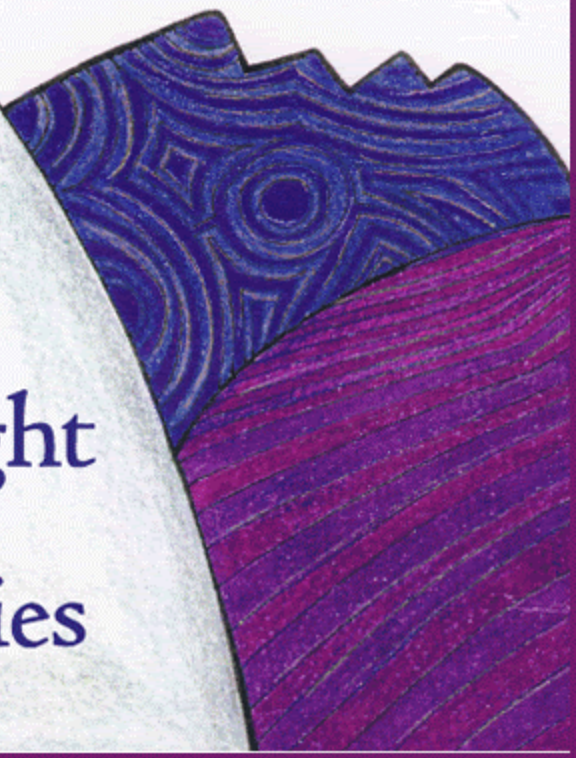




Moyra
Caldecott
Adventures
by Leaf Light
and
Other Stories



ADVENTURES BY LEAF
LIGHT AND OTHER STORIES

MOYRA CALDECOTT

Mushroom eBooks

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First published by Bladud Books in 2007.

"Introduction", "The Expert", "The Wedding", "The Magical Pig", "The Water Lily", "Stars" and "Crystal Gazing" were first published in Adventures by Leaf Light by Moyra Caldecott in 1978 by The Green Tiger Press, USA.

This Edition published in 2007 by Mushroom eBooks, an imprint of Mushroom Publishing, Bath, BA1 4EB, United Kingdom

www.mushroom-ebooks.com

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ISBN 1843195763

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Introduction

Josie is a little girl who found herself unable to run about and play like her sister Deborah while she was recovering from an illness.

She spent a great deal of time by herself in the garden and soon found a world there that was just as interesting as the one she was missing.

She had always had a great love for growing things, and her father for a long time had always asked her where the new plants should go.

She knew some of them liked to be in shady places and some in sunshine. Some liked to have damp, mossy beds and others wanted to be in dry, crumbly soil. These things she had been told by friends, but some knowledge came to her from inside herself without any telling, when she was holding the plant, trying to feel how it was to be the plant.

This way, for instance, she learnt that the blue forget-me-nots wanted to be with the small white daisies because they felt happy together. When they were planted and the rain and sunshine had helped them to

flower, they looked beautiful, and when she sat beside them she could feel their joy.

The pale orange poppies looked beautiful with the rich, dark, velvety wallflowers and whenever she looked at them she felt at peace with everything. Even if she were cross or sad, she just had to be with plants that were happy together and she would feel better.

Then one day she started to see things in the garden that other people could not see.

It happened when she was very quiet and had been sitting for some time feeling very close and loving to everything that lived in the garden.

It was rather like the kind of thing that happens in a busy street when you are waiting for someone. At first you are aware of the cars and bicycles and people passing, and then you stop noticing them and notice instead some little incident, like a column of ants trying to push a crumb that is too large, down their hole in the sidewalk. No one else can see them because they are so busy rushing about buying things and talking to people. When you become interested in them everything else around you seems to fade into the background.

Josie had grown used to seeing the little, half hidden things like ants and tiny spiders going about their business, that most people missed.

But now she seemed to see a whole other world.

A world of Secret People, small as feathers, busying themselves with a life as full as ours, but normally invisible to us.

ADVENTURES BY LEAFLIGHT

The Expert

One day Josie noticed a very small person climbing up a hollyhock stem. He was puffing and panting, his small cheeks very red and warm, his tiny fat legs barely stretching from one notch to another.

She first became aware of him because he was making such a noise, his breathing was heavy and bits and pieces of the hollyhock stem were breaking off as he climbed.

“He is not doing it very tidily,” she thought, remembering mountaineers she had seen on television. But then he had no ropes, no clamps, no friend in large boots and comforting red socks.

His concentration was absolute for the first part of the climb, but when he was half way up he paused, out of breath, and he noticed her.

He stared at her with his small bright eyes with growing indignation.

“It is all very well for you,” he said, “sitting in your chair with all the time in the world and no worries, but I am a very small person and this climb is not easy.”

“I agree,” she said. “Does it have to be done in such a hurry? Perhaps if you did it more calmly... and planned each move before you made it...”

“O yes!” He lifted his nose. “Full of advice I notice. You do not have to be anywhere by mid-day. You will not be in any trouble if you are late.”

He sat on a flower stem and sulked.

She noticed he was damp with effort.

“Where do you have to be at mid-day?” she inquired.

“O, I have no time to go into all that!” he said with a lordly wave of his pudgy hand and a turning up of his minute nose.

But she noticed he still went on sitting, still out of breath.

She watched him for a short while with interest, and then looked at the rest of the stem he had to climb.

A hollyhock stem looked as tall to him as a factory chimney did to her. It towered above her and all the other flowers in the garden. She sometimes thought of the hollyhock as a rocket that had taken off from the earth, but had become transformed into a plant before it could reach the sky.

“I cannot sit here all day you know,” the very small person announced, noticing that her attention had wandered from his small self.

“Of course not,” she said with understanding. “You must be on your way.”

“I must be on my way,” he said importantly, as though she had not spoken.

“Of course,” she said.

He was standing now, balanced rather uncertainly, she thought, on the flower step he had been resting on a moment before. He looked less hot and bothered and was ready to resume his efforts to climb the main stem.

He looked at her expectantly.

Nothing was said.

She did not know what more to say, although she would have liked to hold him back a moment longer.

She did not want to make him late for his appointment, though she was curious about him.

“I am a very important person you know,” he said, lifting himself up to his full height. “Even if I am a bit small compared to you,” he added in an undertone so low that she could scarcely hear what he was saying.

“I am sure you are,” she said encouragingly.

He stood still as though he expected something more of her.

As she said nothing, he clicked his tongue with irritation and took no more notice of her.

The noisy and laborious climb started again.

A robin flew down to the rosebush and peered at the very small person.

“You must not touch him,” Josie said sharply. “He is a friend of mine.”

The robin nodded and turned his attention elsewhere.

“Ah!” The small person said, pausing again and looking over his shoulder at her. “As soon as we learn that we are talking to someone of importance I see, we claim friendship. It is like that, is it!”

“No, not at all!” Josie was indignant. “I just wanted to...”

“I know what you wanted! I have had it happen before. No one takes any notice of me because I am not tall and elegant like some people. But as soon as they are aware of my position they make a great fuss of me. Wanting to see what favours they can get, I suppose.”

Josie was quite angry at this. It was so unfair. She, of all people, liked people for themselves and not for what she could get out of them.

“I was trying to protect you!” She burst out indignantly.

“Nonsense,” he said.

“You are the most exasperating person!” She cried.

“Have it your own way!” He tossed his head and started to climb again.

“I do not even know what your position is,” she grumbled.

“Not many humans do,” he puffed, continuing to climb.

“Would you not stop a while and tell me?”

He looked towards the sun, just as she would look to her watch.

“No time,” he said shortly.

“Will you come back?” she pleaded.

“Of course I will come back!” He exclaimed. “Do you think I live in a hollyhock?”

There was no answer to that.

She watched silently as he finished his climb. As he drew nearer the top and the stem was narrower, she

noticed the whole thing swayed with his movements slightly. Anyone looking out from the house would certainly notice the disturbance. She looked over her shoulder anxiously, but there was no one in sight. The windows reflected the sun like mirrors. The kitchen door was slightly ajar and the interior of the house behind it looked very deep and dark and cool. Strange how dark the inside of a house looked when you were outside in the bright sunlight looking in, and yet when you were inside, it seemed light enough. You could read books quite easily and people moved about without bumping into things.

She had learnt a new word the other day to describe it. "Relative."

The inside of the house was dark "relative" to the outside of the house.

She was so carried away thinking about the word, that she did not notice what exactly had happened to the very small person.

He had gone.

At first she was afraid he may have fallen, but, peer as she might, she could see nothing from where she was that confirmed her fears.

She was sure he would have cried out if he had fallen, expecting to be rescued promptly.

But there was no sound.

The hollyhock had stopped shaking and was standing still, and beautiful, in the sunlight.

She waited.

She had had many strange experiences in the garden, and it had become a very special place to her.

When she looked out of her window, nothing much seemed to be happening, except a leaf or two blowing in the wind, or a bird flying about. But when she was in the garden, sitting very quietly, it was as though a film lifted from her eyes. She was aware of the most amazing activity all around her.

There were all the expected things, like bees fussing in and out of flowers, butterflies doing ballet in the air, and tiny caterpillars hanging on almost invisible threads from the apple tree, wondering whether to go up or down.

But there were also other things happening that her sister Deborah did not seem to notice.

Today, as she waited, wondering what had happened to her new friend, she noticed a procession of beautiful people, dressed in every possible shade of green, winding in and out of the peony bed. Sometimes she could see them, the sunlight shining on their bright hair and happy faces, sometimes they disappeared under the leaves and she could only hear the faint tinkle of their voices.

It was a Joy procession.

She had seen one before in the garden.

On certain days of the Secret Calendar only the Earth knew, groups of happy Beings would form themselves into little processions and parade through the garden, sometimes singing, sometimes just chattering, but

wherever they went and whoever they passed they left happier and more beautiful than before.

A Joy-to-be-alive Procession. A thank-you-for-the-gift-of-Being Procession.

Josie found herself unable to stop smiling.

When they reached the hollyhock they stopped and surrounded the stem, some of them clambering up onto the lower leaves.

They were all looking up expectantly.

Josie wondered if they, like herself, were waiting to see the very small person.

After a while some of them joined hands and encircled the stem, leaning against it and trying to make it shake. It took a great many of them to get it moving, but when it finally did the cheers that went up fairly made her ears tingle. Once they had it moving, it was easier to increase the motion and the hollyhock was soon rocking backwards and forwards until all its flowers rang like bells.

Josie was amused to see a startled bee leave in a hurry, tread air for a while above the scene, and then go off muttering and grumbling to another flower.

Not long after this incident her little fat friend appeared from a flower, looking untidy and flurried, but definitely triumphant.

Josie noticed that it was exactly mid-day.

He was holding something up in his hand above his head. It looked like a hollyhock seed, but, as the sunshine fell on it, it seemed to blaze with a kind of glory.

As he did this the people of the procession sent up a cheer.

The air was full of happy sounds.

Josie found herself laughing and cheering too, though she was not sure what the excitement was about.

The very small person looked across at her and grinned and nodded, as much as to say, "You see! I told you I was a very important person."

She laughed and waved to him, glad that he was having such a good time.

The beautiful Beings had stopped shaking the hollyhock and were dancing around it. Magical music was in the air.

The little man scrambled back into the flower carrying the bright object very carefully.

Josie heard a flutter by her left ear and turned to find that her friend Jamie had flown down to be with her.

"Hullo, Jamie," she said, "I am so glad you have come. I need to know all sorts of things."

"As usual!" said Jamie, his bright sparrow eye amused.

"I have just seen the most wonderful thing and it has made me very happy... but I do not really know what it is all about."

"Well, what have you seen? There is a lot going on in the garden today."

"You see that fat little man climbing — no — slithering down that hollyhock stem?" She corrected herself with a laugh, as her friend lost his grip on a leaf stem and slipped to the next notch, his expression startled and comical. "He held something out of one of the top

flowers, and those people there,” she pointed to the dancers, “cheered...”

“O, you mean the initiation ceremony?” Jamie said in a matter-of-fact voice.

“The what?” asked Josie.

“Surely you know what an initiation is?” Jamie asked scornfully.

“No,” said Josie, who was never afraid to own up when she did not know something. After all, who knows everything? She probably knew lots of things Jamie did not know, and she did not look down on him for that.

“An initiation,” said Jamie, who always enjoyed his role as instructor, “is usually a ceremony for admitting someone into a secret society. In this case it is the ceremony for admitting a specially chosen seed into the Realm of Magic.”

“Tell me about the ceremony,” Josie prompted eagerly.

“There is much about it that is secret. I am only a sparrow and I cannot know everything,” Jamie said.

“But you know much more than most sparrows,” wheedled Josie.

“True,” Jamie said complacently, “but not everything.”

Josie smiled to herself. He really was a very conceited little bird, but she loved him and she did not know what she would do without him.

“Tell me what you know,” she said. “You must have seen the ceremony many times.”

“Well...” Jamie was hesitant, some of the essentials were not easily expressed in human speech. “First... you have to choose the right seed. Not just any seed will do. That is why they have that little man. He is an expert.”

“O,” Josie said, impressed. “An expert!”

“Have you ever noticed,” Jamie asked, “that the hollyhock seed looks like the tape spool of a tape recorder?”

“Yes, I have!” cried Josie in surprise. “And they all fit together in a Circle, most neatly, like a whole library of tapes packed away.”

“That is just what they are,” Jamie said. “Recordings of the plant’s history. The expert looks through the tapes and chooses those that are most promising for the initiation ceremony.”

“But what is it? What happens?”

“The seed that is chosen is held up at mid-day to the sun...”

“I saw it!” interrupted Josie excitedly. “I saw it sort of blaze up with light!”

“At that moment you saw an ordinary seed become a magical one,” Jamie said.

Josie gasped.

“It has something to do with the sunlight... something to do with the joy and love in the hearts of the Secret People at the moment it is held up... something to do with a Power that comes from Nowhere and no one understands... but however it happens, after the ceremony, that particular seed is a very special one.

“Have you not noticed how some flowers are so beautiful and perfect that you seem to stop being yourself when you look into them, and become someone who can see more than you have ever seen before... the tiniest and most beautiful things, too small for normal vision... colours that shade into other colours more subtly than any you have noticed before...”

“I have,” said Josie with awe. “I truly have!”

“Then you have looked into the heart of a magic flower,” Jamie said quietly.

Josie would like to have continued this conversation forever, but the garden was invaded by Josie’s sister, Deborah, and everything instantly changed.

Jamie flew away like any ordinary sparrow, and the visions Josie had been seeing were as though they had never been.

“Mother said you might like some company,” Deborah said grudgingly. “I have been sent out to play with you.”

Josie looked at her, speechless.

“What do you want to play,” said Deborah. “I have brought the draughts and the dominoes.”

**That's the end of the sampler. We hope you enjoyed it.
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About Moyra Caldecott

Moyra Caldecott was born in Pretoria, South Africa in 1927, and moved to London in 1951. She married Oliver Caldecott and raised three children. She has degrees in English and Philosophy and an M.A. in English Literature.

Moyra Caldecott has earned a reputation as a novelist who writes as vividly about the adventures and experiences to be encountered in the inner realms of the human consciousness as she does about those in the outer physical world. To Moyra, reality is multi-dimensional.

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