

FIELD NOTE 0000012

September 11, 2026

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

SOMETIMES THE STEWARD NEEDS A MULLIGAN

AND PERHAPS THAT'S WHY WE SHOULD PRACTICE GIVING THEM BEFORE SOMEBODY REALLY NEEDS ONE

Yesterday we spent some time thinking about loneliness.

About Story Stewards.

About threshold keepers.

About some extraordinary creatures who seem to have left this life considerably earlier than many of us would have liked.

And about something a very small child once said when she wanted somebody to pick her up and hold her:

Hold you.

This morning, Grace apparently decided we had been quite serious enough.

So Arnold Palmer showed up with too many golf clubs.

Humph.

THE KING DIDN'T ALWAYS PLAY BY THE RULES

Arnold Palmer knew something about golf.

They called him **The King** for a reason.

He won seven major championships. He also wrote a book intended to help ordinary golfers understand the rules of the game.

And according to an article that wandered into my morning feed, that book managed to annoy the United States Golf Association because Palmer admitted something rather inconvenient.

When he was playing recreationally, he sometimes took a Mulligan from the first tee.

And sometimes he carried more than the fourteen clubs permitted by the Rules of Golf.

The USGA was not amused.

Years later, however, one of its senior rules officials offered a rather more nuanced answer.

If Arnold Palmer was wandering around with a great many clubs and taking a Mulligan, was he still playing golf?

Yes.

Competitive golf was different. There the rules created the common boundaries necessary for equitable competition.

But recreational golf could apparently survive Arnold Palmer hitting another ball.

That distinction interests this Story Steward very much.

SOMETIMES THE LAW PROTECTS THE GAME

Rules matter.

If we're competing, keeping score, awarding prizes or comparing performances, we need shared boundaries.

Otherwise the score ceases to mean very much.

But sometimes we're not playing for the trophy.

Sometimes we're playing because it's a beautiful morning.

Sometimes we're teaching somebody.

Sometimes we're learning.

Sometimes we're laughing.

Sometimes we're walking beside somebody we haven't seen for a while.

Sometimes we hit a perfectly dreadful golf shot.

And somebody says:

Take another one.

The first ball still went into the trees.

Nobody needs to pretend otherwise.

The Mulligan doesn't change what happened.

It simply creates another opening.

PERHAPS THAT'S WHAT A MULLIGAN REALLY IS

Another opening.

Not an eraser.

Not an exemption from consequence.

Not permission to cheat when everybody else is playing by the agreed rules.

Just an opening in a place where the completion isn't the premium.

The encounter is.

And perhaps that's why recreational games have accumulated so many wonderfully unofficial customs.

Human beings seem remarkably good at discovering little ways of saying:

Stay in the game.

Try again.

Take another swing.

Have another turn.

Let's see what happens this time.

Maybe that's laughter in the law.

Not contempt for the rules.

A little liminal opening beside them where another purpose can be served.

AND THEN THERE'S THE MULLIGAN WE CAN DRINK

At Hot Dish Happiness, we're already playing with another kind of Mulligan.

Arnold Palmer's famous drink gives us iced tea and lemonade.

Then we add at least one more flavoring.

And suddenly we're back in familiar Kadayawan Valley territory.

Combinations.

Variations.

Possibilities.

Perpetual Enigmas of Grace™.

The point isn't to manufacture every possible Mulligan.

Just as the point isn't to collect every possible Enigma wrapper.

Or illuminate every possible Mabuhay Story.

Or hear every possible read-aloud.

Or exhaust every possible encounter.

The variation simply makes room for another one.

And another.

And another.

WHICH BRINGS US BACK TO “HOLD YOU”

There is a heavier reason this matters.

Some people spend much of their lives holding things together.

Families.

Communities.

Stories.

Tables.

Churches.

Games.

Thresholds.

Other people.

And one danger of becoming known as the holder is that everybody—including the holder—can begin to forget that the holder is another creature who occasionally needs holding.

That is why a healthy receiving-giver community cannot consist of one magnificent giver surrounded by grateful receivers.

The directions need to remain fluid.

Because eventually the creature who usually says:

Come in. I've got you.

may need to say:

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

That isn't necessarily the failure of stewardship.

It may be stewardship working exactly as it should.

The holder has moved to another place in the encounter.

And everybody else gets to move too.

THE STEWARD NEEDS A MULLIGAN TOO

Perhaps we shouldn't wait until something has gone terribly wrong to learn how to do this.

Maybe we should practice.

Give somebody another shot when nothing important is riding on it.

Read badly together.

Lose your place.

Let the child interrupt.

Color the horse green.

Try the ridiculous club.

Make another Mulligan.

Add another flavor.

Laugh.

Let the person who normally cooks sit down and eat.

Let the Story Steward be read to.

Let the threshold keeper walk through the threshold.

Let the giver receive.

Let the receiver give.

Because someday one of those movements may matter considerably more than it does today.

And nobody should have to learn the grammar of **Hold you** for the first time on the day they desperately need to speak it.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO LET THE CRACKS SHOW

My first confessor, Father Lewis, once gave me some advice that has traveled a very long way with me:

Don't be afraid to let the cracks show... because that's where the light gets in to others.

He was speaking to me.

And because I eventually let him see some of those cracks, he was later able to help tend a threshold for two people standing on it.

The cracks didn't make the encounter fail.

They made the encounter possible.

That's worth remembering if you're usually the creature holding the door.

You don't always have to look like the door.

PERHAPS THAT'S PART OF KEEPING PEOPLE IN THE GAME AND MOREOVER IN THIS LIFE WITH US WHERE THEY TOO BELONG

We should be careful here.

A Mulligan cannot cure grief.

A Story cannot guarantee that somebody stays.

An encounter cannot promise to rescue another human being from every darkness they may encounter.

And we should never turn the lives, deaths or absences from community of people we miss into tidy explanations they can no longer correct—or perhaps cannot humanly bring themselves to correct in this life.

But perhaps we can make communities in which asking to be held is ordinary.

Perhaps we can practice receiving while the stakes are low.

Perhaps the accomplished creature can have an awful day without believing the accomplishment has disappeared.

Perhaps the threshold keeper can leave the threshold for a while without believing the calling has been revoked.

Perhaps somebody can simply say:

Hold you.

And somebody else will understand.

SO TAKE THE MULLIGAN

Not on the scorecards that matter.

Not where taking it would steal something from somebody else.

But out here.

Beyond the ropes.

On the ordinary links of life where we live.

Take another swing.

Offer another ball.

Try another club.

Mix another flavor.

Read another Story.

Pull up another chair.

And if today happens to be the day when this particular Story Steward can't quite keep the threshold—

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

Tomorrow we can see who's holding whom.

Perhaps we won't even need to know.

Because the point isn't the Mulligan.

The point isn't the perfect round.

The point isn't even the completion.

The point is the encounter.

And sometimes the most merciful thing we can say to another creature—or allow another creature to say to us—is simply:

Stay in the game.

Take another swing.

We've got time.

Mabuhay.

May you live long.

May you prosper.

May you give plenty of Mulligans.

May you have the good grace to take one when you need it.

And may we keep making enough room for one another that the creatures who usually hold the thresholds can remain among us, holding and being held, for as long as they possibly can.

So that together—

May we all—

Help Mercy Abound.

Right on the streets where we live.

And right on the links where we might play together, too.

Even as we make our wonderfully imperfect way toward...

4EVER!