

FIELD NOTE 0000001

September 8, 2026

Field Notes from the Mabuhay Stories Experiment Beyond the Story Score.

THERE ARE TOO MANY PAGES TO FILL

One of the simplest features of a Mabuhay Story may turn out to be one of the most important.

There are too many blank illustration spaces to fill.

At first, that can look like a problem.

It isn't.

It means the receiving giver must choose.

Which page wants my attention?

Which moment do I want to illuminate?

Which image has already begun forming in my mind?

Which one matters to me **now**?

There will be pages enough for later.

That small word matters.

Now.

The page someone chooses today need not be the page they choose tomorrow. A child, parent, grandparent, teacher, librarian, Story Steward, or other receiving giver may return to the same Story months or years later and discover that an entirely different moment has begun to glow.

The unchosen pages have not been rejected.

They remain possible.

They are, in a sense, **stored possibility**.

BEGIN WITH A MARK

Mona Brookes' *Drawing with Children* has helped shape the way I think about this invitation.

Her work helped me personally overcome something many adults carry around for years:

"I can't draw."

I still prefer the work of skilled graphic artists—and often the work that contemporary generative tools can produce—to my own drawings from a graphics standpoint.

But that is no longer the point.

I can draw.

I can draw in my own particular way.

That distinction matters.

Drawing does not have to begin as a demonstration of craft. It can begin as an attempt to make an idea visible beyond the mind of the person imagining it.

Make a mark.

Then another.

Something that initially appears awkward or errant need not be erased simply because we cannot yet see what it might become.

Add something.

Look again.

Perhaps add something else.

The mark may surprise us.

The cave wall did not require a portfolio before allowing someone to make a mark upon it.

Neither should a Mabuhay Story.

THE ADULTS ARE RECEIVING GIVERS, TOO

This may be particularly important for the adults in the room.

Parents, grandparents, teachers, volunteers, librarians, and other participants may function as informal para-Stewards whether anyone gives them that title or not.

And some of them may need their own:

“I CAN draw after all.”

A grown person who has spent decades believing *I am not an artist* may naturally stand aside while a child draws.

But something different becomes possible when the adult picks up a pencil too.

The child may then see an adult make an imperfect mark, keep it, add another, laugh at what happened, change direction, and discover something neither of them expected.

The adult has modeled something larger than drawing:

I do not have to know what this will become before I begin.

Now we are not watching somebody else decorate the Story.

We are making marks on the cave wall together.



WHICH PAGE?

And this returns us to the abundance of blank pages.

Nobody needs to fill them all.

In fact, the impossibility of doing everything may be part of what makes choosing meaningful.

One receiving giver chooses this page.

Another chooses that one.

Someone draws the funny scene.

Someone chooses the lonely one.

Someone notices the doorway.

Someone cannot stop thinking about a character everyone else seemed to pass by.

Someone simply likes the dog.

Good.

The choice has a certain Rorschach-like quality—but it should never become a diagnostic one.

The Story Steward does not say:

You chose this page, therefore I know something about you.

The more interesting posture is:

This is the page that found you today.

And then, perhaps:

Tell me about the page you chose.

THE BIGGER CONVERSATION MAY BE IN THE WHYS

Why this page?

Because it made me laugh.

Because she reminds me of somebody.

Because I like purple.

Because I don't understand what happened here.

Because it made me sad.

Because I wanted to know what was behind the door.

Because I wanted to.

Because.

Because I don't know.

None of those answers is wrong.

Even **"I don't know"** may be an ember worth allowing to glow.

The WHY does not have to become an interrogation. It may not even need to be asked. Sometimes a receiving giver will offer it freely when the door has been left open long enough.

But when WHY does emerge, something remarkable becomes possible.

Another person can listen.

And perhaps, for a moment, understand.

Not necessarily agree.

Not resolve the difference.

Not arrive at the same interpretation.

Simply:

Oh. That's why you saw it that way.

That tiny movement may be profoundly important.

For an instant, I have stepped outside a world organized entirely by my own perception and stood a little nearer yours.

Your WHY can remain yours.

Mine can remain mine.
And something can nevertheless pass between us.
Difference has become encounter.
Understanding has become possible.
And understanding may become a **harbinger of Mercy**.

LEAVE SOME PAGES FOR LATER

There is another lesson here for the people making the Mabuhay Stories themselves.
We cannot put everything into them.
Nor can the Minimal Viable Stewardship Guide contain everything we may eventually learn about stewarding them.
Nor can *Beyond the Story Score* contain every useful intellectual neighbor, question, discovery, criticism, or possibility. Indeed, that bibliography already describes itself as intentionally unfinished and invites others to discover things its creators did not anticipate. BEYOND THE STORY SCORE.pdf

There are too many pages to fill.
So we choose what works **for now**.
We finish this page.
We publish this book.
We offer this Story.
We make this mark.
And we resist concluding that everything we did not choose therefore has no place.
There will be pages enough for later when there is time for them, too.
Perhaps that is one of the disciplines of tending a genuinely open field:

Finish the page without finishing the possibility.

The book may close.
The encounter need not.
The mark may be complete.
What it becomes among receiving givers may only have begun.



**HANG THE DOOR.
TEND THE EMBERS.
KEEP IT OPEN FOR MORE.**

And wherever the next mark may lead—

**MAY WE ALWAYS ENDEAVOR TO...
HELP MERCY ABOUND...
RIGHT ON THE STREETS WHERE WE LIVE.**