***A Light for Little Gnome’s Lantern***

***Susan Perrow © December 2020***

***This story is part of my collection of children’s stories and poems that have emerged to ‘meet the hour’ during this extraordinary year of C-19. I was going to mention Christmas but I have many who use my work that have other beliefs and philosophies so I have simply focused on the finding of a new 'light'*** ***– feel welcome to adjust the story to suit.***

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Little Gnome lived alone in his cosy tree roots home. It had been a busy year. He always had so many things to do - making and baking, crafting and cleaning, dancing and singing.

But now Little Gnome had a problem, and he didn’t know what to do about it. Every night for many months he had been hanging a lantern in his window. Every night the lantern had shone it’s light out into the night, for all in the forest to see. But over time, the lantern had grown dimmer and dimmer - in fact it hardly had any light left to shine.

What was Little Gnome to do? How was he going to find a new light?

Then, one evening, he heard Mother Tree whisper to him,

*Little Gnome, listen to me, there’s a secret stairway in my tree.*

*Find the door and climb up high, there is light for your lantern in the sky.*

Now as you may know, gnomes don’t usually like to climb up high. They always feel much safer on the ground. This is why gnomes love to live amongst the tree roots and rocks, or in caves or under mounds.

But Little Gnome knew he could always trust Mother Tree. Mother Tree carried the wisdom of the whole forest. Mother Tree was as wise as wise could be.

So Little Gnome looked around for a secret door. And to his surprise, right at the back of his home, hidden behind a knobbly old tree root, was a little door that he had never seen before. He opened it wide and saw tiny steps leading up from the ground… a staircase winding around and up and up and around.

Little Gnome fetched his lantern and slowly and carefully started to climb up the winding stairs - up and around, around and up, climbing high to reach the sky.

It took a long time. He passed twisted branches going off to the right. He passed twisted branches going off to the left. He had to stop many times to rest.

Eventually he reached the top. Squeezing out through a woody window he found himself on a leafy branch, way up high under the night sky.

The branch was gently swaying backwards and forwards, this way and that, that way and this. Little Gnome had never felt this kind of movement before. And he had never seen such a view before. There were treetops all around him shimmering in the evening light. And up above in the night sky there were a thousand stars twinkling bright.

Even in his best dreams he had never seen anything so beautiful.

Now he understood the words of Mother Tree’s message,

*Find the door and climb up high, there is light for your lantern in the sky.*

Holding on tightly to the branch with one hand, Little Gnome lifted his lantern with the other hand, up to the sky. As he held the lantern up high, something amazing happened. The lantern caught the shining twinkles of the thousand stars and slowly it’s light grew strong again.

*‘Thank you shining stars, for your light so bright!’*

*‘Thank you Mother Tree, you are as wise as wise can be!’*

Then, carrying the lantern with its new shining light, he followed the winding stairs, down and around, around and down.

Back in his tree roots home, Little Gnome proudly hung the twinkling lantern in his window. Then he climbed into his warm bed and fell into a deep long sleep.

The bright new light shone out across the forest.

All that evening, all the next night, and every night from this time on, the light in Little Gnome’s lantern continued to shine … all the way into the next year and well beyond.