

Dear Students, Colleagues and Friends,

The first snow is falling here and has brought to mind how time passes - and in that time how we have a responsibility to learn all we can, do all we can, celebrate all we can and venerate all we can. So much vitriol has accompanied our Summer and Autumn that the peace of this first snow brings a restful pause for which I am thankful.

For me, gratitude always seems to squirm its way back around to nature and the many gifts it bestows. It seems more than ever people do seem to be fixing their gaze on nature to find answers for our human challenges. Whether they are engaging in biophilia by bringing living walls filled with plants inside our architectural spaces or bio-utilization by using the vegetative part of fungi for packing materials or, of course, biomimicry with the myriad of materials and products developed by mimicking nature's forms, processes and systems – we are generally engaging with the natural world around us in ever increasing ways.

And yet, we still display a disconnect (or worse, a downright disrespect) with the organisms and habitats they depend upon to continuing thriving. We cannot live without nature. Oh yes, oh yes, we say, as we run around working at our jobs, seeing our friends, raising our families – we know that (said with a furrowed brow). But then we rush on to the next thing. Meanwhile, between 2009 and 2011 we have lost 53 million acres of grasslands like those in our nation's mid-section. If that number seems hard to picture, visualize the state of Kansas. Yes, that's about right. Temperate grasslands and prairies are the least protected landforms in the world – even more than the Brazilian rain forest (and you already know its challenges). Prairies, rain forests, rivers, oceans – the list goes on – and many organisms living there are in varying degrees of trouble. Of course, you know (because I know you know) that affects humans from possible losses of food sources (if pollinators die out) to materials for all kinds of products to, increasingly, answers to our most perplexing industrial challenges. And of course, the organisms would probably argue, as do many of us, that they have a right to their wild spaces for their own sake beyond what they can do for us.

Whew.

Here's the thing, though. As this first snow falls and the cold of demagoguery rears its head, we can make a difference. We have the power to make a difference – to save that prairie, that river, that Southeastern forest. Because we can learn more about them and how to help them. We can do all we can by giving to nonprofits who protect these natural resources and raising our voices to say in chorus, "Yes, these places, plants and animals ARE important and must be protected." And in those ways we can show our gratitude and celebrate some of the greatest gifts we have.

And so, for you, I have a small gift – very plain, but lovingly given – the poem below, And I have a request in this season of beauty and thanks – that you give a gift back to nature. Whether you donate to the [Missouri Prairie Foundation](#) or [River Network](#), the [Biomimicry Institute](#) or an organization close to your heart which protects or teaches us about our natural world in some way – and in the seasons to come, please also give your time and your talents. We have one Earth – and each creation is a treasure only we can protect.

### **Tardigrade**

By M.  
Farnsworth

O' tardigrade  
You homely maid  
Your face is not your fame.

Around the Earth  
Your pudgy girth  
Has spawned some other names.

Like moss piglet  
Or water bear  
And you seem never miffed.

Though you're not fair  
O' water bear  
You have a greater gift.

For you can live where others don't  
And never miss a beat  
From ocean floors to mountaintops  
From frozen poles to heat.

And you, sweet friend, can dehydrate  
To live for months on end.  
And if we but ignore your looks  
Your talents help us mend.

Because you see, O' tardigrade  
We looked at you and found  
A way to dry vaccines and take them  
Anywhere we're bound.

Which means, you dear old water bear  
You've helped us save some lives  
By mimicking your gifts, old sport  
We've helped some people thrive.

If we could but acknowledge  
That no matter what we know  
The beauty of the natural world  
Is here for more than show.

For nature's genius deep and broad  
Has answers that will aid  
If we will search beyond ourselves  
To those like Tardigrade.

*Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays of all sorts and thank you for learning, doing, celebrating and venerating,*

*Cheers,*

*Margo*

Margo Farnsworth

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***Give good people good information and they'll do good things.***

(If you've just received this single newsletter, it may be because I thought you'd be interested in this particular subject. You may or may not get others. If you want on my list regularly, e-mail me. If you want off my list, e-mail me. Thanks!)