

A  
CABINET OF  
CURIOSITIES

The Little Book of  
Awe & Wonder

by  
Dr Matthew McFall

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AREPO  
TENET  
OPERA  
ROTAS

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WHEEL



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 Independent Thinking Press

*Fertilising Cornucopia (1895) by R. Christiansen*

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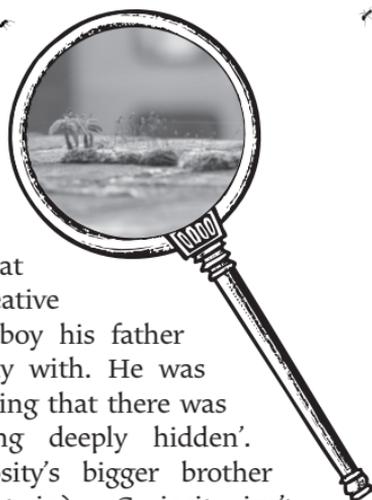
# FOREWORD

## HOW TO SPOT A DESERT ISLAND

Looking is one thing. Noticing is something else entirely. Wanting to notice is what starts it off. It is often remarked that the creative ones are the ones who see what everyone else sees but think something different. Who notice new connections. New patterns. But what makes them want to see the world differently to begin with? Why do they not just walk past the wall at the railway station in the middle of England without noticing the tiny desert island growing there?

Curiosity.

Curiosity is a useful word. It has the same root as the word 'curator'. To look after. To take care. Curiosity is what drives people to want to see the world through a different lens. To notice what's there. And then value what they notice. It is what primes the creative pump. When Einstein was a young boy his father gave him a magnetic compass to play with. He was curious. This curiosity led to him noticing that there was 'something behind things, something deeply hidden'. Curiosity leads to fascination, curiosity's bigger brother (although beware obsession, its evil twin). Curiosity isn't about seeing what isn't there. That's fantasy. It's about taking delight in discovering what is there. Curiosity says, 'I wonder what there is? I wonder what? I wonder ...'



Wonder.

This is the delight derived from curiosity. Curiosity drives the creative mind. Wonder rewards it. Curiosity motivates us to learn and explore. Wonder is the kickback we get that makes it all worthwhile. S'wonderful.

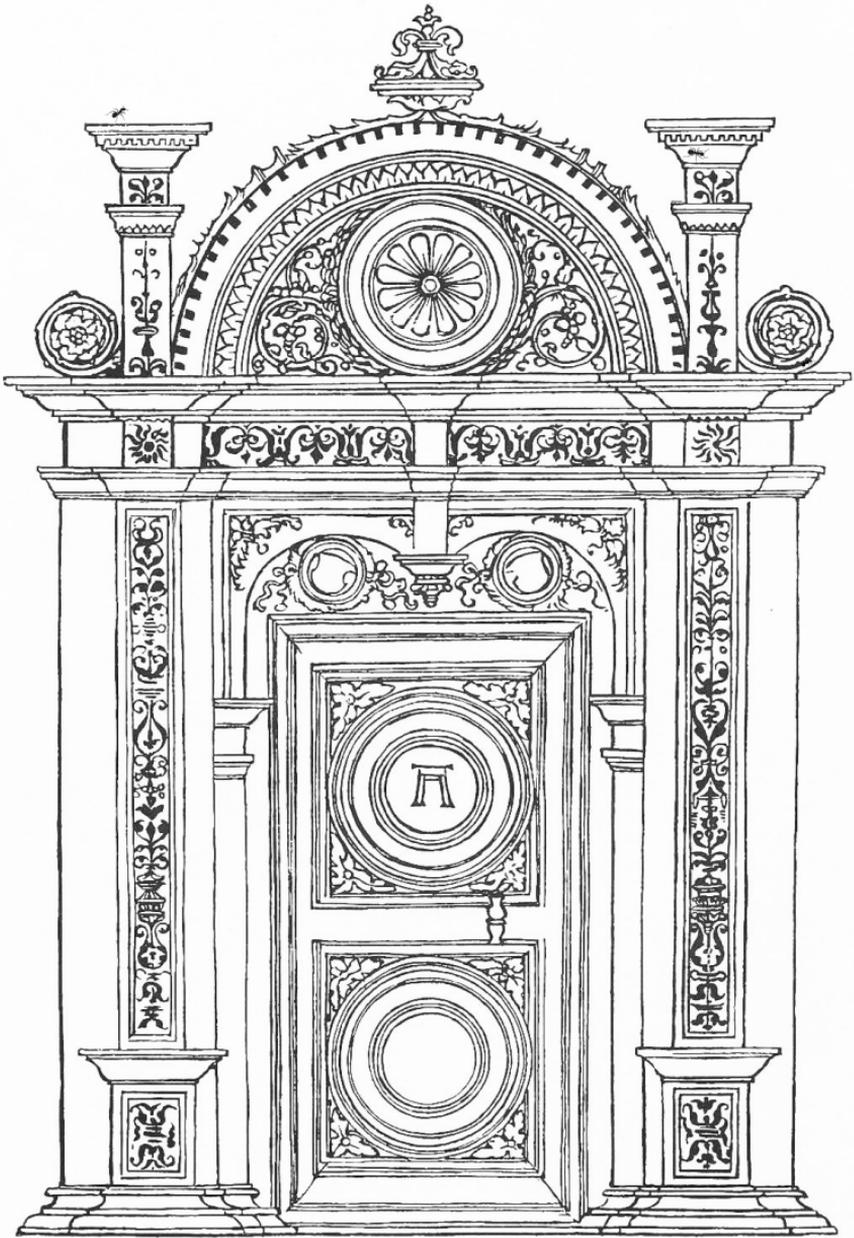
Wonder is what Matthew McFall does. He has a brain like a museum curator's sock drawer at midnight. Everything is endlessly fascinating. Everything is eminently collectable. Everything is a stimulus for wonder. It's this that he brings to his work in education, entrancing the entire school community, young and old, to want to learn. It's the deliberate process of creating a natural state of wonder that turns learning into the self-satisfying act of satiating one's own curiosity.

This book, for example. It's a wonder. If you are curious enough to explore it you will be amazed at the wonder within it. Wasp hairs. Kidney stone crystals. The lost language of Rongorongo. Divided up into six different compartments, this book is a wonder full of wonders. It's a book to dip in and out of, one in which each page is deliberately there to make you stop. And think. And then see the world differently. 'The only true voyage of discovery, the only fountain of Eternal Youth, would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes', as Proust said. This book shows you how every step you take can be a voyage of discovery. How you'll never be able to look at the world again without wondering. How you'll wonder how you got this far and noticed so little.

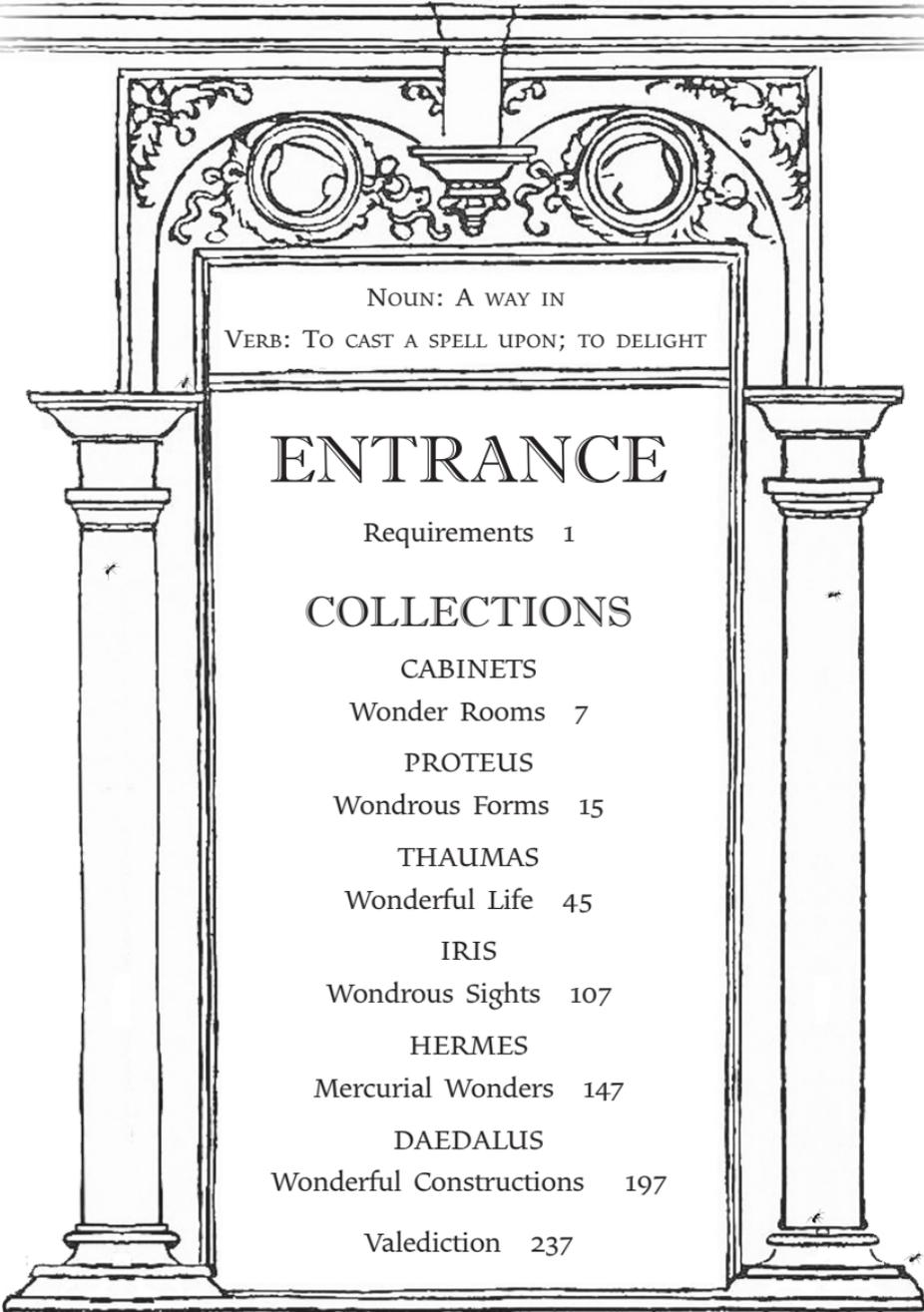
It will show you how to make sure you never fail to notice a tiny desert island again.

Ian Gilbert, Suffolk

TO ALL WHO WONDER



A hidden connection is stronger than an obvious one (Heraclitus Fragments, c500 BC)



NOUN: A WAY IN  
VERB: TO CAST A SPELL UPON; TO DELIGHT

# ENTRANCE

Requirements 1

## COLLECTIONS

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# REQUIREMENTS

Brain v.2013 or earlier.

This book is compatible with all future models.

Optical effects and toys presented here may cause dizziness or nausea if over-explored. Exercise caution.

Your magnifying bookmark will be of great assistance to you.



*Anatomy of the head, lateral view (Patrick J. Lynch, 2006)*

The Little Book of Awe and Wonder

Try to learn something about everything  
and everything about something.

Inscription on the memorial stone of Thomas Huxley (1825-1895)



*Trompe l'oeil* by Cornelis Norbertus Gijssbrechts (fl. 1660-1683)

Curiosity did not kill this cat,  
but it did make her smarter.



*The Widow* (date unknown) by Frederick Dielman (1847-1935)

## CURIOSITY ON MARS



Yellowknife Bay, the landing site of NASA's *Curiosity* rover (NASA, 2012)

## YOU HAVE A MESSAGE

To access your message you need a pen and paper.

Fold a square of paper four times to produce a grid of sixteen squares as in the example below. Ensure the creases are sharp.

Copy out the message grid below onto your piece of paper.

To read your message:

1. Tear or cut the grid in half from ① to ②. Place the right-hand section on top of the left-hand section (you will be able to see the letters R, Y, E, R, V, U, E, C).
2. Tear through both pieces of paper across the centre from ③ to ④. Place the upper sections on top of the lower sections (you will be able to see the letters R, Y, E, R).
3. Tear through the four sections of paper from ⑤ to ⑥. Place the right-hand sections on top of the left-hand sections (you will be able to see the letters Y and R).
4. Tear through the eight sections of paper from ⑦ to ⑧. Place the upper sections on top of the lower sections. You should have a pack of small pieces with a Y on top.
5. Deal the pieces one at a time in a row from left to right.
6. Your message is now delivered. If you can read it, the message is true.

E	O	① R	⑤ Y
V	Y	E	⑦ R
E	A	③ V	④ U
R	L	② E	C

‘Why,’ said the Dodo, ‘the best way  
to explain it is to do it.’

*Lewis Carroll (1832–1898), Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865)*



*Illustration by Sir John Tenniel (1820–1914) for the first edition of Alice in Wonderland*

CABINETS



WONDER ROOMS

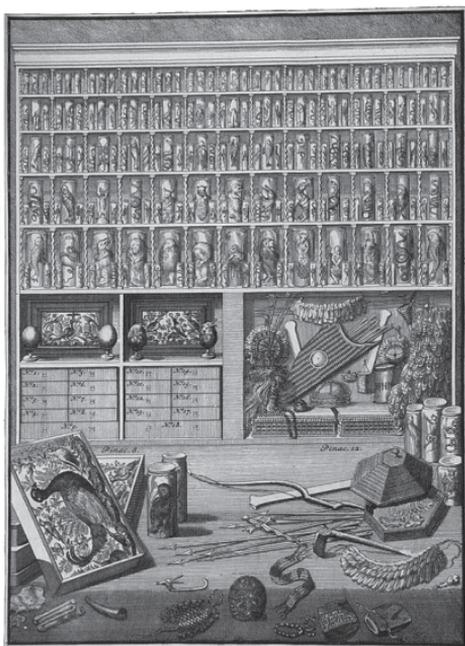
## RIDDLE

Above us on the cliff the samphire springs,  
Salt with the brine of many a stormy night;  
Close to the chalk the hornèd poppy clings;  
The grey gull shrieks and holds its seaward flight.  
And see, low-roofed, where doth to seaward front  
My humble First, exposed to tempest's brunt.

Thence starts at break of day the fisher brave,  
Launches his skiff, and quickly is afloat  
To spread his toils beneath the heaving wave,  
And load with finny spoil his little boat:  
And aye with curious eye a watch doth keep  
Upon my Second's treasures from the deep.

What is it glitters in the dripping mesh?  
A ring - perhaps from Caesar's galley lost!  
Lost years ago, it visits earth afresh;  
Say, what collector would begrudge its cost?  
The wealthy antiquary, lucky soul,  
Buys it at once to grace my costly Whole.

*Riddle by Tom Hood (1835-1874), Excursions into Puzzedom (1879)*



## CABINETS OF CURIOSITIES

A Cabinet of Curiosities is a room, a display, or a box dedicated to the weird and the wonderful. It is a place for discovery, connection, meaning, and mystery.

The golden age of the Cabinet of Curiosities in Europe was during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when large collections could be visited and explored.

It is likely that humans have collected, displayed, studied, and admired interesting objects and artefacts since the dawn of civilization.

A multitude of Cabinets are still in existence, in many different forms.

*Illustration from Wondertooneel der Natuur, Vol. 2 (Levinus Vincent, 1715)*

This is the earliest known picture of a Cabinet of Curiosities, from a catalogue of 1599. It depicts Ferrante Imperato's Cabinet in Naples. The man with the stick is thought to be Imperato himself. He appears to be pointing at the eye of a crocodile.



Ferrante Imperato (c1525- c1615) *Dell' Historia Naturale* (1599)

