

## The Real Story

It happens imperceptibly  
So silently  
So slowly  
We cannot know the time  
Nor place

We cannot name the day  
Nor moment  
We cannot tell when  
We came to know  
That to become ourselves  
We had to hide ourselves

We had to protect our souls  
Sequester our spirits  
And learn to doubt our gifts and  
What we knew we  
Really loved

We are not born alone, empty or lost  
We are born into the vibrant web of life  
Open to wonder, creativity and  
The abundant possibilities of life and learning

Breathing in the joy of exploration and discovery  
Singing with the wind  
Dancing with the trees  
Blossoming with the first buds of spring  
We did not know  
What we could not, or should not,  
Do or be

We were free to play  
To wonder  
To try out all of whom we might become

Buoyed by our own imagination  
And embraced by a palpable  
Yet transcendent field of connections  
And belonging--  
So big it took our breath away

But s l o w l y  
New and older voices began to tell  
A different story  
Began to ask us to live  
A different story

They told us that wonder,  
Awe and imagination were only  
For the young

That we would outgrow them  
That the World they called real  
Would soon teach us  
To change our minds about  
Everything

About the joy of exploration and discovery  
About singing with the wind  
About dancing with the trees  
About blossoming with the first buds of spring  
About belonging to the World,  
Ourselves and one another

And g r a d u a l l y ,  
Just as they said we would,  
We became the story they told us  
The wind still embraced us,  
But we had no time for singing  
The trees still danced,  
But we dared not join them  
And the first blossoms of spring emerged  
Without us becoming part of their flowering

But as g r a d u a l l y  
As we had become lost,  
We were reinvited into the World our  
Hearts,  
Souls, and  
Spirits had always known was  
Truly **real**

A new story was being told  
A story of meaning and mystery  
Of wholeness and wonder  
Of imagination and connections  
Of life and learning

And it was living this story that  
Returned me  
To who I am  
It was living this story that reconnected me to  
The natural World,  
To the song of the wind  
To the dance of the trees  
To the flowering of the first buds of spring

It was living this story that returned  
Me to myself

And told me that I am not alone, empty, or lost

It was living this story that brought me  
Back to life and told me

I belong.

-Stephanie Pace Marshall  
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