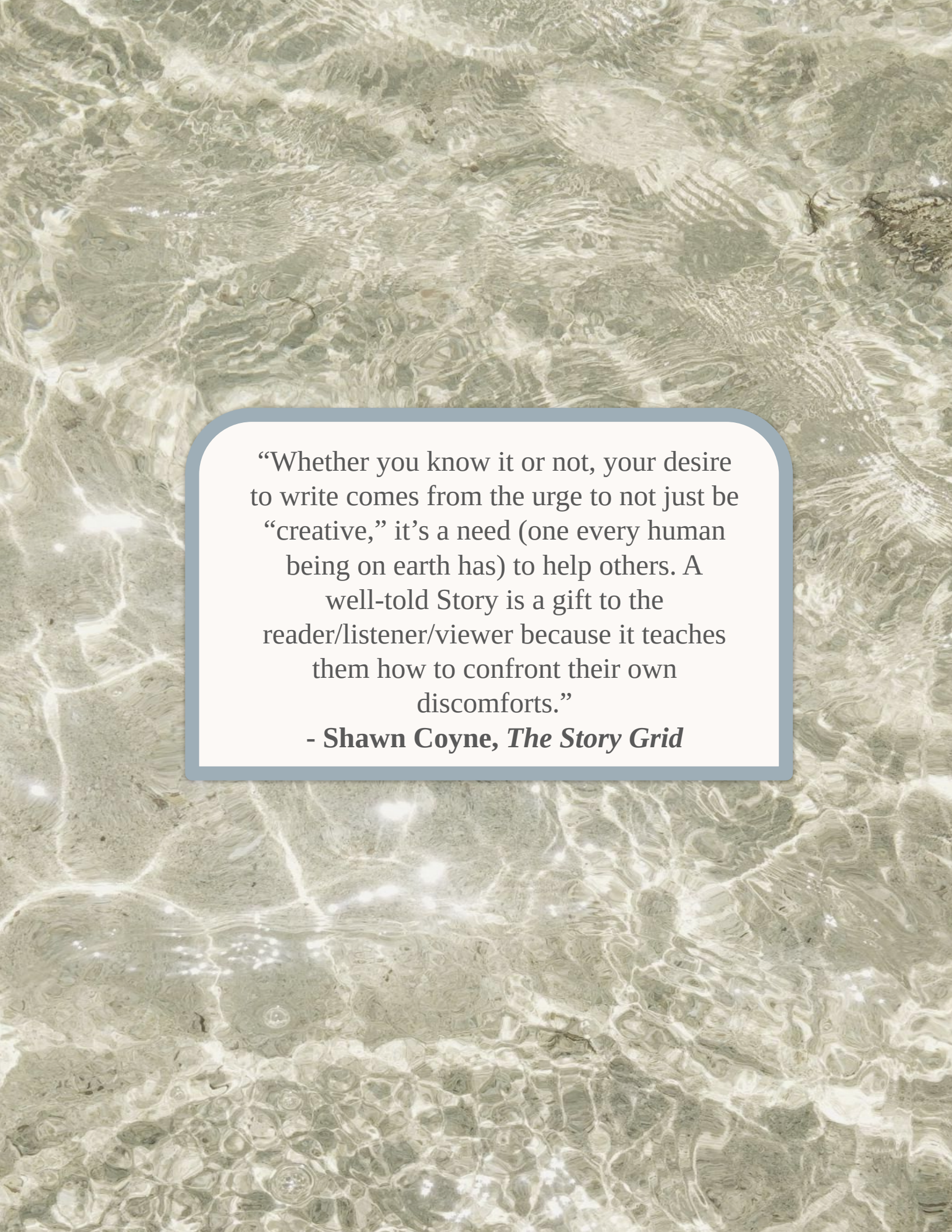
Spring - Stepping Stones - Due Feb. 15

Summer - Chaotic Creations - Due May 15

Fall - Flavored Fright - Due Aug. 15

Winter - Whirling Winds - Due Nov. 15





“Whether you know it or not, your desire to write comes from the urge to not just be “creative,” it’s a need (one every human being on earth has) to help others. A well-told Story is a gift to the reader/listener/viewer because it teaches them how to confront their own discomforts.”

- **Shawn Coyne, *The Story Grid***



THE STORY BEAST

Peaceful Ponderings

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Editor-in-Chief

Alton Takiyama-Chung

Managing Editors

Sara Armstrong, Rachel Hedman,
Brandon Spars, Asia Starr, Bowen
Lee, Jo Radner, Carrie Sue Ayvar

Art Department

Head Design & Layout - Asia Starr
Design Assistant - Alex Randall
Cover Art - Asia Starr

Staff Writers

Karen Chace,
Eldrena Douma,
Lex Meyer

Proofreaders

Sara Armstrong, Ashton C. Clarke,
Via Goode, Cassie Selleck

Contact Information

The Story Beast
Website: storybeast.org
Email: storybeasteditor@gmail.com

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◆ Table of Contents ◆

◆ Letters

- *Welcome Letter*.....10
- *Dearest Crone*.....11

◆ Book Notes with Jo Radner

- *Book Notes* by Jo Radner.....15

◆ Taming the Beast

- *More than Props Storytelling Maria Geary: Telling with Aprons* by Joan Leotta.....20

◆ Storycology with Bowen Lee

- *Sharing the Light*.....24
- *The Hunter and the Doves*.....25

◆ Teacher Tales & Tentacles with Carrie Sue Ayar

- *Standard of the Month* by Carrie Sue Ayvar.....27

◆ Journeys

- *The Door of Reconciliation* by Marilyn McPhie.....29
- *Santa on a Train* by Jim Kissane.....30

◆ Fusions

- *An Altar from a Distant Shore* by Brandon Spars, edited by Nancy Wang.....33

◆ Hall of the Bard

- *The Big Box* by Joan Leotta.....39

◆ Healing Springs

- *Aspects of Peace Poems* by Sara deBeer.....42
- *Christmas at the Time Before A'ala was a Park* by John Shockley.....44
- *The Medicine Man* by Robin Reichert.....47



❖ **Puzzles and Games**

- *Answers for Riddle from September 2023*.....49
- *Lost Word Society with Carmen Agra Deedy*.....50

❖ **Story Sightings**

- *Events to Remember*.....52
- *Stories Everywhere*.....53

❖ **Credits**

- *Bibliography*.....59

LETTERE

DECEMBER 2023 WELCOME

The Holidays are here! It is a time for friends and families to gather, to celebrate, to remember the past, and to make new memories. It is also the perfect time to capture your family stories. The joy, the laughter, the tears, the sorrows, the embarrassing and funny stories that are told and embellished year after year. The stories saved for when you were older. The stories about the adventures you never shared with the grown-ups. The disappointments, the triumphs, the crushes, the true loves, the what-ifs of things that never were. These are all stories we have in common and to which we all can relate.

When a person leaves, they take their stories with them. Unless they are captured, the stories fade in our memories, and are often lost. When your children or grandchildren ask, "How come we live here?" or when they point to a stranger in an old family photograph and ask, "Who is that?" what will you be able to tell them?

Most of us carry around cell phones with video and audio recording capabilities and it is very simple to capture those family memories. Get everyone's permission, set up your phone, hit record, and let it run. Worry about editing later. You are after the stories. You are not doing this just for yourself and your immediate family. You are capturing stories for the future generations. Memories tell us where we are from. Stories tell us who we are.

Would you like to share a story with us? The Story Beast is your quarterly e-Pub forum. We need your creative works -- poems, stories, and artwork, as well as articles. We strive to bring you fascinating articles, moving stories, touching poems, and gorgeous artwork. The Story Beast is a place of connection and community. Please spread the word and tell your friends about us. Let us know what you think and send your contributed works to storybeasteditor@gmail.com.

A big Mahalo and Thank You to all of you who have submitted your words and artwork to The Story Beast. The deadline for contributions for the next issue is February 15 for the March 2024 issue. The Spring issue's theme is *Stepping Stones*. Thanks for reading and Happy Holidays!

Thank you very much,

The Spirits of the Beast
storybeasteditor@gmail.com

A rustic wooden slice, possibly a cork bark, is shown. It features a cork envelope tied with a pinkish thread. A white card with a deckled edge is tucked into the envelope. The card contains text about awkward moments.

Dearest Crone:


Have you ever felt like an outsider looking in? Or still welcomed, but strange? If so, when did that happen? What did you do about it?

Awkward Moments Abound

Dear Awkward Moments Abound:

This feels too personal. Why do you want to know? You have felt like an outsider? Well, then welcome to the world! We will all feel that way at some point. We can be so comfortable in our bubble. Then there is a change, either one we choose or put forth by other means. When someone or circumstances dares to press against that bubble and makes it pop, do you look at the drips of soap and water dripping down that have expanded your world? Or do you blow another bubble?

All this “bubble” talk makes me think of the Fairy Godmothers. Ugh. They are so sweet that my teeth get rotten, my mouth drops open, and then I spout mean things and curses. These Fairy Godmothers are way too prim and proper. One time, I went to the wrong convention. I had hoped to rub rags-and-shoulders with other crones. Instead, I arrived at this over-perfumed and blindingly sparkly ballroom with glass statues and glittery ganoush (really called baba ganoush, which is a gourmet version of hummus).



I realized that it is unfair of me to bring up baba ganoush and not share how to make it. But life is unfair. Bah! And I can tell that you are either giving me glaring eyes or whiny puppy eyes as you read this so fine, here is what you need: 2 pounds of eggplant; 2 medium cloves of garlic; 2 tablespoons lemon juice; ¼ cup tahini (paste made from sesame seeds); ½ cup olive oil plus a little extra for the end; ¾ teaspoon salt; ¼ teaspoon ground cumin; pinch of paprika. Once you have these items, preheat the oven to 450 degrees. Line a baking sheet with wax paper and halve the eggplants and lay them on their flat sides. Roast the eggplants until tender (about 40 minutes). Let the eggplants cool. Scoop out and use only the flesh. Discard skins. Mesh the flesh and wipe away any drippings. Add garlic, lemon juice, and tahini to the bowl of eggplant flesh. Drizzle in olive oil. Break up any stringed eggplant. Add parsley, salt, and cumin. Add salt to taste and a little more lemon juice. On top, drizzle more olive oil and sprinkle parsley and paprika. Enjoy this concoction on vegetables, sandwiches, or whatever you wish. It's your baba ganoush!

Now wave around some stick that shimmers and eat some baba ganoush. The real trick is talking while eating the ganoush. You'll sound like a Fairy Godmother.

You may think I don't like Fairy Godmothers. Bah! I took the moment to watch from the sidelines and waited for what would come next. They are not afraid to be themselves, shiny makeup, and all. I prefer the more earthy tones and color schemes. In fact, “schemes” is exactly what I prefer to do. I ponder long and hard what would be tortuous -- I mean, challenging -- for the youth of today who go down the road. Though, I don't discriminate. I am glad to curse anyone of any age, not just the youth.

So is there any point of what I have shared with you? Besides learning how to make baba ganoush? Well, I did get distracted, but I meant to say that I could have stormed out of that Fairy Godmother convention, but I did not. And the Fairy Godmothers could have flitted their wands and whisked me away in some rutabaga or persimmon or whatever vegetable or fruit is the trendy one these days. They didn't. We were able to co-exist.

Was it awkward? Even annoying? Of course. But what is life but sprinkled with strangenesses? They also make for great stories and ah-ha moments. For your line of work, wouldn't you find it weird if everything was the same and didn't throw some challenge your way? Embrace the outsider feeling. If you're an artist, being an outsider is usually the job. We must go outside the story to then embrace the whole story.

So what kind of Dewey Decimal can I offer you? Would Etiquette be in order? Then go to 395. I lean towards 658.38 for Personal Health, Safety and Welfare. Blend those together like the eggplant flesh for the baba ganoush. Oh, and don't forget the 641.5 for more recipes and cooking.

The next time you feel like an outsider or an outcast, you can think about more food, manners, and a little time spent weighing your personal health overall. You can survive it. You may even seek out opportunities to be different yet present for these moments of life.

What? You've had enough of my thoughts. Bah to you, too! Oh bother!

Yours on the Road - The Crone of All Crones





-BOOK NOTES-

“So many books, so little shelf space!”



BOOK NOTES

This month's Book Notes present a diverse range of valuable new publications. Rosie Best-Cutrer offers an innovative guide to parents who want to embed storytelling in their family culture. Pete Griffin takes us on a wild visit to his childhood adventures in the Upper Peninsula. Kevin Cordi's collective of younger tellers gives an overview of the newer generations' hopes and aims for the art form. Sue DiCicco and Masahiro Sasaki tell an inspiring story of Sadako Sasaki's life. And Jack Zipes brings his masterful mind and scholarly experience to bear on a rich collection of stories of the Sorcerer's Apprentice. What a treasure!

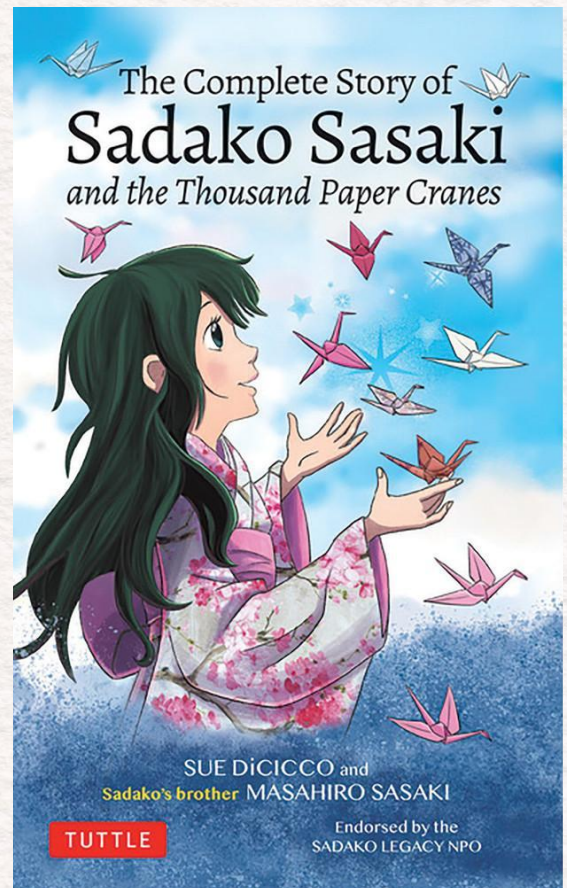
And, my usual promise: I will give any book marked with an asterisk (*) below, FREE, to the first person who requests it by email. I ask only \$5 for postage and handling. (I note each book's list price in parentheses.)

And yet I want MORE books for review! Have you – or has someone you know – published a storytelling collection or a book about the art form in the past two years? Please let me know! and I will request a review copy. Thank you.

Wishing you many glorious stories,
Jo (jradner@american.edu)

***Sue DiCicco and Masahiro Sasaki, *The Complete Story of Sadako Sasaki and the Thousand Paper Cranes*. Rutland, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2020. \$10.99.**

Many have heard of Sadako Sasaki, the twelve-year-old Japanese girl, dying of leukemia as a result of radiation poisoning from the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima, who determined to follow a Japanese legend and fold 1000 origami paper cranes to have her wish for health fulfilled. This biography of Sadako, a collaboration between her peace activist brother Masahiro and Sue DiCicco, founder of the Peace Crane Project, presents a picture of the bombing from the perspective of one neighborhood, as well as vivid insight into Japanese life after the bomb. Two years old at the time of the bombing, Sadako lived the life of a normal, active, athletic child for ten years until her illness appeared. DiCicco and Sasaki tell her story with love, introducing American readers to many aspects of life in a Japanese family of modest means. This book offers storytellers some powerful stories for programs focused on peace.



***Kevin D. Cordi, ed., *Tomorrow's Storytellers Today: A New Generation of Storytellers Assesses the State of the Art.* Marion, MI: Parkhurst Brothers Publishers, 2021. \$19.95.**

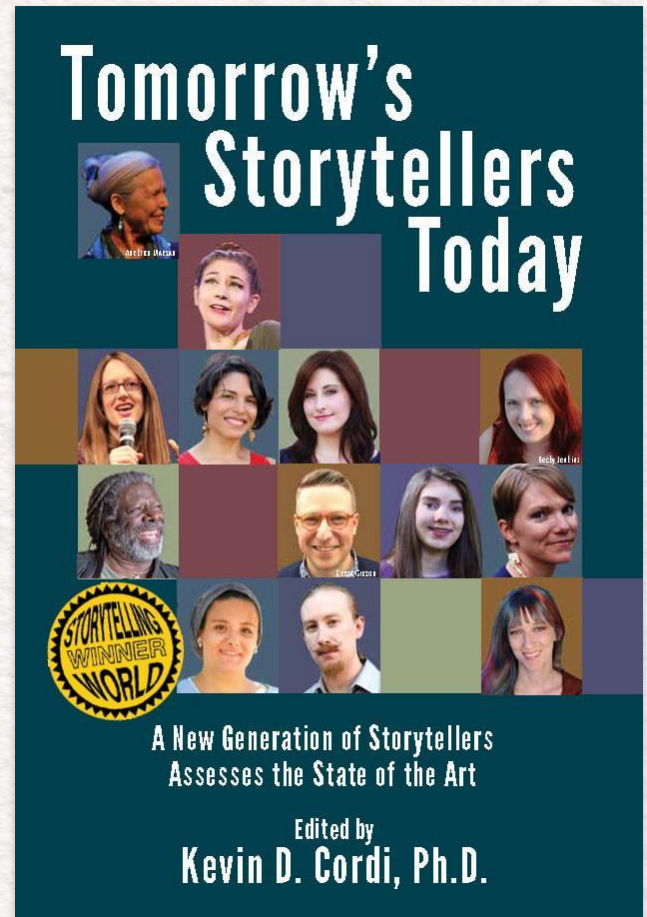
The popular image of storytellers skews toward elders – and for good reason: experience in the art form and life experience both make a difference, and many of our finest tellers (and many listeners) have earned their gray hairs. But no art form can survive without rising generations to continue the work, push at its limits, and introduce new ideas. In *Tomorrow's Storytellers Today*, Kevin Cordi has invited twenty-two tellers, most of them under the age of thirty-five or working with those under thirty-five, to write about the directions they have taken in their artistic careers.

Many of the writers, as expected, have made their entrance into storytelling through what Scott Whitehair labels “the personal narrative movement,” which at its best attracts a diverse range of participants through “a fresh aesthetic marked by honest, unaffected delivery, radical vulnerability, and accessibility to anyone with a tale to tell.” Ward Rubrecht, like other narrative-show tellers, finds it energizing to break alleged traditional “rules” of telling (swearing, avoiding “adult” themes, not using notes). In the aftermath of the pandemic, I see new resonance in Amanda Claire Buckley’s comment that these in-person programs “gave us an opportunity to make ourselves real” – and I applaud her desire to preserve the past by nourishing memories and telling stories. This is not easy, on stage: Charles Parrott raises difficult issues of factuality and “truth” in these performed stories. Katie Knutson provides a thoughtful analysis of the pros and cons of competition in personal storytelling events. Producers of such programs, like Whitehair, must also be “evangelists, instigators, cheerleaders, and facilitators”; Allison Broeren provides good advice about hosting live shows.

Not all younger tellers embrace the personal narrative movement. Cooper Braun argues that through the magic of metaphor, folktales can reach more deeply than realistic confessional tales; Canadian tellers Marie Lupien-Durocher and Petronella van Dijk extend this line of reasoning. Danielle Bellone proposes her practice of “new trad” stories – original stories that incorporate tropes, motifs, and other elements of folk and fairy tales, avoid the perils of cultural appropriation, and can speak to social situations often invisible in traditional tales.

Whatever styles they choose, Carolina Quiroga-Stultz proposes, storytellers should recognize and use the power of their voices for activist causes; Dustin Loehr examines the ways performers can collaborate with audiences to bring about change. In conversation with Antonio Rocha, Caleb Winebrenner discuss the importance of good mentoring relationships with experienced artists. Sadarri Saskill and Holly and Audrey Robison present vivid descriptions of developing storytelling skills within the family. And younger storytellers are markedly open-minded about electronic paraphernalia: Csenge Czalka argues that various social media can be useful tools for storytellers.

In all, this volume presents a useful overview of the state(s) of storytelling today.



***Pete Griffin, Rafts, Raccoons, and Revelations: Growing Up on a Great Lake. Marion, MI: Parkhurst Brothers Publishers, 2019. \$14.95.**

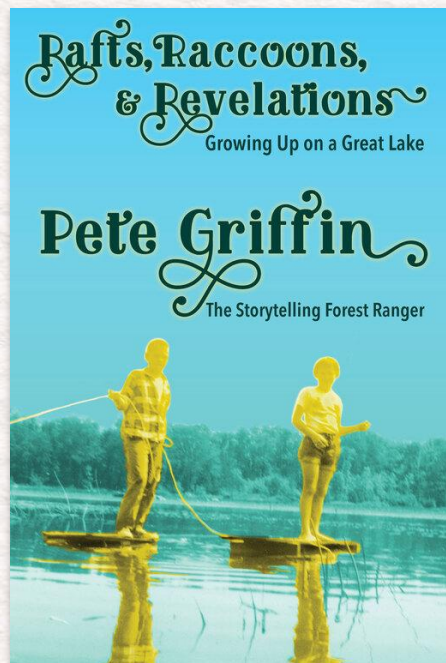
Pete Griffin, “The Storytelling Forest Ranger,” presents an engaging collection of stories of his “free-range childhood” in the Les Cheneaux Islands of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. These tales combine woods knowledge and character portrayals, as young Pete narrates his own process of learning about nature, survival, and human relationships. We meet the wild man Big Dog, driving Pete and his friend – convinced they were near death – at 120 miles an hour in the darkness. We accompany Pete on many learning experiences – hitting rocks on a pre-dawn duck-hunting expedition, contending with a household rat invasion, creating a devastatingly slippery ice track for sledding. Pete’s memories teach us a lot about hunting and fishing. Their honesty and good humor provide excellent models for our own memory stories.

***Jack Zipes, ed., The Sorcerer’s Apprentice: An Anthology of Magical Tales. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017. \$37.00.**

Jack Zipes – who accomplishes so much that he must employ magic – has given us another major work. Not just a beautifully-illustrated collection of some 56 tales from Classical times to the twentieth century and from Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, many of them translated by himself, accompanied by extensive biographies of authors, editors, collectors, and translators, a filmography, a huge bibliography, and a list of nearly 150 other relevant tale texts. No, this work is an interpreted collection, prefaced by a major introductory study: “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice, Harry Potter, and Why Magic Matters.” He frames the tales with a profound and wide-ranging study of their psychological, cultural, and historical significance.

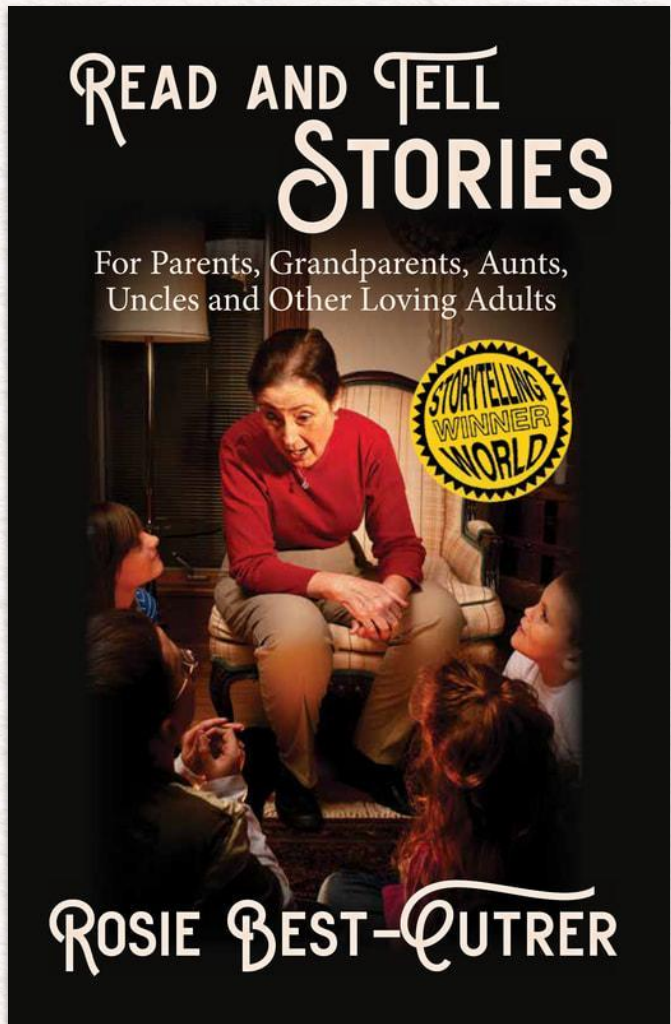
Zipes’ study of “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” began with his perception that the tales could offer hope “in hopeless times.” “The more I dug into the ‘Sorcerer’s Apprentice’ tradition, the more I discovered examples of opposition and resistance to wicked sorcerers of all kinds, who exploit magic for their own gain, and of the ways magic can enlighten readers about oppressive conditions under which they live.” This collection presents variants of two strains of Apprentice tales, which Zipes designates “The Humiliated Apprentice” (ATU 325*), and “The Rebellious Apprentice” (ATU 325). The former, he argues, fosters authoritarianism and enslavement, while the latter, far more numerous, is connected to ideas of empowerment and self-awareness. His examination of this complex tale type – basically, one in which a youth seeks to gain magic against the will of an evil sorcerer – ranges broadly, connecting the meme to Hegel’s master-slave dialectic, Adorno’s negative dialectical thinking, and to the ambiguities and prejudices involved in adults’ relationships to children. Zipes traces the apprentice plot through many examples of youth and adult fiction as well as in recent films, connects it to the Harry Potter novels, and presents a particularly interesting historical example of the evolution of the plot in folktales about the figure of Krampe in Lusatia.

This is a masterly work.



***Rosie Best-Cutrer, Read and Tell Stories: For Parents, Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles and Other Loving Adults. Marion, MI: Parkhurst Brothers Publishers, 2020. \$14.95.**

This is a splendid resource for anyone with available child/family audiences – anyone who does not normally tell stories to children and might not realize the extraordinary delights of doing so. Cutrer’s little book equips adults to start storytelling traditions within the family, to present vivid, face-to-face, imaginative alternatives to the ubiquitous screens that are too prominent in the daily lives of today’s children. She opens with her own versions of seventeen traditional tales, for “younger children” and for “older children.” These nicely tellable versions of the tales are accompanied by tips about movement, sound, and audience engagement; an appendix gives brief notes about each tale and some of its sources.



What sets this book apart from many introductory storytelling-to-children volumes is its focus on making storytelling a strong and regular part of family life. Inspiring suggestions are offered: how to set up a Story Party in the family and encourage all to tell; how to make storytelling a feature of car trips, walks, rainy-day amusements, bedtime and naptime; how to put on a Photograph Party or make an Oral History Holiday Video. (A list of story-starting prompts at the end is cleverly divided into prompts for adults and prompts for children – family storytelling is participatory for everyone.) With folktales, telling without the book is the adult teller’s goal, but Cutrer is clear that novice tellers should start where they are, reading if necessary, making and referring to an outline or a cartoon sketch – any technique that enables them to see and tell the scenes of the story without memorizing its words.

Looking for a modest holiday gift with a lot to offer? For some families, this is the ticket.



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



-TAMING *the* BEAST-

The Art of Crafting Stories



More than Props Storytelling *Maria Geary: Telling with Aprons*

By Joan Leotta

How do you tell your stories? Do you use props? Puppets? Do you draw while you tell your tales? Fold Paper? What about using an apron? Inspirational objects can both instigate stories and can motivate your listeners to tell their own tales. For the object-focused teller, the object itself is an integral part of the story, not simply a prop. Sometimes these stories come together in traditional story shows, sometimes in workshops.

Maria Geary is one of these tellers. She is a visual artist who has begun to use her art in an unusual way to tell stories from her own life, and to initiate the story process with aprons. By joining these two, story and object, her story is made more powerful by the way she can represent the essence of her tales with the concrete object, an apron. She also teaches telling and empowerment, helping people to reach deep into their own stories and make “aprons” of their own to confront the negative and increase the positive in their own lives and stories. Geary also uses aprons to teach others to tell their own stories. Her apron art pieces have been exhibited widely, and she has given workshops on the aprons. She calls her programs of creating aprons, teaching art journaling, and telling stories *Relaxing in Arts* and her email and website reflect that name.

“What’s in the Pocket” is one of the aprons from her most recent body of “apron” work, titled *Every Apron has a Story*. She is currently using several of these in her own performances and workshops. “What’s in the Pocket” is a work of art that honors Geary’s maternal grandmother, Inez Smalls, a woman who was part of the Great Migration along with Geary’s other grandmothers. The idea of the pockets particularly applies to Smalls who left Ocklocknee, GA, for the trip north. Geary says her own mother remembers vividly making that train ride with Smalls at age four, boarding the Silver Liner train in Savannah, GA, and getting off in Harrisburg, PA.





About the Artist

To see more of her work, check out her website,
<http://relaxinginart.com/>

To contact Maria about bringing one of her
storytelling presentations or workshops to your
school, event, or meeting, email her at:

relaxinginart@gmail.com



Geary says, “ I got started on aprons because I remember that Grandma, and the other women of her generation, always had one on. Finally, I began to think about aprons as art, a form of art that would represent the Grandmas I love and my own ideas both In the Pocket story and the others. The program presents a physical reminder of the cultural heritage of the legacy these strong women have left for their progeny.” It is a creative legacy that for Geary has come to embody all her grandmothers, those she knew on both sides and those who came even before them.

In further explicating her creative process, Geary notes that she is influenced by others and often seeks inspiration from others or from her reading. She noted, “I mainly read non-fiction books and it’s during the story that an idea for an apron will either be given to me (like compassion) or one that I stumble across because of the story line (mental health, mass incarceration, etc.). This is a new creative process for me and has certainly stretched me creatively. Because of this growth, I’ve recently taken on inviting interesting folks to my studio for a chat and a collaboration of sorts. I have a neighbor that’s a lawyer with the Center for Death Penalty Litigation (mass incarceration), and Jaki Shelton Greene (Poet Laureate for NC) was invited over the summer for lunch where the colorism apron came to light. The original title of my body of work is Every Apron has a Story, but the title of Other People’s Stories (OPS), has been milling around as a sub-theme for about a year. “

Although Geary uses bib aprons in her programs, she says that the actual aprons of many of the folk she speaks about wore the more common half aprons with one side pocket that usually carried personal effects such as a handkerchief, paper, or loose change. Geary remembers having childhood conversations with cousins about the “sag” in Grandmom Inez’s apron pocket. When she was older she learned the reason for the weight of that pocket. Her Grandmom’s pocket had a sag in it because her personal effects were a blackjack, gun, or a knife. A bit surprising for a grandmother, perhaps. Geary wondered about it until, married and with children of her own, she finally discovered the reason for Grandmom Inez’s rather interesting assortment.

Grandma Inez had been a numbers runner! She carried these items to protect herself, her family and, equally as important, the money and bets placed by those in the community. There are many ways one can tell such a story, but the use of the apron firmly places Grandma Inez in the canon of beloved persons, someone who put herself in danger to support her family.

The presentation of the Grandma Inez story is just one of the tales Geary tells with the aprons in her journaling workshops. Another very popular program is her Words Apron. The importance of this program comes from its ability to help those who partake in her programs (story and art) to begin healing from generational trauma and discovering their own strengths in the face of their own hurtful and/or demeaning experiences. “The art and the words go together to facilitate self-expression. I’m not teaching how to make aprons yet. It’s on my list and will probably not be until late next year. What I do teach now is art journaling where I have participants write out their thoughts and we cover our words using different painting techniques.” she says. One of her aprons includes words that were hurled at her. She has crossed them out on the apron and replaced those words with affirmations, positive phrases. For example, if someone might have called her “ugly,” Geary has that on the apron, crossed out, or otherwise set it aside and replaced it with “beautiful.” Her students are encouraged to do the same. “Students love replacing the negative with the positive,” Geary tells me.

I know that I will never look at aprons in the same way again. Once you have experienced one of Geary’s programs you will likely feel the same way.



Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work



About the Author

Joan Leotta plays with words on page and stage. She performs tales featuring food, family, and strong women. Internationally and widely published, she’s a 2021, 2022 Pushcart nominee, Best of the Net 2022 nominee, 2022 runner-up, Robert Frost Competition. Her chapbook, *Feathers on Stone*, is from Main Street Rag.

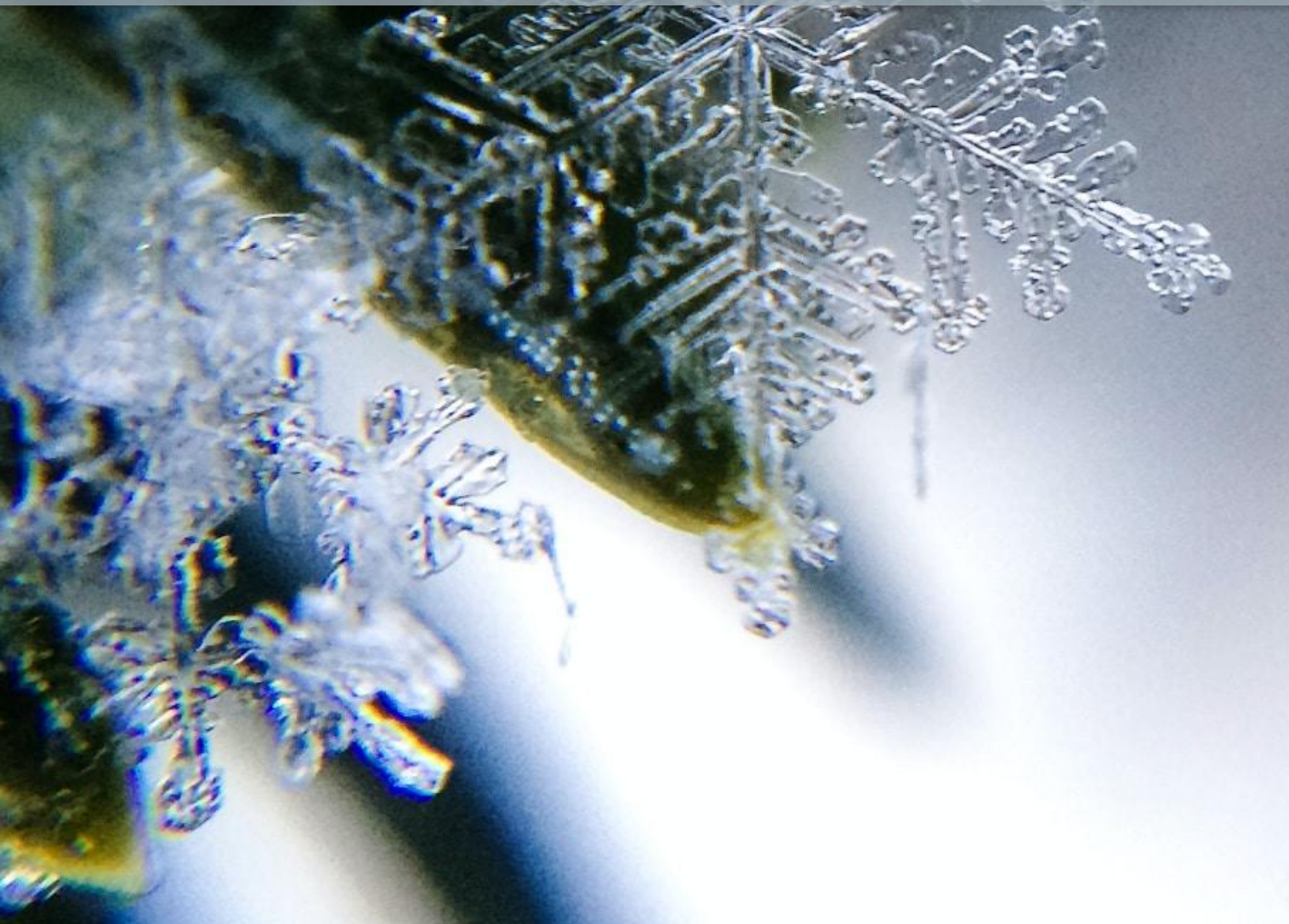
Contact on [Facebook](#) Email: joanleotta@atmc.net



–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.”



Sharing the Light

by Bowen Lee



My neighbors have their “Happy Diwali” banner festooned on their front porch, and it is lovely to see the bright chalk powder mandalas on their walkways in the front yard. But most eye-catching and magically beautiful is the pine tree in their front yard, draped with strings of lights like a curtain surrounding the tree. The lights enclose the tree like a wall of sparkling stars, warm and inviting, turning the tree into a beautiful, welcoming space that feels safe and intimate. You want to enter that enclosure of light under the protective arms of the pine tree. You want to become a part of this union with nature and celebration of humanity.

We are coming into the season of festivals of light: Diwali, Hanukkah, Christmas, the Solstice. Around the world and for millennia, people have acknowledged and celebrated the fact that the darkest day passes and light returns.

Never forget this.

Right now around the world, it seems darkness is taking over. Horrifying wars, political and social discord, social injustices deepening, and catastrophic environmental events are our reality. Even without these monstrously huge threats, millions of small dark particles of fear and concern invade the places where we are: unfairness, insults, prejudices, mean behaviors of all kinds, anxieties, losses, doubts. These small dark invaders surround us and penetrate us.

But this is the way of the world, and it is certainly the realm of the story. All stories address darkness threatening to take over. All stories attempt to show us the way to overturn darkness. Stories bring us light.

There are a lot of stories out there, however. So what stories do we take to heart and which do we share? Holding up one shining light is where we start, but it is the cascade of lights, the many lights we all hold together, that make the neighbor’s yard a place of peace.

During Diwali, telling folktales is very popular. Here is a tale from the Panchatantra.

The Hunter and the Doves

There was a flock of white doves that discovered grains of rice scattered under a banyan tree. The flock flew down and began to peck at the grains, but as it did so, a huge net fell down on the birds, trapping them all. A hunter had set this trap and now he came forward to capture the doves.

But the king of the doves called out to his flock, “We must all fly together, with the net in our beaks. If we all carry the net together, we can fly away.”

The doves all held a piece of the net in their beaks, and they all flew up together. They lifted the net up into the sky and flew away with the hunter chasing after them. After a while the hunter gave up the chase. He could not follow that flock of birds that moved as one across the sky.

But the birds were still trapped under the net. “I have a friend that could help,” said the king of the doves, and he led them to where a mouse lived.

This little mouse was very sorry for what had happened to the doves, and right away he began to nibble the net around the king of the doves. “Oh, no!” said the king. “Dear friend, you must first free my fellow doves, for no leader can see his subjects in pain.”

The mouse then nibbled around the nets of the other doves, and when they had all been freed, the mouse nibbled away the net that was trapping the king of the doves. The doves were all very thankful of the mouse, and the mouse and the doves had a deep friendship for a very long time. The doves flew away grateful for their freedom.

For if we are united, no one can trouble or defeat us.

Happy Festival of Lights, dear teller of stories. Let’s all fly together, with our lights held high.

To be told in educational and professional settings with attribution.



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

**-TEACHER TALES &
TENTACLES-**



Teacher Tales & Tentacles

by Carrie Sue Ayvar

The United States is unique among TIMSS countries (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) as there is not an official nationally-defined curriculum. Since many states have similar standards, phrases, or words, it seems there is a national curriculum but there is not. Thus, we will introduce words you will find common. Please check the state standards where you will be teaching or performing. Search by the featured phrase or word.

National site to find State Standards:

<https://www.ed.gov>

Common Core State Standards:

<https://www.thecorestandards.org/>

Standards addressed:

Problem Solving and Social Emotional Learning Competencies

Problem Solving: The ability to recognize and demonstrate effective creative problem solving is an essential skill, for every grade level from PreK through Grade 12, that is part of curriculum standards across multiple subjects including Math, Science, Engineering, Reading, and Social Studies. Albert Einstein, the brilliant scientist, understood the importance of creative and divergent thinking to solve problems. He said that “to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks real advance in science.” The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics suggests that every student, PreK – Grade 12 should learn to build new mathematical knowledge through problem solving and be able to solve problems in other contexts as well.



About the Author

Blending traditional, international & personal tales, bilingual storyteller Carrie Sue Ayvar (pronounced EYE-BAR) takes her listeners on a journey into the imagination connecting people, languages, and cultures through her stories that flow effortlessly between Spanish and English.

Phone: 305 945-4804 **Email:** Csayvar@gmail.com **Website:** carriesueayvar.com

Social Emotional Learning Competencies: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Responsible Decision Making, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills

Ponder the power provided by seeing possibilities of peaceful problem solving! Problems are an inherent and integral part of every story. The elements of every story include the characters, setting, problem, and the resolution of the problem. No wonder Storytelling is, and has been, a vital educational tool through the ages. Even our youngest students can learn to identify different kinds of problems and figure out ways to resolve problems through a story. Fables -- short stories with a lesson inherent in them -- have been used for generations as an effective means of teaching Social Emotional Competencies and problem solving.

I like to start with a breathing and centering exercise that I first learned from my own mother, Alice Helfgott Silverblatt. She used this pursed lip exercise with us and her students to help us calm ourselves and refocus. Pretend that you are holding a flower in front of you. Smell it deeply. Now pretend that you are holding a lit candle and, with pursed lips, slowly blow it out. Careful – don’t spit on the cake! 😊 Smell the flower and blow out the candle three times. Now we are ready to better face the problems of the world -- or at least the problem in a story!

Even our youngest learners can understand and develop creative problem-solving skills. For example, let’s look at the classic nursery rhyme, Little Miss Muffet.

“Little Miss Muffet, sat on her tuffet, eating her curds and whey. Along came a spider, who sat down beside her, and frightened Miss Muffet away.”

Ask the children what the problem is. Miss Muffet was afraid of the spider? Why? What did she do when she got scared? What are you afraid of? What can you do when you are scared? Discuss what else Little Miss Muffet could have done to solve her problem. As well as honing Problem-Solving Skills, we are also developing multiple Social Emotional Learning Competencies.

Another favorite is Aesop’s Fable, The Two Goats on a Bridge. Two goats meet on a very narrow bridge that is only wide enough for one. What is the problem? Who goes first? What happens if they fight or argue and both insist on being first? How else could they solve the problem? How can we connect this example to our own lives?

Stories are filled with opportunities for brainstorming divergent solutions, looking from different perspectives, and boosting essential Social Emotional skills. Ponder the possibilities!



-JOURNEYS-

**“What marks do you leave in the places you go?
Who sees them?
Don’t you ever wonder?”**



The Door of Reconciliation

by Marilyn McPhie

A retelling of a historic story "The Door of Reconciliation", also known as "Chancing an Arm"

In 2019 my husband and I visited Ireland, the home of many of our ancestors. It was a wonderful trip – filled with gorgeous scenery, kind people, delicious food, and fascinating history. We visited castles and churches, graveyards and pubs, glens and beaches – and all of it so green. We spent several days in Dublin and enjoyed visiting St. Patrick’s Cathedral. We attended matins and evensong and found both the music and the setting peaceful and uplifting. There’s nothing like a choir of pure voices lifted in song to elicit awe and occasional tears.

The cathedral has much history and many interesting artifacts. It was there that we encountered an unusual door and a story about a long-ago feud.

Centuries before the TV game show, family feuds have been the subject of dramatic and often tragic stories. The Capulets and the Montagues. The Sharks and the Jets. The Hatfields and the McCoys. The Campbells and the McDonalds.

This is a story from 1492 about the FitzGeralds and the Butlers.

In that era in Ireland, a position of prominence and power was that of the Lord Deputy, the representative of the crown in Ireland – and the family or faction that controlled that role was in a position of advantage. When a new deputy was chosen, it was a big deal. And in 1492 the position was given to Gerald FitzGerald of Kildare. This was more than a simple disappointment to their chief rivals, the Butlers of Ormonde.

John Butler led the Butler family in opposing their rivals and agitating for the removal of Gerald FitzGerald as deputy. The feud became more and more heated and finally erupted into armed skirmishes of small groups just outside the city walls.

As the fighting escalated, a group of Butlers, fearing that they would lose the fight and some would be killed, ran to St. Patrick’s Cathedral, and took refuge in the Chapter House, relying on the law of sanctuary.

The FitzGeralds followed them into the cathedral, stood in front of the barricaded door and demanded that the Butlers come out. Of course, they refused. The arguments continued for some time. The leader of the FitzGeralds finally declared that if the Butlers opened the door and came out, none of their family would be harmed. The Butlers refused, thinking this a devious ploy that would end in disaster.

Finally, Gerald FitzGerald ordered one of his men to take an axe and cut a hole in the door. Then he thrust his arm through the hole. He offered to shake hands as a guarantee of peace. Of course, he was taking a huge chance. It would have been very easy for one of the Butlers to simply chop off his arm.

Instead, after a pause, John Butler grasped Gerald FitzGerald’s hand. They shook hands through the door. Then the door was opened, and the feud was ended.

The only thing that remains of the chapter house today is the door, the door with the hole in it. It is housed in the north transept of the cathedral with a plaque calling it the Door of Reconciliation.

That is the only physical reminder of this story, but the other reminder is a phrase common in Ireland and even beyond. When someone takes a chance in hopes of a good outcome, it is often referred to as “chancing an arm.”

In times of trouble and strife, may we be willing to “chance an arm” in the name of peace.

Watch Marilyn’s recording of the story on [Youtube](#)



About the Author:

Storyteller Marilyn McPhie lives in a San Diego, California area called “Little Bluffs” (Penasquitos), and her stories occasionally do include a little bluffing. Her ancestors are from England, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, and Scotland – where legends from the ancient Clan McPhie feature selkies, warriors, and one (in)famous black dog.

Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work

SANTA ON A TRAIN

By Jim Kissane

What is it about Christmas and trains? There seems to be an unmistakable connection, one that touches our hearts and souls. In my library I found a 19th century article about a poignant poem about Christmas and a train, that had been written by a fellow named Henry C. Walsh.

Walsh was a journalist associated with the Altemus Company, a 19th century publishing house located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Mr. Walsh was a fanatical historian and world traveler. Until the late 19th Century, he and his fellow explorers led amazing expeditions to faraway locations that were seldom noticed. Walsh sought to change that. He set out to expose the world to the wonders he and his colleagues were encountering through the mechanism of the Altemus publishing house.

Walsh and several fellow explorers founded the world-renowned Explorers Club. He also loved to write about and publish his exciting exploits in Central America and Greenland. But Walsh had other talents that went beyond writing and exploring. He was the editor for the illustrated Altemus Edition of Milton's "Paradise Lost" that was published in 1885.

There was a lesser known side of Mr. Walsh that many did not see. A "romantic at heart," he was always seeking ways to capture and convey powerful and memorable human moments that took the human imagination to places far more interesting than his own epic personal exploits.

One of these moments occurred on a cold December evening, with a gentle snow falling. He was sitting on a train station platform, watching people, as he so loved to do. He observed a young mother, dressed in a way that reflected her very modest means, and her little daughter in tow as he watched them board a nearby outbound train.

The sight touched his heart and inspired him to pen an obscure poem he called "SANTA CLAUS ON THE TRAIN," which I'm pleased to share with you:



On a Christmas Eve, an emigrant train
Sped on through the blackness of night,
And cleft the pitchy dark in twain
With the gleam of its fierce headlight.

In a crowded car, a noisome place,
Sat a mother and her child;
The woman's face bore wants' wan trace,
But the little one only smiled,

And tugged and pulled at her mother's dress,
And her voice had a merry ring,
As she lisped, "Now, mamma, come and guess
What Santa Claus'll bring."

But sadly the mother shook her head,
As she thought of a happier past;
"He never can catch us here," she said.
"The train is going too fast."

"O, mamma, yes, he'll come, I say,
So swift are his little deer,
They run all over the world today; –
I'll hang my stocking up here."

She pinned her stocking to the seat,
And closed her tired eyes;
And soon she saw each longed-for sweet
In dreamland's paradise.

On a seat behind the little maid
A rough man sat apart,
But a soft light o'er his features played,
And stole into his heart.

As the cars drew up at a busy town
The rough man left the train,
But scarce had from the steps jumped down
Ere he was back again.

And a great big bundle of Christmas joys
Bulged out from his pocket wide;
He filled the stocking with sweets and toys
He laid by the dreamer's side.

At dawn the little one woke with a shout,
'Twas sweet to hear her glee;
"I knowed that Santa Claus would find me
out;
He caught the train you see."

Though some from smiling may scarce
refrain,
The child was surely right,
The good St. Nicholas caught the train,
And came aboard that night.

For the saint is fond of masquerade
And may fool the old and wise,
And so he came to the little maid
In an emigrant's disguise.

And he dresses in many ways because
He wishes no one to know him,
For he never says, "I am Santa Claus,"
But his good deeds always show him.

Of all of the worldly exploits that Walsh experienced personally and wrote about in his life, this obscure but touching Christmas poem, penned by him on that bench in the late 19th Century, may be his most enduring work.

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



-FUSIONS



**An Altar from a Distant Shore:
Bringing the Scholarship of Ronald Takaki to bear on
Eth-Noh-Tec’s seminal work, “The Red Altar”
by Brandon Spars, edited by Nancy Wang**



Eth-Noh-Tec: Nancy Wang and Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo.

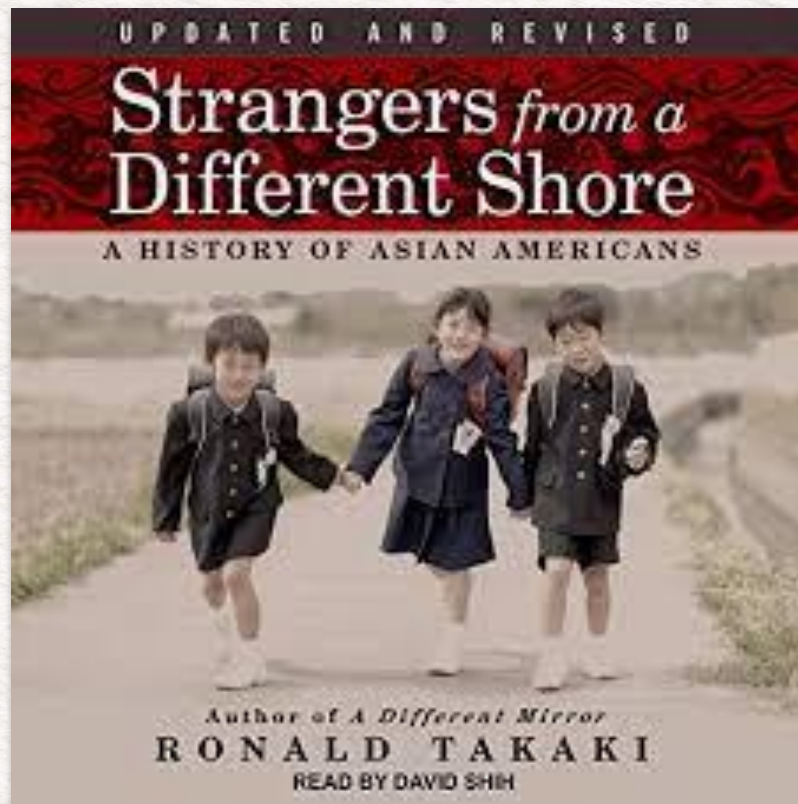
I am a storyteller and a high school teacher at Sonoma Academy in California, and was honored when Eth-Noh-Tec (Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo and Nancy Wang) asked me to help develop a high school study guide around their epic performance titled “Red Altar,” a story play researched and written by Nancy.

Red Altar is a dramatization of the story of Nancy’s ancestors who came over to Monterey, California in 1850. Unlike so many of the early immigrants from China who came to Gam Saan (Golden Mountain for San Francisco) with the intention of participating in the California Gold Rush, Nancy’s ancestors – Quock Bo and So May – came with the intention of fishing and selling salted fish to the Chinese miners living in the foothills. The gripping shipwreck off of Point Lobos in which Quock Bo and So May miraculously survive is followed by a touching account of how they are rescued and sheltered by members of the Esselen and Rumsen Native American peoples then living along the coast. Once on their feet, these two dynamic first generation immigrants build a successful fishing business and raise a family.

The triumph of their business is a light in the darkness of the times, a darkness that grows over the course of the story. Discrimination against the Chinese is initially absent from the Monterey area, but Quock Bo and So May hear stories of unfair practices, exploitation, and even lynchings, which were occurring in the mining towns of the Sierra Foothills. Eventually, the bigotry and violence make their way to Monterey, and in 1906, the largest fishing village at Point Alones, which had been thriving, was burned to the ground. Their story is, therefore, as much about the slow approach of racism to Monterey as it is about the triumph, ingenuity, and resilience of the Chinese community there, especially that of Nancy’s ancestors beginning with her great, great grandparents Quock Bo and So May.

Enlisting My Students

I enlisted a group of six motivated students, ranging from the tenth grade to the twelfth, to aide me in creating a study guide to help contextualize this nineteenth-century saga spanning the world from China to America. Our research led us in many directions and to many different sources. We often enlisted Robert and Nancy themselves to provide us with additional information, including a family tree and a copy of their working script. One source stood out as the best means to plunge into the world of the nineteenth-century sojourners who left China for a “better life” in California, and that was Ronald Takaki’s *Strangers from a Distant Shore*. In particular, Takaki’s chapter devoted to these “travelers to the Golden Mountain” (“Gam Saan Haak”), gave us a door through which to travel back in time and across the ocean to the turbulent world of 1850 China.



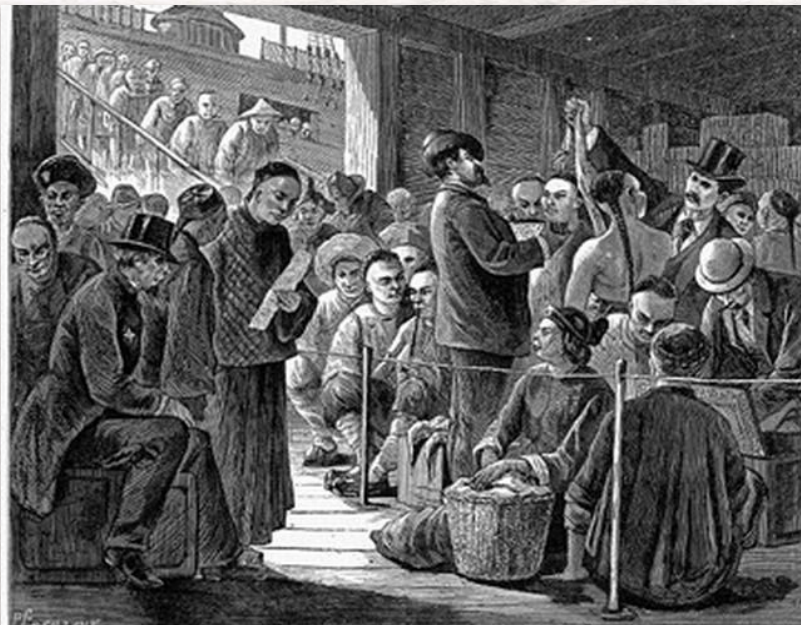
My Students Discover: Seeking a Better Life

Nancy employs both narration and character dialogues, as well as media, alternating with Robert in a tandem storytelling style. She includes historical contexts and in one scene describes the milieu in 1850 China. Robert narrates, “With famine, typhoid fever, civil unrest, and the Taiping rebels turning their country into bloody killing fields, what did they have to lose?” In this single line of the piece, there are volumes of history and social commentary to be made, and Takaki’s book does much to begin to give us a glimpse into who these sojourners were and what they were leaving behind.

“They went as wah gung, Chinese laborers, as sojourners hopeful they would be able to work in a foreign country and return home rich in three to five years. They had given names to their lands of destination – Tan Heung Shan (“The Fragrant Sandalwood Hills”) for the Hawaiian Islands and Gam Saan (“Golden Mountain”) for California. Beginning in the 1840s and 1850s, they departed by the tens of thousands – about 46,000 to Hawaii in the second half of the nineteenth century and about 380,000 to the U.S. mainland between 1849 and 1930.

The Chinese already had a long history of movement overseas. By the seventeenth century, there were 10,000 Chinese in Thailand and 20,000 in the Philippines. Chinese migrants defied the laws of the central governments of the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, which prohibited overseas travel on pain of death. But the greatest outflow of Chinese occurred in the nineteenth century: between 1840 and 1900, an estimated two and a half million people left China. They went to Hawaii and the United States as well as to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Southeast Asia, the West Indies, South America, and Africa.

Most of the Chinese migrants to the Kingdom of Hawaii and the United States were from Guangdong (Kwangtung Province). Many of them sought sanctuary from intense conflicts – the British Opium Wars of 1839-1842 and 1856-1860, the peasant rebellions such as the Red Turban Rebellion (1854-1864), the bloody strife between the Punti (“Local People”) and the Hakkas (“Guest People”) over possession of the fertile delta lands, and class and family feuds within villages.... Forced to flee from the violence and turmoil, they felt “pushed” from their home country.”



Chinese immigrants at the San Francisco Customs House, c1877. The Granger Collection.

The Red Turban Rebellion and the struggle of the Hakkas mentioned above, fall under the fourteen years of war (1850-1864) referred to in Robert’s narration as the Taiping Rebellion. This rebellion was led by a religious zealot named Hong Xiuquan, who claimed to be the younger brother of none other than Jesus Christ. It was waged against the Qing Dynasty, and the fourteen years of war in which the Red Turbans would join Hakkas in the struggle to wrest political control from the Qing Dynasty and moral reform of all of society. The Taipings were against foot binding (in fact women were organized into fighting companies), adultery, gambling, alcohol, tobacco, opium, and slavery. Some estimate that in the fourteen years of fighting, twenty to thirty million people lost their lives. Other estimates including starvation and disease put the death toll at the incredible figure of one hundred million. When Robert mentions that China had been turned into a bloody killing field, he was not exaggerating. To put this in perspective, some of the estimates surpass the loss of life in World War I by a factor of two.

The morality behind Hong's movement appealed to those who had witnessed the tremendous deterioration of Chinese society due to the importing of opium from India by the British. The first opium war was before the Taiping Rebellion, and resulted in the Nanjing Treaty, which was quite unfavorable to the Chinese (this was when Hong Kong was handed over to the British). In fact the treaty allowed the entrance of the very Christian missionaries that would inspire Hong in his social and political movement. The Second Opium War was launched by the British (and French) while the Qing government was already busy trying to quell the Taipings. After the Second Opium War ended in 1858 and the Taiping Rebellion in 1864, the Qing Dynasty would never fully recover. The nationalist and communist parties that would rise and overthrow the Qing Dynasty at the turn of the twentieth century would trace their roots back to the Taipings and the reforms they sought to win from Qing rulers.

Of course Quock Bo and So May were not alone in wanting to escape the turbulence of the times. California seemed like a haven from the death and despair descending over entire regions of China.

“Gam Saan promised not only gold to be mined but also opportunities for employment. In the port cities, circulars distributed by labor brokers announced: “Americans are very rich people. They want the Chinaman to come and make him very welcome. There you will have great pay, large houses and food and clothing of the finest description.... It is a nice country, without mandarins or soldiers.... Money is in great plenty and to spare in America.” The Chinese who returned to their villages with money made in Hawaii and America reinforced the excitement of emigration. Sixteen-year-old Lee Chew witnessed the triumphant return of a Chinese migrant from the “country of the American wizards.” With the money he had earned overseas, he bought land as spacious as “four city blocks” and built a palace on it. He also invited his fellow villagers to a grand party where they were served a hundred roasted pigs, along with chickens, ducks, geese, and an abundance of dainties. The young Lee was inspired, eager to go to America himself.”



Chinese Gold Miners, 1850. The Granger Collection.

Individuals such as the one mentioned above who were able to return with wealth, were exceptions. The simple fact remains that in China during the 1860s, a Chinese laborer might earn five dollars a month while in California he would earn thirty dollars. However, Middlemen, of course, saw tremendous opportunity in the promise of America and the relative darkness of these times in China and took their share:

“The Chinese migrants were told they did not need much money to get there. They could choose to go as contract laborers to Hawaii: under arrangements made by emigration brokers representing sugar planters, they could have “free passage” to the islands, where they would sign labor agreements to work for a planter for a term of five years and receive in return wages, shelter, food, and medical care.... Or they could go to the United States as free laborers under the credit-ticket system.

Under this arrangement, a broker would loan money to a migrant for the ticket for passage, and the latter in turn would pay off the loan plus interest out of his earnings in the new country. Chung Kun Ai recalled how his grandfather went into such moneylending as a business venture: “One condition of his loan of \$60 was that each borrower was to pay back \$120 as soon as he was able to do so. In all, grandfather must have helped 70 young men from our village and nearby villages to migrate to North and South America and also Australia.”

The Quock family was unique in that they bought their own boat, a Chinese junk, and from the Philippines sailed it with four other teens followed the Wei Liu current, past Japan, across the Pacific and down the coast of North America to Monterey. Initially settling in Point Lobos with the help of the Esselen and Rumsen people, the Quock family would relocate to Pescadero Fishing Village and then to the Point Alones fishing village in 1879. By this time the Quock family included three children, a son Tuck Lee, and two girls, Quock Mui and Sing Hing. Quock Mui born in 1859 is said to be the first Chinese girl to be born in North America. She was also called Spanish Mary because she knew Spanish fluently as well as four other languages. Quock Mui, played by Nancy, becomes the focus of the story. Her character seems to personify the very qualities that allowed the Chinese to build a thriving fishing industry in the Monterey area, and the audience is given a nuanced glimpse into how the strong, fighting spirit of a survivor had to be molded and shaped.

Soon, Italians and Portuguese are drawn to the successful area, and when the Italians begin cutting the Chinese nets, Quock Mui whimsically wonders if they would change their tactics if they had to sit with her and mend them. When the Portuguese ram the Chinese fishing boats, she wonders if her brother could make friends with them so that they might stop. Then when a law is passed that Chinese cannot fish during the day, her family boldly decides the Chinese will fish at night for squid, like in China. Then the Chinese are not allowed to dry and salt the squid for selling and shipping. Now two decades later, when the Italian fishermen start dumping rotting fish guts on a public beach, Quock Mui’s son gathers them up to make fish fertilizer to supply the agricultural industry in the nearby valley. This became yet another means for her village to survive financially, since many times over and over again, laws were passed to stop the Chinese from accomplishing their work. This they hoped would get rid of the Chinese. But that didn’t happen.

TO BE CONTINUED....IN MARCH ISSUE

To be told in educational settings with attribution



About the Author

As a teacher of both high school humanities and college writing, Brandon has always brought storytelling into his lessons. He has contributed to countless workshops and conferences on the intersection between storytelling, ancient history, and pedagogy. He is the author of four books on storytelling.

Website: brandonspars.com .



-THE HALL *of the* BARD-

“Music and storytelling are sisters and have always been close; where you find one, you can be sure the other isn’t far away.”



The BIG Box

By Joan Leotta

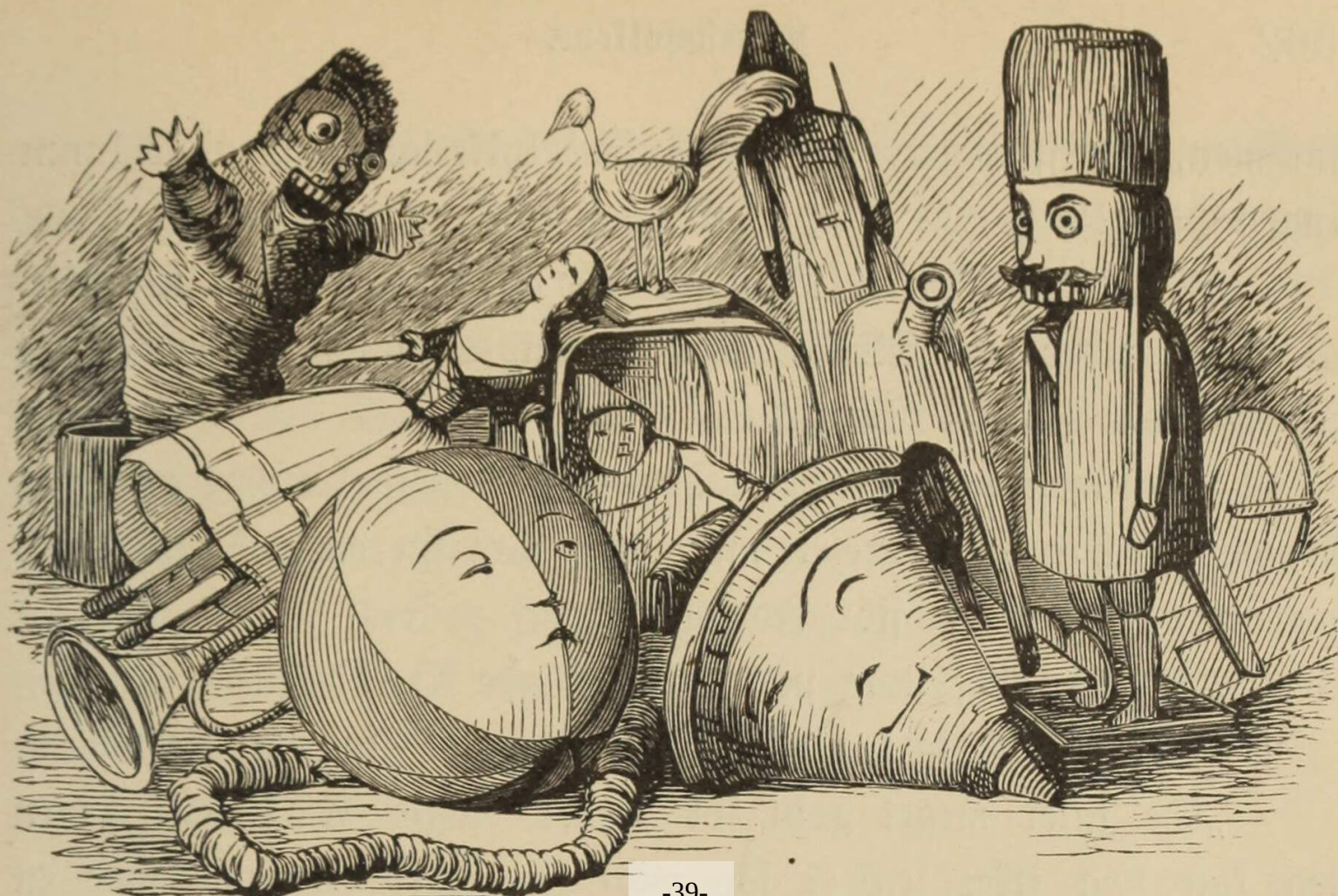
By age eight, I already had learned one of life's hard truths. Christmas gifts for little brothers come in BIG boxes. Big sisters receive only medium and small boxes whether from Santa or Mom and Dad. To be honest, I never really suffered in the gift category. There was abundance and I loved the puppets, crayons, cooking sets, books, and mountains of stuffed animals that I received. I had no interest in the fire engines, ride-on toys, and forts revealed when my little brother's BIG boxes were opened.

I admit that silly though it may seem, when I spied the HUGE boxes under the tree for my brother, there was the nagging suspicion that a bigger box equaled more love. The old maxim that good things come in small packages did not ring true for me.

I thought about putting a new bicycle on my list, just so I could qualify for a big box, even though my bike was just fine. I was the same height I had been the year before — almost.

On Christmas Eve, all my aunts, uncles and cousins met for dinner at my grandmother's house as usual. We opened gifts from each other and laughed a lot. After clean-up, my family spent the night.

Despite staying up very late on Christmas Eve, I awakened before dawn, put on slippers and robe, and crept downstairs. The Christmas tree lights were on and under it were our stockings and boxes "from Santa." There were many, many boxes, some big, some small—and one GREAT BIG ENORMOUS box. I sighed.



Quietly, I perused the pile for items with my name attached. I piled my gifts by my stocking and sat down next to them to wait for my parents and Grandma to come downstairs. I opened the copy of *The Black Stallion* my Aunt Claudia had given me the night before. I hoped my "Santa" packages would contain a Magic Bake oven, and a new diary with a lock, along with a pen. I could see that my stocking was full of candy. That made me smile. I took a candy cane cookie from a plate by the tree, arranged my gaily wrapped boxes spread around me, and began to munch on a cookie and read my book while I waited.

As I read, I heard my brother, Mom, and Dad pad down the stairs. Grandma came down a minute later. My brother and I dumped out our stockings. Mine had a bracelet, peppermints, and chocolate Dutch shoes! Mom said I could eat one, or even a pair of the chocolate shoes, right away since, "After all, what's a little chocolate on Christmas morning?"

Grandma brought in a tray with coffee for the adults, milk for my brother and me, and a plate of sweet rolls. Mom helped my brother open his boxes. Dad was ready with some tools to put together my brother's new ride-on toy. I exclaimed happily over my Magic Baking oven and diary. Santa had been good to me.

Grandma and Mom began to clean up the wrapping paper. Then Mom noticed — the BIGGEST box was still wrapped.

"Whose is this?" she asked.

I looked up. "Mom, you'd better help little brother open that one, too."

Mom stood up, read the tag and looked at me. "Why, don't you think you can open it yourself?"

"Me? It's for me?"

I walked over to the box. It was as high as I was tall, definitely the BIGGEST box under the tree this year and possible, ever! And my name was clearly printed on the tag: "Joanie." Santa and all his helpers clearly had recognized my need for a BIG BOX. I hesitated before opening it. The box was a present in and of itself.

My Mother urged me on. "Open it, dear."

So, I turned the box on its side and began to rip the paper. My hands were trembling as I tugged at the box flaps that opened to reveal a sea of shredded paper. I reached in and tossed out the paper in fistfuls. Deep down in the paper nest lay a large toy lion — silky and soft — with a golden mane. The imprisoned lion was large but not huge. The box and filling were about three times his size. I released him from this cardboard incarceration and hugged him tight. A moment later, I christened this amazing creature, "Goldie" and he promptly became the king of my stuffed animal jungle.

It's been a long time since the biggest box under the tree was the one I wanted. After all, jewelry comes in small boxes. But I've never forgotten the real gift that Christmas, learning that often when we think no one notices us, that no one is aware of our inner desires for a BIG box or whatever else, someone often does. As a parent, I've tried to always put this lesson into practice, carefully observing our dear daughter and son so Santa and I (and my husband) will know how to fulfill what they think are hidden wishes, to know we value them for who they are and love them equally.



Joan Leotta plays with words on page and stage. She performs tales featuring food, family, and strong women. Internationally and widely published, she's a 2021, 2022 Pushcart nominee, Best of the Net 2022 nominee, 2022 runner-up, Robert Frost Competition. Her chapbook, *Feathers on Stone*, is from Main Street Rag.

Contact on [Facebook](#) Email: joanleotta@atmc.net

Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work



-HEALING SPRINGS-



POEMS

By Sara deBeer

At the Foot of the Teacher by Sara deBeer

Kissing this sweet foot of yours,
I realize that you are living in an
uncalloused world.
Your foot has not yet suffered
The too tight shoe,
The hard-hitting pavement.
You are the epitome of tenderness
And I sit at your feet,
Hoping to learn once again
What you now know.

Inadvertent Hurt by Sara deBeer

You reach out to gather the griever
close to you, murmuring “There,
there, I am here.” You smooth
each soothing word you speak—

but the griever shakes free of your
embrace
having heard only words which deepened
the hurt, as if when attempting to save
a drowning man, you forced his head
deeper
underwater.

This is the time for acknowledging to
yourself
the need to ask forgiveness
without adding your earnest explanations
or defenses. This is the time to offer
your deepest and clearest powers
of listening, of allowing the griever to be
heard.

Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell her works

Healing the Whole by Sara deBeer

Perhaps it slipped through your fingers;
perhaps it slipped through your lips –
but what had been whole is now broken.

What had been whole is now broken;
scattered shards lie on the floor.
Puzzled, you stare at the fragments.

Piece by piece, puzzling the fragments,
you balance fragments with hope
that what had been whole can be healed.

Fault lines can never be hidden;
though joined, pieces speak of the break.
But that which was broken can be healed;
that which was broken can be healed.



About the Author

Sara's great love is telling folktales from world cultures. A listener said, "Sara is a captivating storyteller, sensitive to her audience and their interests. Her extensive repertoire enables her to present programs on a wide variety of themes." Sara is a published poet who also teaches poetry-writing classes. Website: storydebeer.com

Hush-a-Bye

by Sara deBeer

I. Endlessly Rocking

My son never slept
unless I rocked him,
unless I sang soft songs:
of cherries with no stones,
of all the pretty little horses.

With his pudgy fists, he clung
to the Lego-locking,
K'Nex constructing
syncopated symphony
of his wide-awake world.

II. People Would Say

People would say, "Put him in his crib
and don't go in until he's cried himself to sleep.

People would say, "He has to learn
to fall asleep by himself."

I tried.

I waited, heart in throat
while he cried, heartbroken, for fifteen, thirty, forty-five minutes.

After an hour, I crept in.

He was standing, rigidly pressed against the bars of his crib,
hands so clenched

I could barely liberate him.

I rocked him for another hour
as his body shook with shuddering sobs,
my voice singing the familiar soothing songs
until he softened, overcome with exhaustion.

III. The Gentle Darkness

From then on, I chose rocking, singing,
answering those questions that are only spoken
when those who love one another
are not quite awake, not quite asleep.

Those deep sleep words
that are heard only
when two are cuddled as one.

Christmas at the Time Before A'ala Was A Park

by John Schockley

A long time ago, before A'ala was a city park in Honolulu, it was a terrible slum. There were stores on the streets but above the stores in the old wooden buildings that had tin roofs, poor people lived in very bad surroundings.

There were creaky old stairways in buildings crammed behind the neat stores. Clothes lines strung across alleys. People were poor.

In the slums, there lived a little boy named Kai. His mother washed laundry for rich people who came to A'ala only because they could have their clothes cleaned and folded neatly for just a little money.

Kai's father used to work as a plumber but one day while he was under a house working on a broken pipe, part of the floor collapsed because the water from the broken pipe had rotted the wood. He was trapped under the house for a long time. When the rescue people got him free, his leg was badly crushed. His lungs were punctured and he coughed a lot, even after he was able to come home from the hospital.

Kai's father walked with a bad limp and it was dangerous for him to go up and down the rickety old stairs so he spent most of his time in a dark room while his wife did laundry to keep the family from being thrown out by the landlord.

"Hey boy! No touch the tricycle if you no can buy!" the toy store owner warned.

"I was just looking."

"Look, no touch! I know you -- you no can afford da tricycle. You stay living in da slum behind da store, no?"

"How much cost, the tricycle?"

"Ten dollah -- see? You no mo dat kine money, eh? So, go away!"

"I can clean up all the rubbish in front your store, sweep da sidewalk?"

"No -- no need. Now go!"

Kai was used to being treated badly by the big people. He stopped by the store every day to see if his tricycle was still there or if it was sold. It was getting near Christmas and lots of parents brought their kids to Honolulu to search for presents.

Kai knew there would be no presents for him. The other kids laughed at him at school because his clothes had patches and he had no shoes. There were lots of other poor families in A'ala, but none as desperately poor as Kai's

One by one, the tricycles were being bought at the store. Kai's red tricycle was still in the back shelf. Kai hoped it would become invisible and nobody would see it.

One night, after his dinner of shoyu and rice, Kai went down to the street and began cleaning up the sidewalk trash in front of the toy store.

"Maybe if I clean up the sidewalk every day, Mr. Kim will let me have the tricycle," Kai dreamed.

He had to walk down the alley with a leaky pail to get water each night so he could wash down the sidewalk after he picked up the rotted garbage people threw on the streets. It took five trips with the pail to make the store front look clean.

More customers came to the toy store as the holidays approached. Mr. Kim was a shrewd man who noticed everything. Even his store window was clean and shiny. The little boy's eyes peered through the window from time to time. Mr. Kim shooed the boy away.

Kai had other chores besides his toy store clean-up. He was the delivery boy for the laundry his mother washed. Sometimes he had to take the trolleybus to make deliveries. The houses were fine but the people were cold to him when he picked up and delivered laundry -- no words of "Thank You!" for Kai. That didn't stop Kai from saying "Thank You" to the patrons for he knew how desperately his mother needed work.

Kai's father felt badly that he could not find work anymore. He wanted to be able to do things for his family but, alas, his health was bad and his cough was getting worse. The doctor said it was pneumonia. The medicine was too expensive to cure it. Ten dollars in those days was a lot of money.

It was Christmas Eve and Kai was making his last laundry delivery to a lady across King Street. "Merry Christmas Kai!" He looked at her blankly. "Thank you." He left her door with a smile because even though his Christmas would be like any other dreary day, she at least spoke a kind greeting.

As he crossed the street, he saw something. A TEN DOLLAR BILL! He darted into the street. SCREECH!

The crowd gathered around the boy lying on the ground in front of the delivery truck. Someone reached down to see if he was alive.

"IT'S MINE!" Kai tightened his fist around the \$10 and picked himself off the street slowly nursing bloody scrapes that were bleeding through his tattered clothes.

"Boy, you should watch where..." Kai was gone. The delivery driver shook his head and got back in his truck.

Kai limped toward the toy store window with his money tightly clutched in his bleeding hand. He looked in the window. The tricycle was still there, but he didn't enter the store. He went next door to the pharmacy and bought medicine for his father.

In the darkened room, Kai opened the door to find his father staring out the window into the street below. He looked up at his bloodied son.

"What happened boy?"

"One truck went bang into me, but I stay OK."

"Better go clean yourself up." Kai left the room but before he did, he placed the box of medicine on the bare table in front of his father.

"What's this?"

"Medicine for make your cough go away."

"That medicine cost \$10 dollars! Where'd you get that money?" He drew Kai close to him to re-examine his cuts.

“Boy, you didn’t do anything bad for that money, did you?”

“Honest dad, the \$10 was blowing down King Street and I went jump out to get it. Tha’s when de truck went hit me.”

“That better be true son, we’re poor but we’re honest, OK?”

“Take da medicine, OK? I think da money was one gift from the wind. Soon you goin’ be bettah an happy again.” His father limped to the kitchen to help Kai wash his wounds.

“The real gift was you weren’t hurt or killed -- especially on this night.”

That Christmas Eve, Kai moaned and slept lightly because of his pain. Kai’s father didn’t cough but twice that night. Kai’s mother worked late ironing shirts for delivery the next morning.

“Take these shirts to Mr. Kim,” Kai’s mother said wearily. “He wanted a special order for today. Be nice, say ‘Thank You’ when you deliver. He’s a new customer.”

Kai knocked on the door of the toy store. It said, “CLOSED FOR CHRISTMAS.” Nobody answered. The door pushed open.

“Mr. Kim! Mr. Kim!”

“Come to the back,” a distant voice called out.

Kai noticed his tricycle was gone as he walked slowly to the office door in the back of the store.

“Come in! Did you bring my shirts?”

Kai’s eyes lit up as he opened the door to Mr. Kim’s smiling face. His red tricycle was on his desk with a ribbon on it. “It’s yours!”

Kai could not believe it. “But howcum? You stay always one mean buggah to me -- why?”

“When I was your age in Korea, I was more poor than you, boy. I grew up mean until one day, one old man was nice to me and taught me to run one store.”

Kai’s eyes welled up with tears. “I don’t have anything for you.”

“Sure you do! Give me one ‘Merry Christmas!’ You go head, say ‘em’”

“Merry Christmas Mr. Kim!”

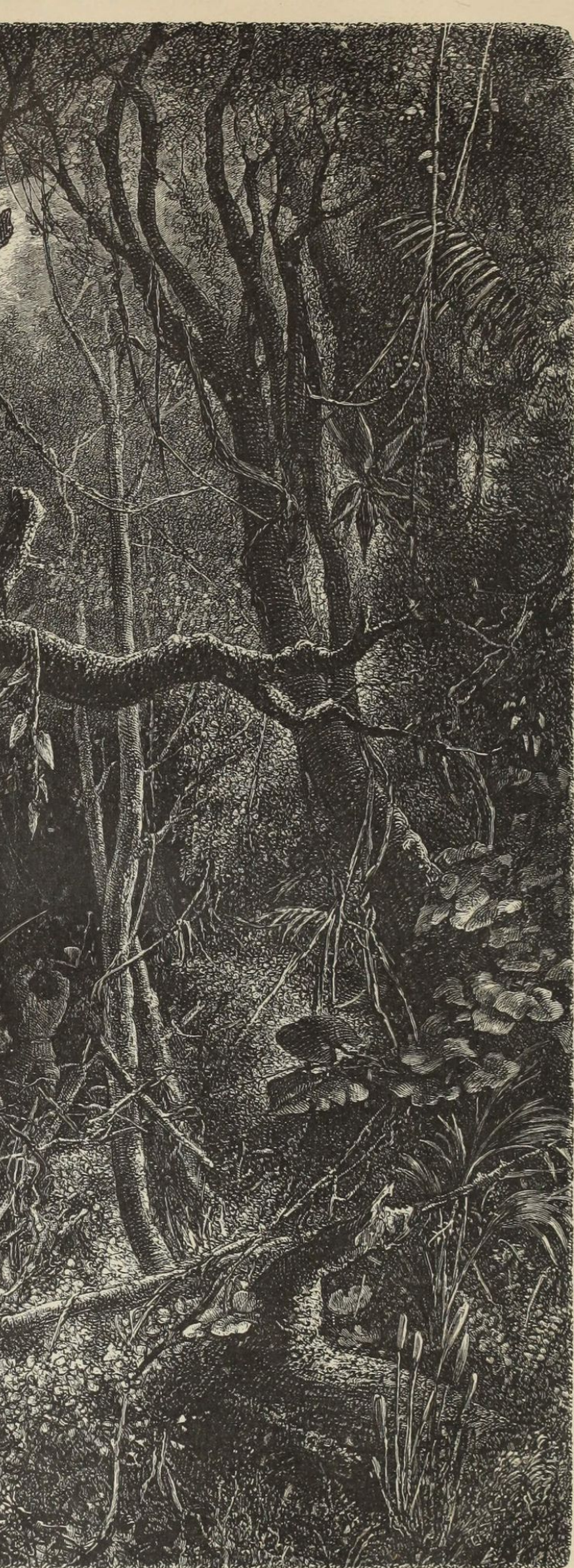
And for Kai and his family in Honolulu’s A’ala slum, it was a very Merry Christmas indeed.

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 MEDICINE MAN

by Robin L. Reichert

In January 2012, while traveling in Belize, I met a woman from British Columbia who was studying herbal medicine. Our bed and breakfast host suggested Carla visit a local medicine man to enhance her classroom learning. Herbal and dietary alternatives had helped my lifelong health issues so I jumped at Carla's invitation to go along, wondering what we might learn.

Carla and I walked miles across a gravel road until we saw the hand painted sign "Rainforest Plant Walk" with an arrow pointing toward a narrow path bordered on both sides by a tangle of tropical plants. The end of the path opened to a clearing just large enough for what looked like a large picnic shelter with benches around the perimeter. Off to the side stood a wooden structure the size of an outhouse.

Dressed in worn jeans, green cotton shirt, and straw field hat, Don Pablo -- a short, thin man in his 70s -- appeared, looking like a farmer after a hard day at work. After introductions he informed us that the outhouse-sized building was his treatment room, the picnic shelter, his waiting room.

We followed Don Pablo into his forest pharmacy, awed by his ability to name every plant, its medicinal properties, and preparations for each plant section: root, stem, and leaves.

When I asked if he spoke with the plant spirits, he spun around, peered into my eyes, and replied, "Yes! I talk to God before every treatment!" His intensity spoke volumes of a universally all-encompassing "God."

I had heard how indigenous people, still deeply connected to Mother Earth's gifts, ask the spirit of plants what to use for certain ailments, which plants are ready to sacrifice themselves, and the proper harvest time according to moon cycles. Any colony of plants has a mother plant that must be left undisturbed.

Toward the end of the tour Don Pablo stopped to point out a tall plant-covered mound just a few feet off the path. "This is an unexcavated Mayan temple -- very sacred." He had chosen this spot to erect his hospital for the sacred quality of the area. He announced he had cured every disease except epilepsy.

The next day, I experienced yet another morning of pain in my wrist, which I had broken three months before. Since a massage therapist, self-massage, and massage from others offered no relief so Carla suggested we return to Don Pablo.

Once we arrived, his apprentice sent us a quarter mile back to Don Pablo's home. Through the open doorway his wife saw our approach and waved us inside the ramshackle house. Don Pablo greeted us in the living room/bedroom where hammock "beds" hung in a corner over an earthen floor.

He slid three kitchen chairs together and invited us to sit. Earlier, our B&B host mentioned Don Pablo had been schooled in plant medicine by his father since age three. I sat with eager anticipation.

The medicine man inquired about my problem, disappeared behind a curtain, and returned with a jar of white cream. He scooped out a dab and gently massaged it into my wrist for ten minutes. I sensed both humility and confidence in his work as he conversed with us in broken English.

We walked down the dirt road chatting after the session. "Could you read what was in that cream?" I asked Carla.

"Fat and several plants I assume are native to the area."

A few minutes later I stopped and wriggled my wrist. No pain. I lifted my hand, astounded by what I saw. It appeared as though I had slipped a dark purple glove over my hand, an odd result considering the light touch of the massage, yet I remained unconcerned by the color because the PAIN WAS GONE!

In twenty minutes the strange color dissipated. I expected the pain to return eventually, but it never did. Eleven years later my activities are normal and I practice yoga poses where I occasionally support much of my own weight without a hint of discomfort.

This experience increased my desire to maintain well-being by the most natural means possible. I cherish the memory of a skilled, respectful, prayerful man with gentle hands in a humble setting. My sense of what is possible broadened as I stepped briefly into the ways of another culture. I arrived home with greater respect for and trust in the perfect design of our Mother Earth and the boundless gifts she offers.

Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work



About the Author

Writer, speaker, storyteller, artist, poet, Robin Reichert has written in some form or another since childhood and fell in love with storytelling while working at a Native American store. Her 3 published books and a CD speak to her love and respect for nature and the mysteries of this beautiful world.

Website: RobinHeartStories.com

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-PUZZLES and GAMES-

"Curiouser and curiouser!"

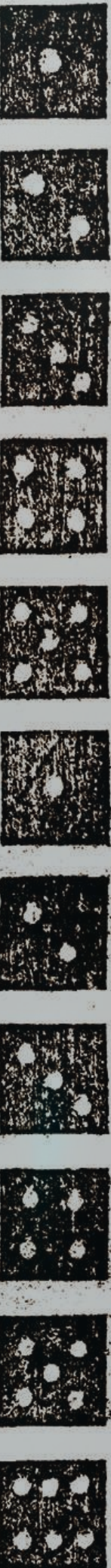
A Riddle For You

I have no life, yet, as I fly,
A thing of beauty to the eye,
I bear, my glittering shape beneath,
A part of my Creator's breath;
With ever-changing shade and hue
I rise and vanish from the view,
And, though a phantom deemed, I share,
In portions, water, earth, and air.

What am I?

-SB 

Last Month's Answer: *Forty Eight Feet*



LOST WORD SOCIETY

by Carmen Agra Deedy

Once again it's time again to play along with Carmen Agra Deedy's LOST WORD SOCIETY.

It is the Holiday Season! Remembering times long gone, festive gatherings, greeting old friends, and making new memories. It's also time once again, to head to the Way Back Machine and trundle backwards to a time long before this to find yet another rarely used word in modern English.

Each month we will give you an archaic, obsolete, or otherwise "lost" word. We will make up three silly definitions of the word, mostly incorrect, to amuse ourselves and hopefully you, dear reader. Your job is to make up another definition, a haiku, a story, or even a five-person play about the lost word. The challenge, should you decide to accept it, is for you to use your new creation in a story, just for fun. Next month we will publish the true definition of the "lost" word and provide you with another one. Have fun!

KICKSHAW (n.) Archaic.*With the holidays around the bend, this is one word you'll want to bring back from oblivion — if only to mutter it under your breath.

- 1) A low blow or physical insult, intended to be perpetrated upon Captain Quint (Robert), or a playwright (George Bernard), or a Big Band Leader (Artie).
- 2) A transportation device for a single individual, consisting of a narrow platform on two wheels and an upright steering handle, which is propelled forward by pushing with one's foot, while balancing on the platform with your other foot. A much smaller version of the larger two-person vehicle, Rick, an ancient precursor to Uber and Lyft.
- 3) A state of heightened anxiety, especially acute during family gatherings and celebrations, where the affected individuals must endure relatives they barely tolerate, being introduced to the new significant other of the month, and where they are forced to consume massive quantities of mediocre food, which gives them gas.

Last Month's Lost Word:

BALTER (v.) Origin, Middle English.- to dance without any particular grace or skill, but perhaps not without joy.



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



-STORY SIGHTINGS-

What's going on?

Organizations, Events, People and Much More

Events to Remember!

We are Seeking our Next Executive Director

The Executive Director of Storytelling Arts of Indiana (SAI), Ellen Munds, will be retiring from her role on June 30, 2024, after leading the organization since it was established in 1987. You can read about her accomplishments and contributions to promoting the art of storytelling locally and nationally [here](#).

With Ellen's departure, the SAI Board of Directors now welcomes applications from individuals with related leadership experience and knowledge of nonprofit organizations. Preferred candidates will have practical experience with fundraising, volunteer development, and collaborations. A love of storytelling and a commitment to share that passion with others would be a plus.

See the Executive Director's job description [here](#).

Please email resumes by January 31, 2024

Michael Bogers
Storytelling Arts of Indiana
Chair, Governance Committee
Chair, Executive Search and Selection Committee
STAofI2@gmail.com



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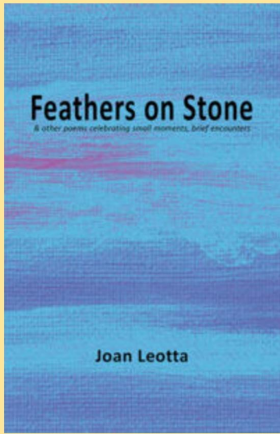


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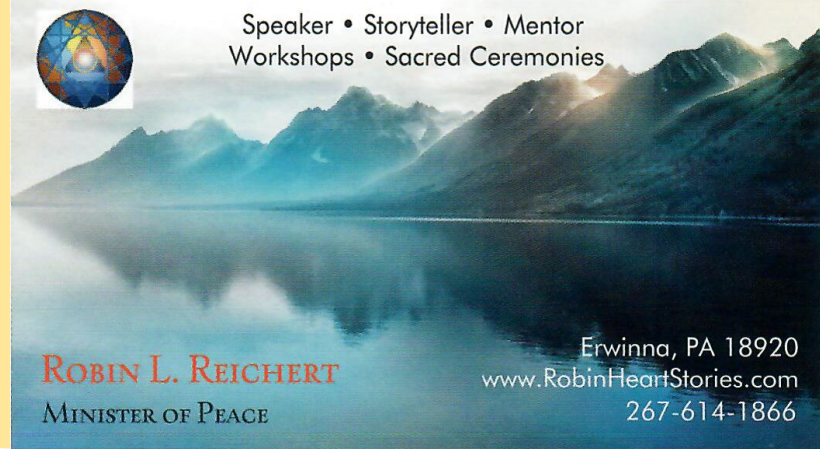


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Spring - March 2024 - *Stepping Stones* -Due February 15

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Winter - December 2024 - *Whirling Winds* - Due November 15

For Submission Guidelines go to storybeast.org/submissions

Submit to storybeasteditor@gmail.com

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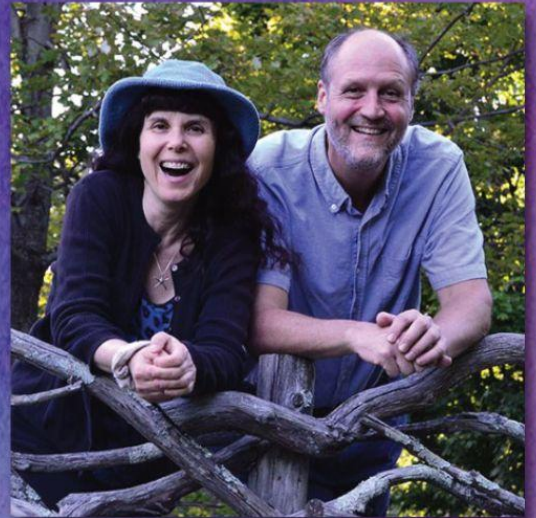
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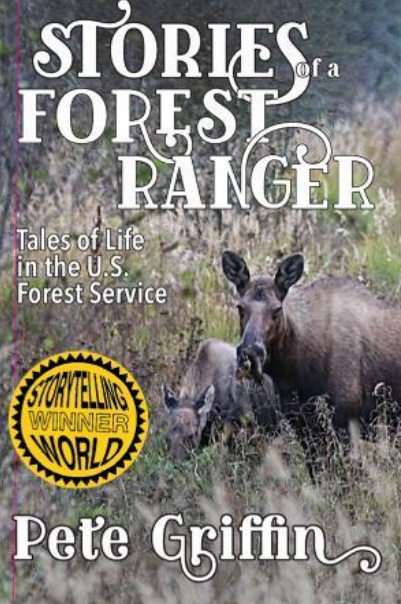


Jeri Burns, Ph.D. and Barry Marshall, The Storycrafters, perform and teach nationally and internationally as The Storycrafters. In addition to their work in schools, libraries, conferences and festivals, they are healing storytellers at Stamford Hospital Psychiatric Unit and former adjunct college faculty at Southern Ct. State University. Jeri is adjunct faculty at the State University of New York at New Paltz, communication coach for public defenders at New York State Defenders' Institute, and public radio essayist. Barry is sound engineer/producer of various storytellers' recordings, including those of The Storycrafters.

In addition to their award-winning recordings and radio show, The Storycrafters have been recognized with The National Storytelling Network's Circle of Excellence Oracle Award and the Cayman Islands' Gold Star Award for Creativity in the Arts. They live in New York's Hudson Valley with their son Zack, their most treasured creation.



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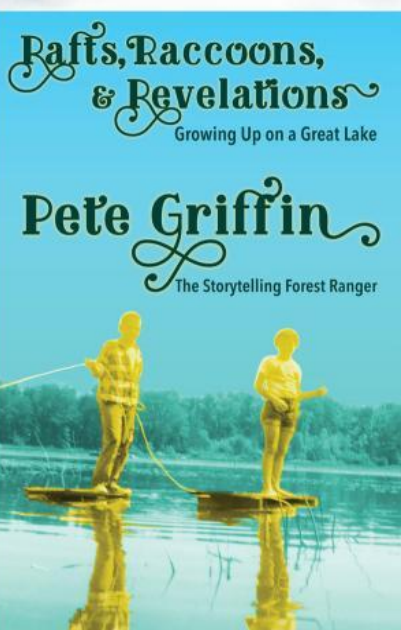
Musings of a wildlife biologist

Pete Griffin grew up in the pristine woodlands of northern Michigan, Studied forestry and biology in college, and served the US Forest Service his entire career. In semi-retirement, he has become a professional storyteller working on Disney and Princess cruises along the Alaskan coast. Griffin lives with his wife in Juneau, Alaska.

PHOTO BY SEANNA O'SULLIVAN-HINES, JUNEAU.

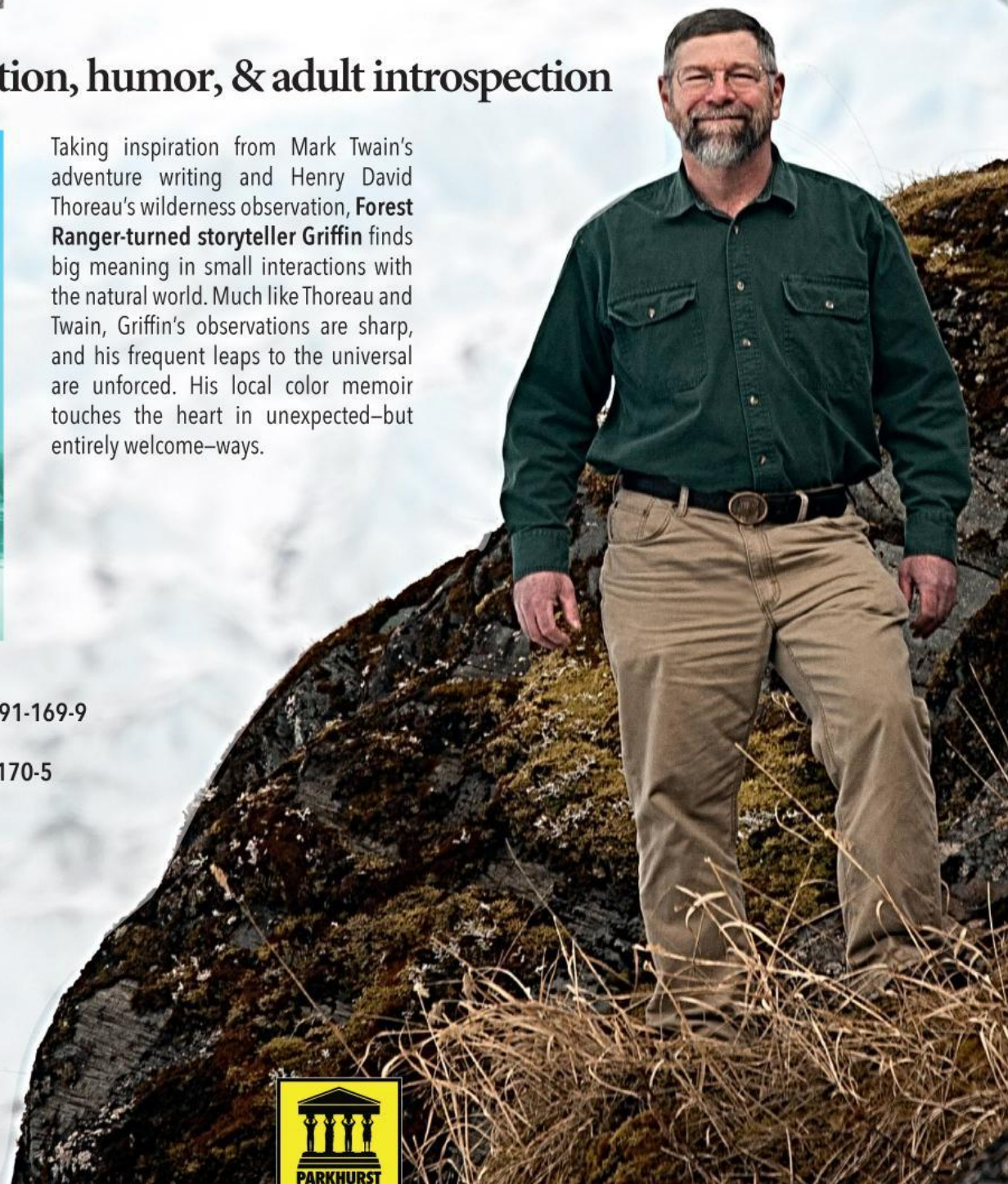
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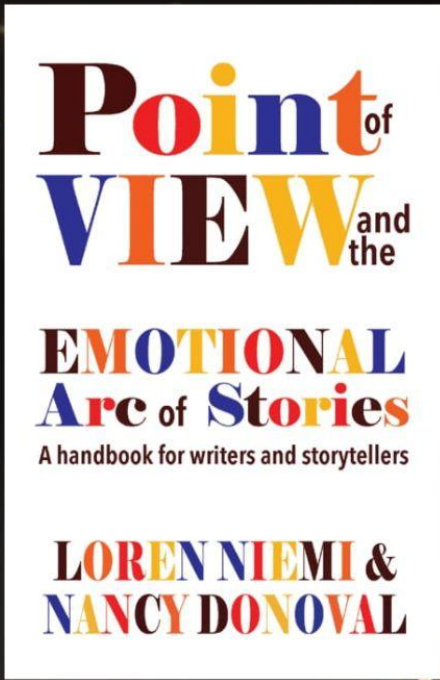
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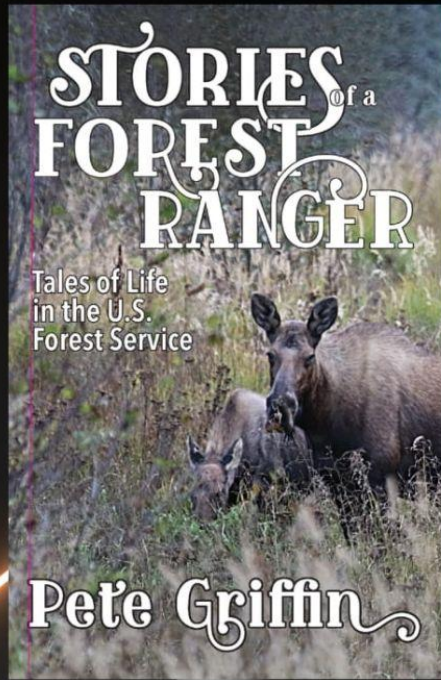
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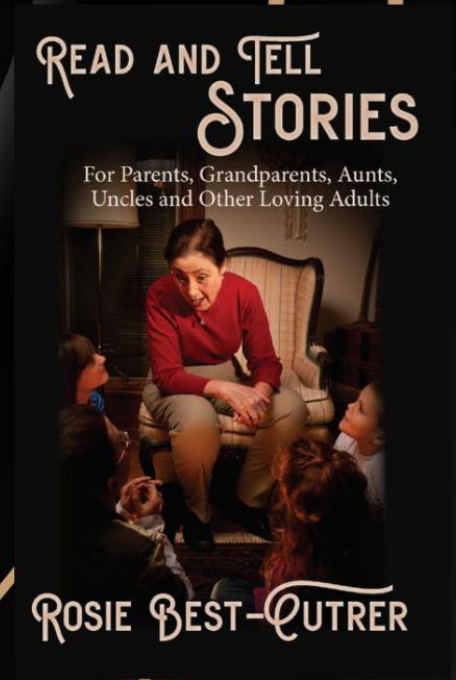




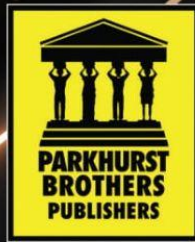
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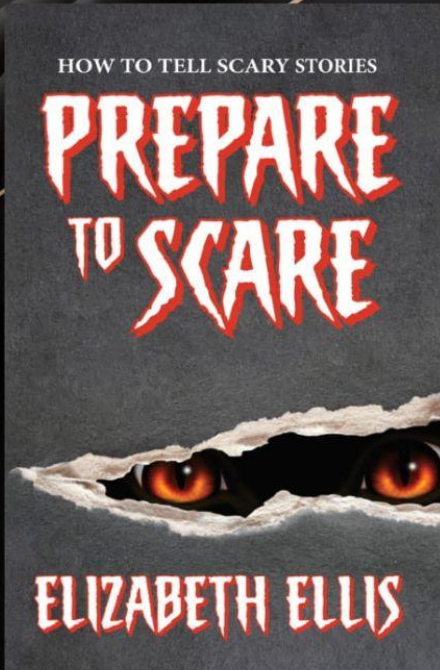
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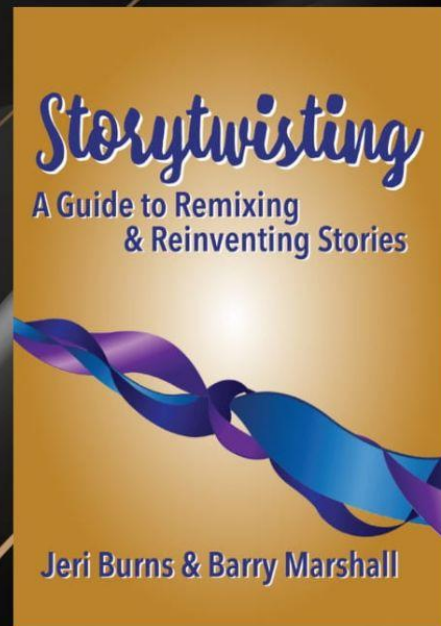
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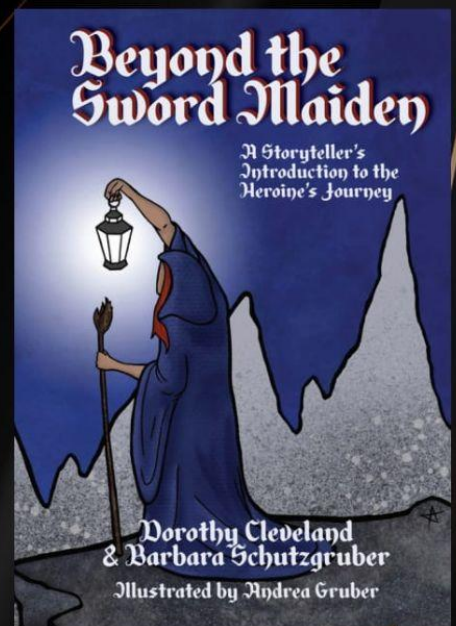
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Tinos was designed by Steve Matteson as an innovative, refreshing serif design that is metrically compatible with Times New Roman™. Tinos offers improved on-screen readability characteristics and the pan-European WGL character set and solves the needs of developers looking for width-compatible fonts to address document portability across platforms.

Updated in May 2013 with improved hinting and released under the Apache 2.0 license.

Images

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*Everyone has a story to
share.*

*May you always wonder,
dream, and share.*

-Asia Starr
Head Design & Layout
mamastarrstorytelling.com

Thoughts? Feedback? Feelings?
Contact us at:
storybeasteditor@gmail.com.





