

FIELD NOTE 0000007

September 9, 2026

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

ON BEING A CHILDLIKE ADULT

EVEN WHEN YOU MIGHT BE THE DESIGNATED STORY STEWARD FOR THE DAY

One of the peculiar things about The Mabuhay Stories™ is that there are an awful lot of blank spaces in them.

This is intentional.

For a child, the invitation is fairly straightforward.

Here are some crayons.

Here's a story.

Here's some empty space.

What do YOU see?

Draw it.

Color it.

Illuminate it.

Make this particular copy of this particular story partly your own.

That's a wonderfully childlike thing to do.

And perhaps adults should be careful about assuming we've outgrown it.

Because the blank pages present adults with a challenge too.

Only our crayons may look a little different.

For us, the blank spaces aren't merely places where illustrations are missing.

They may represent **encounters that haven't happened yet beyond the written page.**

Someone we haven't welcomed.

Someone we haven't listened to.

Someone we haven't forgiven.

Someone we haven't fed.

Someone whose gift we haven't noticed.

Someone whose story we've decided we understand before allowing them to finish telling it.

Or perhaps simply somebody we haven't met yet.

That's a considerably more difficult blank page to illuminate.

Especially when we happen to be the designated Story Steward for the day.

Because adults entrusted with stories can very easily begin believing our job is to possess them.

Explain them.

Interpret them correctly.

Keep everybody inside the lines.

And perhaps even make sure the crayons remain properly sorted in their original box.

Humph.

Children frequently know better.

Give children a blank page and they generally understand something many adults have worked very hard to forget:

The empty space is an invitation.

It doesn't necessarily mean something has gone wrong.

It may mean something hasn't happened yet.

That distinction matters.

A Canonical Story Score leaves room because the storyteller cannot possibly know every illumination the story may someday receive.

A Story Steward leaves room because the Steward cannot possibly know every encounter through which the story may someday travel.

And a childlike adult leaves room because we've finally become old enough to understand that we don't know everything that's coming next.

Perhaps that's one of the great gifts children can return to the adults who read with them.

Wonder.

Not ignorance.

Not gullibility.

Not irresponsibility.

Wonder.

The willingness to encounter something before deciding completely what it must become.

The willingness to ask another person:

What do YOU see?

And then actually wait for the answer.

That may be one of the most important disciplines of Story Stewardship.

Because the Story Steward isn't necessarily the wisest creature gathered around the book.

We're simply the creature who happens to be holding it today.

Our job is to Receive the Story.

Keep the Story safe.

Tell the Story well.

Leave room for Wonder.

And then—

perhaps—

hand over the crayons.

The child may see something we missed.

The grandparent may remember something nobody knew they remembered.

The lonely person may discover language for something they've never been able to say.

The storyteller may hear an illumination that was never consciously placed into the story at all.

And somebody who began the encounter as a receiver may discover something they can give.

That movement matters to me.

Receiving.

Encountering.

Responding.

Giving.

Then receiving again.

Because the object of these stories isn't to manufacture perfectly illustrated books.

And it certainly isn't to manufacture perfectly interpreted people.

These texts work on multiple levels for multiple ages.

Sometimes the response may simply be a purple unicorn drawn across two pages.

Good.

Sometimes it may be laughter.

Good.

Sometimes a question.

Good.

Sometimes a memory.

Sometimes tears.

Sometimes a difficult conversation that should've happened a long time ago.

And sometimes an encounter may reveal something sufficiently painful or complicated that the merciful next action is seeking help from somebody properly trained to provide it.

These stories aren't substitutes for professionally supervised therapy.

They're stories.

But stories can sometimes become bridges.

They can provoke catharsis.

They can help us notice things.

They can give us language.

And, most importantly for this experiment, they can sometimes help move us from merely feeling something toward doing something meaningfully corrective with what we've felt.

Not because the Story Score prescribed the answer.

But because the encounter illuminated a blank space in our life that we can now see.

And perhaps do something useful about.

That's where the adult crayons come in.

Feed somebody.

Call somebody.

Listen.

Apologize.

Forgive where forgiveness is possible.

Repair what can be repaired.

Welcome somebody.

Make something.

Teach something.

Learn something.

Ask for help.

Offer help.

Or simply sit beside somebody long enough for the next illumination to appear.

Children put crayons on the page.

Perhaps childlike adults learn to put Mercy into the blank spaces of their lives.

And perhaps the wisest Story Steward is the one who remembers that being entrusted with the story doesn't make us its final authority.

It makes us its temporary keeper.

For this encounter.

On this day.

With these particular creatures gathered around us.

Tomorrow somebody else may hold the book.

Good.

Give them the crayons.

Because neither the completion nor the artifact is the premium.

The encounter is.

And every blank space leaves room for another one.

Another illumination.

Another receiving giver.

Another little place where something extraordinary might become possible—
right on the streets where we live.

So remain grown-up enough to steward the Story well.

And remain childlike enough to wonder what might happen when somebody else gets hold of the crayons.

Then behold.

And Help Mercy Abound.

Naturally.

Organically.

And as widely as possible.

Without end.

4EVER!

