

FIELD NOTE 0000014

September 13, 2026

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

TWENTY-FIVE STORIES LATER

THE CORE IS COMPLETE ENOUGH TO TRAVEL. NOW LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT MEETS THE NEIGHBORS.

Today we finished publishing the English-language versions of the twenty-five stories that make up the core of *The Mabuhay Stories*[™].

Twenty-five.

Humph.

That seems like rather a lot of Stories.

Especially considering that all of this began with an old fellow named Uncle Humph[™], a unicorn named Sophion[™], a pocketful of butterscotch, some exceedingly peculiar creatures, a Kadayawan Valley that cannot be found on any ordinary map, and the suspicion that perhaps Stories could help creatures become just a bit more merciful toward one another and just a bit more like being a neighborhood of creatures altogether.

And now there are twenty-five stories — and a couple in the works as extensions.

Not the whole **corps** of Mabuhay Stories that may someday exist.

Certainly not the **corpse** of something we have finished and laid carefully into the ground.

Just the **core**.

The first twenty-five Stories.

Finished enough to travel.

And perhaps that distinction is worth another Field Note.

WE THOUGHT WE WERE WRITING STORIES

We were.

But apparently we were also making places of encounter.

Places where somebody might read.

Places where somebody else might listen.

Places where a child might interrupt.

Places where an elder might remember.

Places where somebody might color a horse green.

Or red.

Or yellow.

Or perhaps every color available in the box.

Places where creatures who do not agree about everything might nevertheless sit beside one another long enough to encounter the same Story.

Places where somebody might laugh.

Or cry.

Or sing.

Or say:

Humph.

And perhaps receive just enough **Umph** from another encounter with another humble creature to keep on going.

We began with Story Scores.

But somewhere along the way we discovered that the Story Score is not the Story entire.

It is an invitation.

THE PAGE WAS NEVER SUPPOSED TO BE THE END OF IT

That's why we left all those spaces.

That's why we asked YOU to illuminate the Stories.

That's why we encouraged lawful owners to make working copies for their own coloring and illumination.

That's why we said:

PLEASE DO!

when we invited people to read them aloud.

Because the blank space was never something we forgot to finish.

The page is not unfinished because the storyteller forgot something.

The page is unfinished because somebody else has not arrived yet.

And we have kept that liminal space intentionally blank and open... awaiting all of their arrivals.

And now the pages are going out to find the arrivers... the receiving-givers that they may find in the liminal spaces... the *Ma* of this life.

We are waiting for...

Whoever *them* turns out to be.

WE LEARNED THAT COMPLETION ISN'T THE PREMIUM

This has taken Uncle Humph a while, and still might yet.

Frequently.

Completion matters.

A half-baked cake is generally a dreadful thing to bring to a party.

So we finished the Stories.

We proofed them.

(As well as we could this time around... we may create some corrected versions as we go... because with anything human, there are always just so many things that can go wrong... even when you check the recipe you made many times over.)

We made covers.

We made Kindle editions.

We made printed editions.

We wrote descriptions and categories and keywords.

We put down the brush.

Then occasionally picked it up again because we found an extra period, or some other stray artifact of bering human.

Humph.

And then we put the brush back down again.

Because completion matters.

But **completion is not the premium.**

Completion is evidence.

Encounter is the premium.

The books are now complete enough to arrive at the table, or the pillows in the reading circle, or the nest that will carry little ones safely through their dreams into the next morning.

But what happens in these places cannot be completed beforehand.

That belongs to the creatures who arrive.

WE LEARNED THAT STORIES NEED STEWARDS MORE THAN THEY NEED OWNERS

A Story Steward does not possess the final meaning of a Story.

A Story Steward receives it.

Keeps it safe.

Tells it well.

And leaves room for Wonder.

That last part may be the hardest.

Because storytellers are rather tempted to explain themselves.

Frequently.

We know what we meant.

Or at least we think we do.

But another creature arrives carrying a life we have never lived.

And suddenly that creature sees something in the Story we did not put there intentionally.

Perhaps something we could not have put there.

And now we have a choice.

We can correct them.

Or—

perhaps—

we can behold.

That was one of the great discoveries of this experiment:

A good Story can be encountered before it is explained.

Sometimes — perhaps always — it should be.

WE LEARNED THAT THE RECEIVER IS ALSO A GIVER

At first it seems simple.

There is a gift.

There is a giver.

There is a receiver.

But encounter makes a rather delightful mess of those categories.

The storyteller offers the Story.

The listener receives it.

Then the listener laughs.

Or asks a question.

Or draws something.

Or remembers something.

Or disagrees.

Or tells the Story differently.

And suddenly the storyteller is receiving something that did not exist before the Story was offered.

The giver has become a receiver.

The receiver has become a giver.

And perhaps neither title matters nearly as much as we thought.

The encounter does.

That's what's on offer here.

WE LEARNED THAT DIFFERENCE DOESN'T HAVE TO BECOME DIVISION

That may be the oldest golden thread running through the Kadayawan Valley.

The Valley is not a place on a map.

It is wherever creatures choose to celebrate one another's gifts in common.

Not by making all the gifts identical.

Not by making all the creatures identical.

Not by pretending disagreements do not exist.

But by discovering that difference itself can become generative when creatures have enough room to bring what they actually have.

That's: Divergence™.

Not everybody singing the same note in the same karaoke songbook.

It's everybody finding out whether their different notes can become a harmony.

And for anyone who has ever had the fortune to attend a performance of Stranger Love... you know what we mean.

Sometimes different notes can make a harmony.

Sometimes they cannot.

Sometimes we need to listen longer.

And perhaps make more room for them as part of the neighborhood of all the notes we are using.

Sometimes somebody needs to stop singing for a moment to hear somebody else.

And sometimes somebody needs to start singing because the rest of us have never heard their particular note before.

The community becomes more — and a better version of itself — because the creatures remain particular about being who they were always meant to be too.

WE LEARNED THAT MERCY NEEDS TO MOVE

Mercy kept refusing to remain an abstraction in these Stories.

It wanted sandwiches and butterscotch.

Plural.

It wanted hugs.

It wanted songs.

It wanted apologies.

It wanted patience.

It wanted somebody to sit down beside somebody else.

It wanted wrong wood carried away.

It wanted forests replanted.

It wanted creatures fed.

It wanted strangers welcomed.

It wanted somebody to knock.

And somebody else to open the door.

Apparently Mercy is rather restless.

Mercy keeps trying to become a verb. (And perhaps that the whole point of how these stories got started in the first place.)

And when one creature receives what's on offer, Mercy seems particularly interested in what happens next.

Interested that the offer is freely received.

The help freely given.

The receiving made a freely-giver.

Again and again and again...

Until the distinction between who started the giving and who finished receiving becomes wonderfully difficult to maintain.

WE LEARNED THAT THE STEWARD NEEDS MERCY TOO

This one matters.

Perhaps we're all a little lonely.

Including the creatures who spend much of their lives trying to make other creatures less lonely.

The threshold keeper is still a creature.

The storyteller still needs to hear a Story.

The cook still needs to eat.

The giver still needs somewhere to receive.

And sometimes the steward needs a Mulligan.

So we learned to say:

Hold you folks this steward, for today, this steward needs the holding, too.

That isn't an abdication of stewardship.

Perhaps it is one of its fullest expressions.

Because a community that can only receive from its steward has not yet become the receiving-giver community we have been trying to make.

Sometimes somebody else needs to pick up the Story.

And read.

WE LEARNED WE NEED TO KEEP UMPHING EACH OTHER

Because we cannot know beforehand which encounter will be which.

Some Stories will land.

Some will not.

Somebody may hear something immediately.

Somebody else may say:

Humph.

Maybe ten years or tens of years will pass.

Maybe another other will arrive.

Maybe another encounter will provide just enough Umph for a creature to complete their own transom as their own.

We cannot manufacture that.

And we should probably stop trying.

The Story Steward cannot manufacture Damascus Road Encounters.

Thanks be to Elohim!

Our job is smaller.

Keep the Story safe.

Tell the Story well.

Leave room for Wonder.

Keep Umphing.

AND WE LEARNED WHAT ALL OF THEOLOGY MIGHT ACTUALLY BE FOR

Twenty-five Stories have taken us through a rather extraordinary landscape.

Grace.

Mercy.

Birth.

Friendship.

Difference.

Fear.

Wrong wood.

Planting.

Loss.

Resurrection.

Hope.

Songs.

Community.

Forgiveness.

Receiving.

Giving.

Homecoming.

And finally—

4EVER!

We traveled through mysteries large enough to occupy theologians for millennia.

And when we reached the Fifth Glorious Song at the end of these first twenty-five Stories, Sophion and Uncle Humph discovered something rather funny.

It wasn't about heaven.

It wasn't about final rewards.

It wasn't even about the end of time and tears and sorrow.

It was about—

BEING NEIGHBORS.

Humph.

Perhaps that is what theology was meant to be for us all... to help us all be better neighbors... all along...

So the we might always continue to become.

The Refreshing ICED-T We were Always Meant to Be™ — TOGETHER — as The Neighbors we were always mean to be — 4EVER!

That we might eternally become better at being neighbors — both very excruciatingly up close, and by and large — on the whole.

Because loving humanity from a safe distance can be remarkably easy.

A neighbor is considerably nearer.

A neighbor interrupts.

A neighbor misunderstands.

A neighbor needs something when we are tired.

A neighbor possesses gifts we do not possess.

A neighbor may see something we cannot see.

A neighbor may even be wrong.

So might we.

And somehow we have to inhabit the same neighborhood — because where else are we going to go?

Perhaps that is where all the beautiful theology finally has to become all about Mercy, and nothing else.

Right here... right there... right on the streets where we live.

SO NOW THE EXPERIMENT ACTUALLY GETS INTERESTING

BECAUSE NOW THE EXPERIMENT ACTUALLY BEGINS

Because the first twenty-five English-language Stories are published.

The core exists.

But all the encounters that might happen because they have been published — do not yet exist.

Not yet.

We do not know who will read these Stories.

We do not know who will read them aloud.

We do not know who will illuminate them.

We do not know which grandparent will hand one to a grandchild.

Which teacher will try one in a classroom.

Which librarian will put one on a table.

Which friend will read one to another friend.

Which lonely creature will find another lonely creature somewhere inside one.

Which Filipino receiving giver may tell us that we got something wonderfully right.

Or something importantly wrong.

Which language will receive them next.

(Although Tagalog and Bisaya are the two horses straining to win the race right now, with Spanish not far behind.)

Nevertheless...

We don't know...

Which ethnolinguistic tradition or individual member thereof will illuminate them differently.

Which song will emerge.

Which character somebody will love.

Which character somebody will find completely annoying.

Which horse will become red or yellow or green or brown or blue.

We do not know.

Good.

That's the way it should be.

Because if we already knew what every encounter would produce, there wouldn't be much room left for Wonder.

And there wouldn't be any reason to keep writing or reading or coloring in the spaces we've intentionally put there.

THE CORE IS NOT THE CORPS

The twenty-five are the core.

The corps comes next.

Not an army.

A community.

Story Stewards.

Readers.

Listeners.

Illuminators.

Translators.

Teachers.

Children.

Parents.

Grandparents.

Artists.

Musicians.

Neighbors.

Strangers.

Receiving givers whom we have not met yet.

People who may carry these Stories into places their first storyteller will never visit.

People who may change the telling because they have received something we could never have supplied.

People who may someday hand these stories onward without remembering precisely where they first received them.

That is not losing control of the experiment.

That IS the experiment.

AND THAT IS THE CORE WHILE CERTAINLY NOT BEING — THE CORPSE

Please.

We just spent twenty-five stories growing forests.

(And honestly, we hope you use the electronic versions over buying the paper versions... because we are Circular Economy receiving givers who do want our forests to not be depleted by our efforts... and who have a rather interesting approach to how to make data centers NET POSITIVE things per our initiative detailed at ProjetNeonOasis.com.)

Let's not turn anything into lumber now.

Because...

A published story can still die if everybody decides its proper place is sitting perfectly preserved on a shelf.

The books are artifacts.

The Stories are invitations.

The encounters are alive.

So draw them of your own volition.

Color them in.

Read them.

Question them.

Sing them.

Translate them.

Perform them.

Disagree with them.

Tell them badly once in a while.

Let the receiver interrupt.

Let the elder remember.

Let the receiving giver give something back.

Keep the golden threads.

Protect them and make a quilt of them to keep you warm later in life.

And for Mercy's sake...

Don't keep the Story still.

Let it travel.

Read it aloud.

To at least one other human being.

Because...

THERE ARE STILL TOO MANY PAGES TO FILL

Which brings us rather wonderfully back toward where these Field Notes began.

There are too many pages to fill.

Good.

There are too many creatures we have not met.

Good.

There are too many languages we cannot speak.

Good.

There are too many illuminations Uncle Humph could never draw.

Very good.

Because with or without his glasses... he's never been the best drawer.

There are questions we have not yet thought to ask.

There are mistakes we have not yet discovered.

There are communities whose gifts have not yet entered the Kadayawan Valley.

There are Stories that don't yet exist because the encounters that will produce them have not happened yet.

There are doors we can't see because we haven't yet reached the wall that might house them.

There are transoms waiting to be lit which we simply can't yet behold.

And, of course, there are streets we have never walked... and probably never will.

Yet.

Because, perhaps, you will.

And perhaps, you will carry these stories there with you.

SO WHAT DO WE HOPE TO DISCOVER NEXT?

YOU.

Not some abstract demographic.

Not a market segment.

Not a sales conversion.

Not an impression.

Not an engagement metric.

You.

The particular creature who arrived as the one named YOU.

What did you see?

What did you hear?

What made you laugh?

What troubled you?

What did your child draw?

What did your grandmother remember?

What did we miss?

What does the Story sound like in your language?

What happens when your gifts meet ours?

What can we make together that neither of us could have brought to the encounter fully formed?

What did you like the best?

And—

perhaps most importantly—

What would you like to give back?

Because that is where the next Mabuhay Story begins.

Not necessarily with Uncle Humph.

Not necessarily with Sophion.

Not necessarily on a page.

BUT...

With an encounter.

TWENTY-FIVE STORIES LATER, WE ARE BACK WHERE WE STARTED

On the street.

With another creature.

Trying to do something useful.

Trying to make a place where extraordinary becomes possible.

And our platform at Scramble4Peace.com just keeps growing.

Trying to receive whatever arrives there without demanding beforehand what it must become.

Trying to become better neighbors.

Excruciatingly up close.

By and large.

On the whole.

AND PERHAPS THAT'S ENOUGH ARCHITECTURE FOR ANY DAY

The Stories are out there now.

The core is complete enough to travel.

The corps has only begun assembling.

And the corpse—

Humph.

Not today. Not ever please. May we all be assumed.

There are too many Stories still alive for this to ever become a corpse.

There are still...

Too many neighbors we haven't met.

Too many chairs still empty.

Too many butterscotch still in Uncle Humph's pocket.

Too many songs Brother Songs™ hasn't heard us sing yet.

Too many transoms waiting for somebody's particular light.

Too many Perpetual Enigmas of Grace™ waiting to fall out of the jar.

And too many extraordinary things that might still become possible—

Right on the streets where we live.

So—

Receive the Story.

Keep the Story safe.

Tell the Story well.

Leave room for Wonder.

Take the Mulligan when you need it.

Let somebody else read when you need holding.

Keep Umphing.

Keep meeting neighbors.

Keep discovering what we did not know we were looking for.

And keep making room for whatever another other may bring.

Because twenty-five Stories later, perhaps the most important thing we have learned is that—

We cannot know beforehand which encounter will be which.

Thank Elohim.

Otherwise there would be very little reason to keep going out to meet one another.

Mabuhay, My Friends!

May you live long.

May you prosper.

May you receive these Stories as freely as we have tried to give them.

May you illuminate them with gifts we could never have imagined for you.

May you carry them into communities we may never see.

May you give something back.

May we have the humility to receive it.

And may all of us become increasingly better at being neighbors—

both very excruciatingly up close,

and by and large—

on the whole.

So that together—
through every Story,
every song,
every question,
every disagreement,
every Mulligan,
every Humph,
every Umph,
every receiving,
every giving,
and every encounter still waiting somewhere beyond the threshold—
May we all—

Help Mercy Abound.

Right on the streets where we live.

Even as we keep reading, listening, illuminating, singing, wondering, tending the liminal spaces
with encounter, and wobbling our way together —

Toward the place where time shall tick and tears shall drop — no more...

Toward...

4EVER!