



*Dedicated to the Real Whistling Tree
who used to reside next to our home...
Thank you for your inspiration.*

*Text and artwork © 2017 Susan Schroder
All rights reserved
No part of this publication may be reproduced without
permission from the artist and author.
ISBN: 978-0-692-87060-0
www.SusanSchroder.com*



CIRCLE THE SUN

Book One

SUMMERS SOL

Written and Illustrated by
Susan Schroder



Whistling Tree Press
Erawanu

Summer

Happiness reigns in long Summer days,
Where faeries flutter in the Sun's rays,
As they gather, the tall grass stirs,
And gentle breezes carry their whispers...

Whispers



*There have been many Travelers
throughout time, and many more
are sure to begin on their path.*

*This is a tale of
one Traveler's journey
while our Earth
Circled the Sun.*

There was Once a Time
Upon which a story was told,
Between Now and Then,
And far from Here and There,

In a Place not found on any Map,
Nor in any books would it be bound,
It seemed to be another World,
Strange and wild; Beautiful and free,

A place that lives and breathes,
In the Light of our same Sun,
Among ancient trees and moss,
Between mists and whispering showers,

What Secrets does the Earth still keep?
Another World within our own,
Right next to us existing,
Just at the Edges of Sight.

From the Archives of the Library of Erawa



Summer **Solstice**

is the longest day of sunlight.

I do not think this was the beginning of my tale, nor its ending.
But, it is the first day I remember of the journey.

In these pages, was the story I found myself within.

She was definitely different.

I suspect I had known this before she was even there.

Waking early to a vibrant orange sunrise, I had no reason to think this would not be just another typical day...one more in a long string of days purposefully weaving together a rather ordinary life.

I thought all this right up to the jolt of the earthquake.

I had just finished getting dressed when the tremor hit. In the few seconds it lasted, time felt suspended as the muffled roar of the earth coincided with an unnatural shaking of the whole house. Living in the Pacific Northwest of the United States, earthquakes happened on occasion, so I was no stranger to them. But they were always unnerving. Thankfully this seismic event had not been too strong and, other than a few toppled knickknacks, I could find no damage anywhere.

A small California town situated at the north end of the Great Central Valley was where I resided. It was the kind of place people drove through on their way to somewhere else. Nestled among soaring mountains on three sides, our town had plenty of natural beauty with a landscape of hardy oaks growing in a sea of golden grasses. But it was long, dry, hot summers that kept most people away. While the lack of rain during this season was a challenge to my garden, I never minded temperatures that sometimes surpassed 100 degrees Fahrenheit. I was happy to call this my home.

Having a shy, quiet personality, I had always felt content with this sort of humble, middle-of-nowhere tranquility. It was quite the contrary for my parents, though, who always lived in the spotlight. My Dad had been a successful writer of historical fiction novels. My Mom was an acclaimed traditional painter. Every inch of open wall space was decorated with her artwork, along with a large cabinet filled with his books. Also stored in it were awards given to them both, magazine articles and videos of TV interviews and appearances from around the world.

I wish I had known them.

The official story was that their small private plane had gone down somewhere in the Amazon rainforest of South America. That was many years ago; they were never found and presumed to be dead. At the bottom of that same cabinet was a small black box tucked away in the back corner. Neatly folded inside it were all the stories and articles about the crash. I had been three years old at the time and their only child. As always, during any of their travels, my grandmother had been caring for me here in this very house.

I never left.

Pulling my thoughts back to this particular present day, I started preparations for a hike into the sprawling woods nearby. So far, there were no aftershocks, and I decided not to cancel my activity. But a persistent feeling of uneasiness haunted me...and it was not just from the earthquake.

The air in my house appeared to be moving in a curious manner, causing strands of my long, dark hair to float up onto my face in a brazen defiance of gravity. While trying to smooth down the errant tresses, I kept smelling the deliciousness of warm, homemade chocolate chip cookies even though there were none baking in the oven. The windows were open wide to this warm, sunny day. However, there were no nearby neighbors from which these lovely odors could be drifting into my countryside cottage.

In an attempt to ease my agitation and get my mind back to my tasks, I began to busily gather all the things I would need for my outing. The first item packed into my timeworn, but dependable bag was my favorite camera which I carefully snuggled into its sheltered spot. Pausing a moment to savor the rich leather aroma of the satchel, I thought of my grandmother. Being a pretty good photographer, she used it for her own camera gear for many years. She gave me the bag just before she passed away one year ago on this very day.

I was alone now for I knew of no other living relatives. The stinging in my eyes reminded me how much I missed my Grandma. But she would not have wanted me to wallow in sorrow or loneliness, and I held back any more tears. I had cried enough this past year. So, I planned this trek for today because we had both loved taking long walks and I thought this would be a perfect tribute to her.

Along with snacks and water, I also brought a light sweater for the cool shade of the trees. The solitude of the woods was the perfect place for creative pursuits, so I added pencils, a small watercolor set, and paper for both. Grandma always liked to say I had inherited some artistic abilities from my parents.

Undoubtedly, there were also many other long-forgotten odds and ends at the bottom of this much-loved carryall. My spirits were picking up, and I was looking forward to a leisurely walk as I set down my bag by the door--ready to go.





But the strangeness in my house would not subside, so, before leaving, I decided to make myself a calming cup of tea. Just before pouring it, a loud cawing sound of a large bird from outside startled me. The teacup in my hand dropped to the floor but did not break and seemed fine upon examination. It was only when I went to fill it with the hot brew that the cup chose to collapse into pieces.

I nervously chuckled at this absurdity while I poured more tea into another cup. The house could feel this wayward day, too. It creaked and groaned even though I felt no more tremors.

I thought I could almost see it sway as I sat at the table with my drink. The colors of everything around me seemed slightly skewed, but maybe it was just the sunlight streaming through the windows. I trifled with the dust specks floating in the bright sunbeams while petting my black cat, Merik, who came over and sat next to me. He was also a bit agitated and became preoccupied with some undetectable tidbit on the table.

Cautiously sipping my tea, I contemplated this peculiar day. A breeze swept in through the open window, billowing out my hair, and I found the zesty scent of oranges suddenly filling my senses.

I could not know it then, but it was the moment
everything would be forever different.

She arrived.