

"A most unusual and beautiful story"



the Sailor

The Seven Gifts within us

"Walks a fine line between profound & insane"

Eric Hoffer Award Winner 2019

"As inspiring as Kahlil Gibran's The Prophet"

"Sweet simplicity meets marvellous depth"

"Madness dances with brilliance"

"Wonderful"

“A unique & wonderful manuscript”

Editor @ Souvenir Press

In the Earth, Seven Gifts lay Waiting...

The Seven Gifts

theSailor

The BookLife Prize

“A wonderful current-day twist on fairy tales, faith, subjective morality, and the search for universal truths”

US Review of Books

*“Perhaps the most unusual book you’ll ever read, it is just as educational and inspiring as Kahlil Gibran’s **The Prophet**, but far more readable and enjoyable”*

Eric Hoffer Book Award: **WINNER:** Fiction (Ebook)

FINALIST: Montaigne Medal (*thought-provoking*)

SHORTLIST: The Grand Prize

4th Edition: Easter 2019 : © [theSailor](#)

“A melding of sweet simplicity and marvelous depth”

*“Beautifully written tales
that capture mind, heart & spirit”*

*“I thought this book was charming.
I much preferred it to **The Shack**”*

*“Brilliant .. bizarre ..
the details of seamanship are surreal”*

*This story is for my friend Michèle,
who talked to me about such things.
And for my children, who I hope will do the same.
It is also for Tammy, who had no need of talk.
And for all who look behind the mirror.*

*“This is not a normal book with a normal story; it must
be approached with an open mind and no preconceived
ideas of how books should be written. If readers are
looking for something original and thought-provoking,
this is nearly perfect.”*

The Book Review Blog

Before the Story

BEFORE THIS story began there came into the world a little girl, to whom everything was possible and all things had meaning.

It was obvious to the little girl - long before it was to the scientists - that if she could imagine something then it must exist. Her mind was a part of the Universe, so anything in her mind was also, de facto, part of the Universe, and therefore, in some form, existed.

So the little girl's life was full of wonder and magic: peopled by daring and handsome Princes who rescued damsels in distress, saved woodcutters and milkmaids from tyranny, and rode fine white chargers across the land, their goodness proudly emblazoned across their hearts.

Good fought with Evil all through the early years of her life, and Good always triumphed. So life for the little girl was simple, and she instinctively understood what was meant by the words: "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

But her elders had no understanding of those words. They dismissed them as fantasy; and smirked at the smug illusion of their maturity. Life was considerably more complex than any child could imagine, what with stock exchanges and mortgages, pension funds and life assurance, technology, social mores and atom bombs. Without growing up, a child could not enter this adult world, never mind the Kingdom of Heaven (wherever that may be).

It was the bounden duty of adults to make little girls

grow up and face the true facts of modern, civilised life. And that, undaunted by dreams, was what they did.

So the little girl was coerced out of childhood; and she carefully put away all her childish things, according to the example set her.

She laid aside her childish charm and wonder, and drew on the mantle of acquisitive adulthood. She replaced her trust and simple honesty with a grown-up worldliness, and the sophisticated pragmatism that comes with maturity. And she came to view the world with the sad eye of the realist: a bleak and practical world with no magic.

The fairy tales and mystic parables that had inspired so many of her dreams were discarded in favour of more realistic and socially orientated writings: the intellectual and literary fashions of her day.

The little girl settled herself - as she had been taught - to the rewards and responsibilities of citizenship. And she grew into a modern young woman, aware of and sensitive to her own important needs and desires; and learnt her rightful place in the community.

Her life, which had once been open, inquisitive and mystical, shrank into a solid, firmly structured matrix built entirely around the need for material comfort. In this respect she was a fortunate young woman, for she lived in a time when there was no work for the majority, and thus generous social benefits to compensate. She had a nice home and car, regular holidays abroad, sufficient money for her comfort and needs, and the time to pursue her own important desires. Any struggle would have to be of her own making.

But she made nothing. In the company of her peers, she sank slowly and steadily, and quite willingly, into the seductive quicksands of mature adulthood. And as those

sands dragged her remorselessly ever downward so, beneath the seeming indifferent gaze of the Angel, her spirit gradually died over the years, until finally only her body remained: a firm, lithe, sensual body, moulded to the mood of the time. She was bright, vivacious and socially aware: a most attractive young woman devoid of all childish things, and all childish dreams.

It was a sad story; and there were few that realised, for it was a story of the time, and they were all in that time.

Had they been in another, they might have seen more clearly into this one. She herself might have done. For every time has its own individual quality: its own cosmic tide against which it is hard to fight; though for those that do, the rewards can be great.

But the young girl did not fight. Her elders had drawn a veil over her mind and left her only eyes with which to see. So she never saw her adversary. And she died without ever knowing there was one.

~ ~ ~

All this the Angel knew well

As did the girl; for she had chosen it

The Young Boy

THE ANGEL finished the little girl's tale and then walked with the boy in silence, towards a tall, thin building that stood alone at the far end of the sands. Lights twinkled from the high, narrow windows, and they could see tiny dots of people entering and leaving by the small door at its base.

The boy broke the silence. "A pity she had to grow up," he said. "But it was a funny time to choose to live, wasn't it, with all those problems?"

The Angel smiled. "No," she answered. "It was a rather interesting time in fact. It was the beginning of an important change in the lives of all the people on Earth - the time when the seven gifts of its guardian were to be unveiled."

The boy looked at her quizzically.

The Angel explained: "When the Earth was created its guardian endowed it with seven special gifts. But the awareness of these gifts was to remain dormant until the time came when the people of Earth had grown sufficiently to understand them. The little girl's life was the beginning of that time.

"She wanted to experience the early stages of the change

- the distant sense of a new age of consciousness gradually, almost imperceptibly spreading its tentacles through the dying spasms of the old. In this story, she was freed from the need to work but had lost her child's simple understanding of how to replace it. When the gifts are finally revealed, all the people will 'become as little children', and regain that understanding.

"She knew nothing of the seven gifts; only that it was a time of important and far-reaching change. You will be living on the Earth shortly after her, but before you go you must learn the secrets of these seven gifts."

The boy was surprised. "But why?" he asked. "I don't think I want to know all that. How can I live a normal life if I learn all that before I go? Nobody else has to. Why do I?"

The Angel turned her face away from his enquiring gaze, towards the darkening sea. A flicker of sadness showed briefly in her eyes. Only when it had gone did she turn back to him.

"We all have things we must do," she explained gently, "and this is something you must do."

"But ..."

"Don't argue!" the Angel interrupted him brusquely. But then her tone softened and she went on: "You will find out why soon enough. Now I am going to show you seven books, each of which contains a story illustrating one of the gifts. You must read these stories carefully, then come to me after each one to show me that you fully comprehend not only the nature of the gift, but also its significance. When you have read all seven, you should understand the purpose of the guardian's seven gifts, and the reason for them being unveiled at this time. Then you will know why you have to do this.

"I cannot tell you what the gifts are. It is important that

you find them for yourself."

They entered the building with the high, narrow windows, stood alone at the end of the sands, and began to climb the stairs. The Angel took the boy to a small room right at the top of the building which contained a chair, a table and a single shelf. On the shelf were seven books. She showed him the books and then left.

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~ The First Gift ~

Custer's Last Band

FAR BEYOND the mountains that encircled the kingdom of the Snow Queen, deep within the swirling high altitude mists forever present in those regions, there lived, in a small cave cleft between two rocks, a retired rock 'n' roll singer called Coalhole Custer. He was a strange man, as befits his calling, with a wild beard and long, flowing yellow hair. His music had been way ahead of its time and so he had retired (not entirely voluntarily), penniless and unappreciated at the age of thirty three, to live alone in the mountains with only the company of a small cat and his thirteen string guitar.

But Coalhole Custer was content. He had room to breathe that clean, rarefied air that sparkled forever round the mountaintops, and he had time for his thoughts. The solitude of those mountains freed his mind and let it fly to all manner of strange places, in a way that musicians' drugs had never been able to. He was happy simply to dream his dreams and sing his songs, and allow his restless mind to wander whither it would. And his cat was all the companionship he needed. Those crowds of weirdos that used to surround him at the court of the Snow Queen held no attraction anymore. They had never understood his music and he had never understood them. In truth, he had never

even liked them. Trivial was the word that sprang to mind whenever his memories recalled them. He was missing nothing.

On calm summer evenings he would sit quietly outside the cave, puffing on his pipe and gently stroking the cat. He would watch the glowing red ball of the sun slowly sink beyond the twinkling, distant lights of the Snow Queen's city. At times he fancied he could hear music, drifting up on the thermals and attenuating in the thin, clear air far from that city.

Rubbish, he would think to himself; utter rubbish. No idea at all, any of them. Same old emotive diatonic junk: froth for filling meringues - or the minds of citizens. And his cat would purr in agreement, feline disdain twitching its whiskers.

He wrote his music for the mountains now, and for the heavens that seemed so close around him. This was real music, dragged up from the depths of his soul: music that soared above the minds of mortal citizens; that suffused the earth, enveloping it, enjoining it, and drawing it up, rejoicing, to meet the gods that truly made it. For Coalhole Custer knew that he no longer stood alone in the forming of his music.

And in between times he would walk the foothills with his cat, the old thirteen string guitar slung over his shoulder. In his mouth would be the special thirteen-note Pipes of Pan, built for him by an old radical sculptor who had been banished from the kingdom for carving images of truth. For the Queen's people desired only illusion - shadows behind which they could hide. Even the soil of the Earth was hidden by concrete. The brothels were garnished with fairy lights and the people's faces painted with ochre, their clothes tailored to deceive. Their smiles belied the material

machinations constantly occupying their meringue-like minds. Truth was a dream, metamorphosing only in the clean air of the mountains.

Coalhole Custer breathed it in deeply. Down into his lungs and around his heart it flowed, to be formed finally into music and expelled through the pipes, forever in his mouth. And the music of the gods, set free by this man, took wing and ranged all around the mountains, reaching into every crevice and every creeping thing. It filled the plants and diffused into the Earth; it formed into the songs of birds and the whirring of insects, it shaped the clouds. It brought the winds and softened the rain, and reached out for the sun. But it never reached the city.

At that time the city was in something of a turmoil, owing to the impending Coming-of-Age of the Queen's daughter, the beautiful Ice Princess. The trouble was caused by the Princess's nature, which was as cold as her name. Nothing was good enough in the preparations for the Grand Ball. The decorations - holly plucked from a thousand trees throughout the Queen's domain; castles sculpted from ice; fountains and rare flowers; her name picked out in the lights from ten thousand glow-worms - were tawdry. The specially-made gown - designed by the greatest couturier in the kingdom, assembled by a hundred hand-picked seamstresses from the finest silk of faraway lands - was cheap. The Queen's coach - fashioned from ice of the deepest blue and drawn by twelve golden reindeer, bred for this purpose alone - was uncomfortable. And the band was abysmal.

All the bands were abysmal. The Princess had listened to thirty seven of them, each one worse than the last. "Can no-one write decent music in this God-forsaken land?" she raged. Everyone around her was incompetent. Would

anything ever go right in her life? Did she have to do everything herself?

She had the holly burned and a thousand more trees cut down; the castles melted and rebuilt to her own design; the fountains destroyed and the flowers dug into cesspits, along with the glow-worms and the designers. She took a carving knife and hacked the gown to shreds then burnt it, along with the couturier. She drove the coach - with the reindeer - over the highest cliff in the kingdom, to be dashed to pieces on the rocks at the edge of the ocean; then demanded of her mother that a new one be built. And she banished all thirty seven of the bands into the icy wastes of the glacier region, where Snowman fought with polar bear over the flesh of anything that moved.

Finally, on the very eve of the ball, she had the decorations to her taste. The gown at long last fitted properly; and a brand-new coach stood at her door with twelve blue reindeer specially captured by the Queen's Hunters after a fierce and bloody battle with the Warriors of the Tundra.

But still she had not found a band.

The palace was in consternation. The Queen was in floods of tears, and the King had long since gone to visit his brother on the far side of the ocean. The courtiers gathered to hold council.

The Chief Minister presided. "I know of no band left in the kingdom," he said simply. He was ready to resign himself to his fate. He looked around with faint hope at all the courtiers gathered in the Meeting Room but they were all reluctant to catch his eye. For a long while there was uneasy silence; then a young courtier at the back stood up. "I know of one," he said.

The effect was electric.

~ END of SAMPLE ~

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