

THANK YOU!

With Deepest
Gratitude

An appreciation of gratitude for Universe, Community, Individual

Michael Floissac

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An Appreciation of Gratitude for Universe, Community, Individual
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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all those I have encountered either in person or virtually—family and friends (those present and those who have moved on), and simply to all human beings who have inspired me, caused me to laugh, and even those who have afforded me the benefit of shedding my tears. Through all these experiences, I have grown and become the person I am today. Thank you for every moment you have allowed me to be in your presence.

To my wife Veronique – thank you for deciding to join me on this journey through life.

To Isabelle and Noah – thank you for your continuous love and inspiration; without you this book would not have been possible.

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PREFACE

THIS BOOK REPRESENTS for me both a culmination and a beginning. A culmination, because it touches on life lessons I've experienced while aiming to live a life of gratitude, and a beginning, because my journey continues. This book came about from a lifetime of casual conversations, observations, and a practice of seeing gratitude in all aspects of my life.

My primary source of inspiration for this book came from reading *The Profit* by Kahlil Gibran, which I received as a gift. I spent the next 20 years fascinated by the universal topics, and this book could be seen as my reflections on similar themes. I was motivated to write this book in the hope that if someone reads it, they may obtain a new frame of reference and see all things in life from a place of gratitude.

This book touches on topics that I believe are globally relatable to all and addresses gratitude through three broad

categories: Universe, Community, and Individual. Each part is broken down into smaller chapters, and challenges the reader to find gratitude in their connection to these chapters.

The hope is that we are all reminded to be kind to everyone we meet, for each person faces tremendous challenges in life. It is through kindness often as simple as with a smile or a thank-you that we may lighten the load of a fellow human being.

A WORD ON THE BOOK'S CONSTRUCTION

This book is divided into three parts, each comprised of a few chapters. There are some short chapters and some longer ones, and each chapter addresses a universal topic, includes a short devotion of gratitude for the topic, and then offers you some instructions on how you may interact with the topic. This is followed with a short chapter where I share my experience with the topic. Then, I invite you to reflect on what you have just read and encourage you to share with the loved ones in your life.

Please read as you like—while it can be read from beginning to end, each chapter stands alone. You may browse the table of contents and pick a topic of the day that interests you. You may even be the type of person who likes to tear out a chapter and post it on the fridge—the devotional opening chapters are small enough to do so.

It is my hope you will find enjoyment in this book, and whether you keep this copy or gift it to a friend, I hope the theme of gratitude will continue to flow throughout your life.



PART ONE
UNIVERSE



Four expressions of gratitude as experienced through Mother
Nature, Random Acts of Kindness, Freedom, and Dreams.



MOTHER NATURE

“If the only prayer you say in life is ‘thank you’
that will suffice.” —Meister Eckhart

MOTHER NATURE, YOU embody love and beauty in your vastness. As with a mother, there is comfort wrapped up in the warm, nurturing, and life-giving properties of your earth. A place of peace, a beginning and an end, a center where all things spawn—you offer a calm that can only be felt, should we dare to be open.

You are the lens which starts the day. We give thanks to you, Mother Nature, for a new day, a chance to see the sun rise, a bird dance on a tree limb, a feather wave in the wind, and hope to see the sun set. Though your temperament fluctuates, it is not without purpose and direction; there are no accidents.

You give so much and ask so little in return. You give the birds, trees, seas, rivers, mountains, hills, and valleys, and also the beauty

of flowers, which cannot be denied. You are the life force from which all beauty originates, and yet you are so humble that you allow us to walk upon you, on sacred ground.

Seek out Mother Nature, spend time in her presence, and treasure her with every breath. Learn from her, preserve her existence; she carries the wisdom of your ancestors. Listen to her, observe her, embrace all things in nature.

Seek to love the sun for the energy it brings—a source of both physical and emotional healing. Appreciate the rain as it nourishes the ground and the beautiful flowers it helps to sprout. Learn to love the rivers, as the running water can serve as a source of meditation. Come to love the ocean, the vastness it is, for it is through time spent by the ocean that we can search the horizon and remember anything is possible. Grow to love the trees for their beauty; observe the leaves, for it is while looking up at the canopy we get a glance at an umbrella of togetherness, a union working side by side, casting a sea of sunshade. Remember, the tree started as a seed, and be reassured, for as we started small, we too can grow and branch out and offer a canopy of togetherness and comfort to others.

Love Mother Nature as she is a gift, and challenge yourself to feel most at peace in her presence.



MOTHER NATURE – MY STORY

“He is richest, who is content with the least,
for content is the wealth of nature.” —Socrates

As a young kid growing up on the Caribbean island of Dominica, I was very lucky to spend most of my days with Mother Nature. Dominica is known as the nature island of the Caribbean; comprised of 365 rivers, rain forest, and a vast array of tropical flowers, it is a playground for nature lovers.

As a child, my day would begin at the rising of the sun. Like most kids growing up on the island, I would run and play with friends, ride bicycles, experience family weekends at the beach, and just explore every opportunity I had to be out in nature. I currently live outside of Washington, D.C., and it is easy to see how lucky I was to have had that early childhood experience in Mother Nature.

My favorite, almost daily adventure would be leaving the safety and comfort of my home and venturing deep into the rain forest, in search of the magnificent views at the base of the Trafalgar Falls.

While today there is a clear path with man-made steps, reaching the waterfalls was quite a different journey in my day. The journey was full of discovery, and took me through deep brush and over rugged terrain, where I might encounter fallen trees, tropical birds and spiders, and maybe even the occasional snake from time to time. The reward was a breathtaking view. And apart from the beauty that the natural topography presented, there was the reward of taking a plunge into the most refreshing water you could stumble upon.

Being around water has always been one of my favorite

activities in nature, and some of my fondest memories involve rainy days. Growing up, a rainy day was like music to my ears. It was always a time of play, where we would run outside and just jump around in the rain. Feeling the raindrops was like receiving a blessing from the universe.

To this day, a rainy day is my favorite day. I no longer run and dance in the rain, but some parts of me wish I did. Instead, I may go for a walk or just sit outside and observe the rain as it falls to the ground, appreciating the gifts of Mother Nature.

Another childhood experience in Mother Nature was sharing in the company of many animals: dogs, cows, sheep, chickens, rabbits, pigs, and iguanas, to name a few. I grew up among all these animals, and my earliest memory stems from my encounters with each of these animals and feeling the gratitude and kindness they showed.

When they would greet you, they would offer a gentle greeting, sometimes trying to lick your face. The thought of a cow, sheep, or goat licking your face may not sound exciting to you, but it was the way they greeted me. And while they were always eager to receive any food I had to offer, through each encounter I felt I was the recipient of a gift.

One standout recollection from when I was growing up was encountering the random stray dog that was always eager to jump on my lap, wag its tail, and give and receive a hug. I was struck by the passion of dogs; while we may speak a different language, we also share a universal language of love and gratitude.

I also love and am fascinated with birds. Somewhat of a novice birdwatcher, I appreciate the beautiful colors and the different mannerisms they exhibit, whether it is searching for food or just being playful in a pool of water.

My love of birds was enhanced one day, I distinctly recall, as I was walking up to the ninth hole at my local golf course and the most beautiful expression of gratitude happened. I received a hug from three hummingbirds. Picture this: me walking up to the green, carrying my golf bag, and out of nowhere, three hummingbirds appear. The birds circled me all the way from the tee box to the green. Even when I stopped to make my last approach shot, the birds circled me as I walked. I was struck almost to tears at the experience and simply said “thank you”; then they were gone.

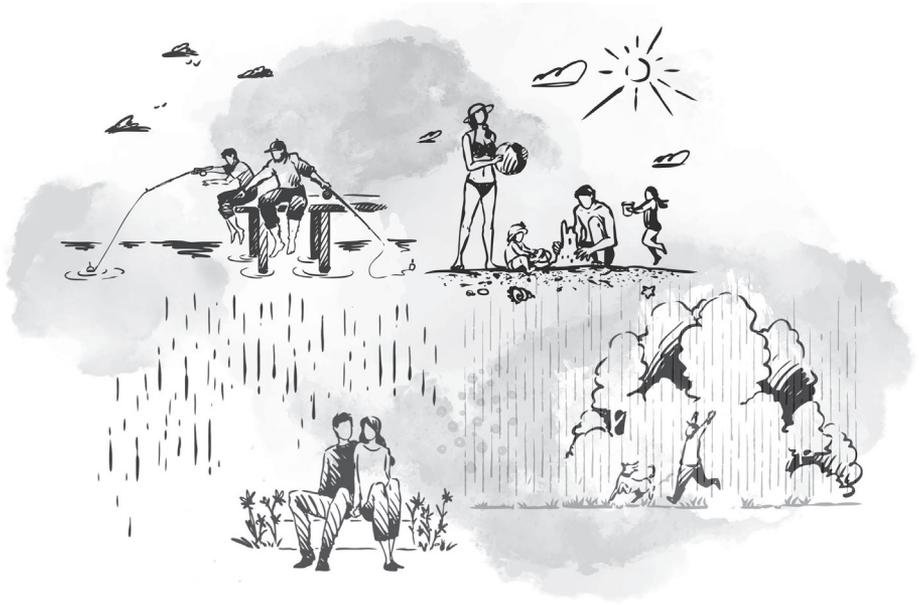
As a measure of my thanks for my past experience with animals, I always make a point to greet any animal I encounter. I often say “Good morning, have a good day” to the random dog or squirrel I may encounter.

My gratitude for Mother Nature truly flourished when I developed a deeper connection to her, allowing my experience with her to flow, not from the outside in, as I experienced her in the past, but from the inside out. I now take the time to listen, to feel, and to be present in her healing presence.

Every day in nature is a gift, and she comforts me on troubled days. A simple act of taking a walk outside offers me a chance to clear my head—a healing experience for my mental well-being. Taking long strolls on the beach has been an opportunity to connect to my inner self, and it is on these walks that I attempt to listen to bring my breathing in time with the crashing of the waves, and in turn experience a connection that is so pure, and an expression of love for self—all through being one with nature.

With my wife’s permission, I share the story of her “healing rock.” One day, after arriving in the Washington, D.C., area for work, she came upon a large rock alongside a creek near the

National Zoo. She sat on the rock, and in that moment, any troubles or challenges were lifted off her shoulders. By taking that moment and being present with her environment, she was granted the opportunity to put whatever ailment she was dealing with into perspective, and obtain the peace and assurance that whatever it was, it would pass, as life goes on.



MOTHER NATURE – WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

1. What are some of your earliest adventures in Mother Nature?
2. Do you have a favorite rock? A quiet place in Mother Nature where you can be by yourself?
3. Ask yourself, what is your relationship to the rain? Do you feel the rain or is it that thing that just gets your clothes wet?

Action Item: Challenge yourself to spend 5 minutes a day in nature. If possible, spend these five minutes barefoot, with your shoes off; feel the experience as if you are taking deep breaths on the heartbeat of Mother Nature.

“I felt my lungs inflate with the on-rush of scenery—air, mountains, trees, people. I thought, ‘this is what it is to be happy’”
—Sylvia Plath