



# Writing: Beginning a Novel

Plotting and Integrating Characters Across Six Novellas,  
Research for Writers, and a Brief History of the Modern Novel

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## Abstract

This experiential study was designed to explore the ways in which a novice writer goes about tackling the challenges of beginning to write a novel, and to give a brief history of the modern novel. The subsequent questions arose: Where does one begin writing a novel? What type of research is needed for novel writing? How does one integrate characters into multiple story lines? How does one organize information as the work accumulates? How did the modern novel develop?

This study includes a reflective essay detailing one writer's process of addressing the above questions; a brief history of the modern novel, focusing on the years 1890-1930 (the Modernist Period); and original fiction consisting of the first drafts of six chapters, concentrating on two of the novel's six main characters.

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## Preface

Sometime in the year 2000, I read an editorial in the Boston Globe with which I disagreed, vehemently disagreed. The kind of disagreeableness that stays with you all day, and becomes insidious. I was still a stay-at-home mom in those days and though my daughters, ages three and four, were intellectually superior to their peers, they were not up to the verbal repartee of my outrage. So all day long I stewed, and I sparred with the voice in my head, clearly and wisely articulating my point of view over and over again, until finally my husband Paul came home from work. Though he was distracted by his adoring little angels who were clambering for his attention, he listened to me as I rambled on about the missive I'd formulated, succinctly conveying the righteousness of my opinion, but his advice was not what I had hoped for. His glib response was, "So go write a letter to the editor." I was outraged by his callousness.

The next day, even though I knew before I put pen to paper that I most assuredly would not be able to complete the task, I tried anyway. Five sheets of paper later I had yet to get the first sentence out. My argument, so perfectly pithy in my head, became a jumbled mess as soon as my hand became involved in the process.

Unable to coerce the words out, I sat and stared at the paper for hours. I felt defeated and stupid. My inability to communicate in writing was and always had been frustrating, embarrassing, and humiliating.

Over the years I've worked in professions that have afforded me opportunities to be successful in ways that didn't involve writing. I've worked in the printing industry, been a jeweler, a lapidary,

and owned my own business. My careers have, to varying degrees, allowed me a measure of creativity that has been useful and personally rewarding. Through the manipulation of film, the forging of metal, the carving of stone, and the challenges of being self-employed, I have managed to satisfy my need to create, to think, and to turn out concrete results.

In 1996, after the birth of my first daughter, Eva, I decided to move my lapidary business from the Diamond and Jeweler's Building in Boston to my home in Haverhill. Over the next two years, I had another daughter, Lillian, lost my mother, and gained an in-house babysitter when my older sister, Pamela, came to live with us. (Do not mistake this as a selfless act, my sister is a gourmet who cooks us dinner six nights a week and does all the laundry.) It was during this period that I began to have trouble with my hands. By 1999 I had my right hand operated on, closed my business, given up jewelry and lapidary work for good, and thus begun my appallingly long identity crisis.

I had no idea who I was if I couldn't make something. During the next few years, I read every self-help book out there concerning career development, midlife career changes, and career aptitude testing, (I'm an ENFP, Relater, Adaptability, Ideation, Activator and Intellection are my strengths, and I could list all the action verbs that apply to my repertoire of transferable skills but that would be one long and boring recitation best limited to my resume). I tried to find my passion, discover the color of my parachute, and do what I am, but I couldn't find the right path. Finally, I came to the conclusion that maybe living by my wits instead of my hands wasn't going to be an option for me and took a job working nights in the medical equipment industry building ultrasound machines.

The manufacturing company I worked for turned out not to be the kind of place where I wanted to spend the rest of my life, but for a while it would do. I enjoyed my job and the people I worked with, a multi-cultural, multi-generational hodgepodge of men, women, transgendered, accepting, hard-working, affectionate nuts. I fit right in. I sang, I supported, I challenged management, I baked, and worked really hard, and within three months my hands were shot.

I went to my boss. I apologized for wasting his and the company's time, and offered to leave as soon as they could find a replacement for me. The next day he asked if I thought my hands could take working the line once in while as back-up and offered me a job in quality control it turned out that no one wanted me to leave. Because I had no other options, I stayed, but I knew, ultimately, that I had no future there and that the moment had arrived to figure out what I wanted to be when I grew up.

It was around this time that I first discovered Vermont College. I don't remember exactly how I happened upon it but it was definitely online. I'd just recently learned how to use the computer and the first skill I mastered was Internet shopping. I then became involved with a gardening board, and in my continuing quest to figure out what to do with myself, began searching college sites for inspiration. I decided that what I really needed and wanted to do was to go to school. Somehow, Vermont College appeared on my radar and I became fixated.

As I anxiously awaited the arrival of the Vermont College catalog, I tried hard not to imagine doing the actual schoolwork. Had I known then the amount of writing that I would be expected

to accomplish, I never would have entertained the idea of enrolling. As it was, when the forms did arrive, my heart sank as the words “write an essay” glared up at me. That was all it took to send me off in a torrent of tears, my dream of going to college over before it even began.

I spent the next month or so contemplating the catalog and forms. I kept them in my “pile,” taking them out, rereading them, hoping somehow to find a loophole in the essay requirement. Feeling crushed over my inability to write something as simple as a personal essay gnawed away at my self-esteem. I really wanted to go to Vermont College; I just had no idea how I could get there.

As is my custom, I lamented to Paul. I got mad at myself, I became depressed and anxious, and finally, one day, I decided there was only one thing I could do: I had to learn to write.

Every spring, summer and fall, the Northern Essex Community College class schedule appears in the mail. I’d never considered going there before except maybe to take a cooking or sewing class, but there it was on the table that day, the day I decided I had to learn how to write, so I impulsively called and registered for my very first college class, English Comp I. I figured if I could pass the hardest class I could imagine taking, maybe I could write that essay and get into Vermont College.

During this same period, my husband, who had been helplessly watching me crumble into a blithering idiot at the mere mention of that essay, made it his mission to find some way of helping me. And he did. He came upon the word dysgraphia, the very definition of which is, the



inability to write coherently. See, there really is something wrong with me. What a relief! I felt as though a weight had been lifted off my shoulders, a light bulb had gone off over my head, everything was suddenly coming up roses, and every other cliché you can insert here that aptly conveys the euphoria and elation I experienced at this discovery.

The first class started at 8:00 am, September 11th, 2001. Not the most auspicious beginning to say the least, but the professor's prescient choice of text, a wonderful collection of poems, memoirs, photos, letters, and news clippings about the Japanese internment camps called *Only What They Could Carry*, helped us all cope with some of the issues that came up throughout the tumultuous months to come.

But first our professor asked us to write a little about ourselves. It was a disaster. She strongly suggested that I make use of the Writing Center, and straightaway I made an appointment for a remedial writing intervention. (In my defense, disregarding the dysgraphia for just a moment, I hadn't written anything since I'd dropped out of high school at the end of tenth grade in 1980, twenty-one years previous to this, so it really was no wonder that I couldn't string three words together.) The next morning, I showed up with my paper, and a student tutor sat me down and went line-by-line over the entire paper pointing out my mistakes and how to fix them. And while I can't say it *all* came back to me, because I never had it *all* in the first place, I did grasp the basics of where I was going wrong and how to go about fixing it.

That first story relating the diversity of my life on Melville Avenue continues to be my favorite piece of writing. I still can't quite believe that I can, without anguish and frantic calls to the

suicide hotline, transfer the words in my head to print, that writing now flows easily from my mind to the monitor, and that all I have to worry about now is content, and grammar, and style, and voice, and point of view, and, well, the whole craft of writing.

In my entrance essay I wrote about feeling uneducated, unskilled and unemployable, and how lost and bewildered I was, not knowing which direction to go in or what subject to study. I mentioned my interests, which are many, and my dismay at not having a clearly-defined passion. And of course all my fears of the unknown were brushed away with the Vermont College battle cry of “Trust the Process,” the mantra of my initiated and indoctrinated brethren.

I’m sure I was sporting the “deer caught in the headlights” look of the newbies that first weekend since the interventionists (a term here meaning anyone who is not a newbie) kept asking me how it was going, and if I knew what my study was yet, and then admonished me to “trust the process” before they scurried off to drill--I mean help--another newbie.

By the third go-round of “meet the advisors,” I was so sick of talking about myself I would have agreed to study neuromuscular disorders of the pygmy jerboa. But as luck would have it I must have mentioned an interest in writing more times than my interest in the anatomy of small rodents, so my first study evolved into Creative Writing: The Short Story.

Neuroses being statistically the most commonly diagnosed mental disorder in writers (I’m making that up, it’s self-induced malaise), I have rejected the notion that I am a writer, only conceding to the present tense statement, “I am writing,” so as not to put too much pressure on

myself. The last thing I needed was to have another moniker to slough off: dot-etcher, jeweler, lapidary, business owner, Q-C, and preschool teacher were enough identities for any one person to shed.

I enthusiastically threw myself into my study, hanging on to the encouraging words of those who'd gone before me, faithfully believing my advisor's counsel and casting all my fears aside. I wrote. No, it didn't really go quite as smoothly as all that. There were panicked emails of histrionic proportions, all responded to with calm assurances that, "Yes, you can finish, and you are a writer, and everyone feels like that at this point in the semester." She was right. I did get through it, I read all the books, wrote all my responses and essays, and even managed to complete a few short stories. I loved it. No, I hated it. No, no, I loved every minute of it.

So much so that for my second semester I decided I was going to study character development. I had an idea for a novel, but I was way too intimidated to try my hand at that. I thought maybe if I spent my second semester learning about character development, and my third about the process of writing a novel, I could begin writing a novel for my culminating study. Surely, I'd feel confident enough in my skills by then to tackle such a large project.

During the second semester, while I was toiling away creating people, I was awaiting word from the administration as to whether my certificates in jewelry making from the North Bennet Street School, and faceting certificate from Gemological Institute of America would meet my art criteria. Yes, they would, so long as I wrote an accompanying piece on art theory. Since I now

could write that thrilled me, until the middle of the semester when my name showed up on the culminator's list. I'd received so many credits that I'd now lost a semester.

Oh, the horror!

The second semester flew by. I completed the six short stories that serve as backstories for the main characters who are now the protagonists in the novel I've begun writing for this culminating study. The writing has started to come a bit easier. I've begun to warm up to the idea of being called a writer, so long as we stay away from discussing the next logical transformation into author.

I started out with no idea where to begin my culminating study work. I had the main idea for the novel and the six short stories that hinted at who the main characters would be, but now what? How does a writer proceed once they have the idea? I played around with keeping the six characters stories separate but having the plots run parallel to each other in novella form, but after discussing this in group, some other ideas were proposed that sounded intriguing. I tried to follow Elizabeth George's model, exemplified in her process book but found much of it too rigid and detailed for me. Stephen King's process is too unstructured for me. My process turns out to be a mixture of doing research, creating sketches and then doing a bit of fiction writing. I'd learned through past studies that my fiction writing comes most naturally from me by just sitting down and typing whether I have a plot or not; it just seems to come to me as I go.

The most important thing I've learned this semester, what I want to convey to other beginning writers, is to investigate other authors processes till you find the mix that works for you. I'm still trying out various methods of research and learning what works for me. I suspect that the more you engage in the process, the finer-tuned it will become. There are many paths to writing well; finding one that accommodates your unique needs and wants is worth the time and effort, for the reward of your endeavors is self-actualization and better writing.

To those who have seen me through the dark, despondent moments of self-doubt, I thank you and hope that I have returned the favor. I don't know if anyone ever fully appreciates the encouragement and support one receives here until, in the midst of your culminating study, you suddenly realize you are preparing to leave and separation anxiety sets in. The freedom to follow one's interests afforded by this self-directed study, coupled with the support, guidance, and advice of the intelligent, thought-provoking, and gifted people here, is what has made this program work.

This study of creative writing reflects my ongoing pursuit of skill, knowledge, and craft. I hope that I have conveyed to other beginning writers how the process, both the school's and writing's, has served to advance my transformation from "I am writing" to "I am a writer."

## Reflection and Research Essay

I sit in the family room trying to spend time with my family and immerse my mind in the world of my novel. It doesn't work out so well. The attention this study is going to need warrants a new place to write. Labor Day weekend, my daughters and I paint my bedroom, bureau and side tables. Over the irritating green go Tuscan Beige, Edwardian Lace and Oriental Silk. Inspired, my husband buys and hangs steel-blue curtains. If I create nothing else of any worth this semester, I will at least have created a haven for my beloved orange lamps.

The idea for my culminating study was inspired by a book of photographs I'd used in my previous semester's study. In which study I examined character development using short stories. At some point while elaborating on the idea to make the stories backstories for a novel, it transformed into my culminating study. I wasn't sure what the end results would be, never having written anything longer than a short story before, but I was ready to put some trust in my abilities as a writer. *Creative Writing: Beginning a Novel* is the inelegant though accurate title of my culminating study.

One thing I have had trouble keeping in mind is that I'm not trying to write an entire novel, nor am I even looking for any revised work. I just want to find out how a writer goes about tackling such a large undertaking and figure out the answers to these questions. Where does one start? What is the best method of research? How do I figure out what methods work for me?

I started with E.M. Forster: "How then are we to attack the novel—that spongy tract, those fictions in prose of a certain extent which extend so indeterminately? Not with elaborate

apparatus. Principles and systems may suit other forms of art, but they cannot be applicable here . . . ” (Forster 23).

Those first weeks were filled with frantic searches for books for the bib, drafting questionnaires to outline the plot, and the creation of forms to flesh out the characters. I made lists of possible scenes, lists of possible places, lists of lists that referred to other lists. I searched the Internet for information I wasn't sure I needed. I made note of ideas I had for other novels. I took notes from three process books: Elizabeth George's *Write Away: One Novelist's Approach to Fiction and the Writing Life*; *How Fiction Works* by James Woods; and E.M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*. I hoped they would help me organize my writing better, except I hadn't written anything yet. Really, I was just bouncing off the walls, directionless.

I couldn't focus. I was confused and panicked. I threatened to quit. One bit of advice that kept returning to me was something I'd read back at the beginning of the very first semester: When you're stuck, just sit down and write. It doesn't matter what you are writing about, just start typing. I took that advice to heart. I have fallen back on it quite a few times and it has yet to fail me. I sat down, opened up the new novel-writing program I'd just downloaded that morning, and started typing. By the next day I'd decided to concentrate on two of the six characters, who will be the protagonists of my novel. I knew where the novel would be set, but I still had no idea where to go from there. I thought I would begin at the beginning, but I couldn't figure out where that was. I only had an idea: I wanted to write a story about people whose lives had been changed by off-hand remarks; but what comes first--plot, character, outline, scenes, location, or research?

Choosing the right process books has been crucial to my progress. I take great care to read the opinions of other writers and what they think about process books. Usually, I check at least three reviews before deciding on a book; then I check it out of the library. If it turns out to be useful, I'll buy it. I love books. As I recall, at least half the books I chose for my first semester ended up being a waste of my time. I relied too much on what others recommended without evaluating whether they were good fits for my study or me. It only took one semester to learn that lesson. Time is precious and the weeks shorter by the minute when there are twenty books to read and annotate. I learned that it's important to choose books wisely, but not rigidly; the preliminary bibliography is a flexible guide that can, and should change as the study shifts direction.

A few books have become essential. One of the most important to me has been Elizabeth George's *Write Away: One Novelist's Approach to Fiction and the Writing Life*. I believe in her methods but I haven't followed them to the letter. Now, I realize this has been a bit of a mistake. I think I would have struggled less had I used her methods of organizing earlier on in my process.

I've read the book all three semesters, sometimes twice. I refer to it constantly for its precision, practicality, and sage advice. In regards to her students, she writes, "Above all, I tell them to ignore the committee in their heads that chatters on and on about how they don't know what they're doing, couldn't write their way out of a paper bag, and wouldn't know a good story if it came up and introduced itself, etc, etc" (George 172). How comforting; she's a mind reader! Really, how did she know that was exactly what I was thinking? She also writes, "Sometimes my life seems so insular and safe. There seems nothing worthy in it from which I might draw deeper



meaning for my books and my characters. What am I doing pretending to be a writer?” (George 29). Even the best writers doubt their abilities, and reading about her struggles in the journal pieces she shares at the beginning of each chapter embolden me to think that I could do this too. If she can doubt herself after all her success and still write, why can't I?

It was to this book I first turned to find answers to my questions. George's *Write Away* reads like a novel-writing manual. As much as I love and respect her process, I quickly discovered it wouldn't work for me. Or maybe I wouldn't let it work for me. Whether it is because I'm a novice, or that she writes mystery novels, or that my imagination doesn't follow as linear a path as hers does, I don't know. However, her insights, her techniques and her teaching of the basics are why I continue to regard her book as one of the most important to my study. I intend to continue writing this novel and I will be going back to the advice outlined in this book.

The entire reason I had such confidence in my ability to write a novel came from reading these three books, all of which made novel-writing sound possible: Elizabeth George's *Write Away* and Stephen King's *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*, both excellent books on the process of writing from two very different perspectives; and James Wood's *How Fiction Works*, which I read over the summer.

Wood's book is more like a deconstruction of elements; he takes it all apart so you can see how to put it all back together. One of the first elements he addresses is narration: “The house of fiction has many windows, but only two or three doors” (Wood 3). There are so many aspects to think about when one sets out to write a novel, so many questions to be asked and answered, that

aside from the actual story, I hadn't considered who would be telling the story. To tell the truth, I'd always found the terms of narration confusing: first-person, third-person once removed, cousin of omniscient past participle, I don't know what anyone is talking about. Can't I just tell the story?

The reason I like this book so much is that I understand it. Wood doesn't try to define every example of narration (I have English comp books for that), he simply states which ones are really used in today's writing and gives a few precise examples on usage. "A novelist's omniscience soon enough becomes a kind of secret sharing; this is called 'free indirect style,' a term novelists have lots of different nicknames for—'close third person' or 'going into character'" (Wood 8). He then goes on to give three examples of speech: direct or quoted, reported or indirect, and free indirect, using the same basic set of phrases written to reflect the way each mode is used. Information imparted simply, to the point, and immediately usable--what more could I ask for?

From here I moved forward in a rather zigzag fashion. Actually, this nursery rhyme just popped into my head:

There was a crooked man who walked a crooked mile,  
He found a crooked sixpence upon a crooked stile.  
He bought a crooked cat, which caught a crooked mouse.  
And they all lived together in a little crooked house.

That's how this semester has moved forward, down a crooked path. Which is fine. When you don't know where you're going, you have to try out different avenues. You can't be afraid of having to backtrack and try another road just because the last didn't get you where you wanted to go.

There have been quite a few fits and starts along the way. I bought a new writing program, Storymill, and the first time I used it I lost all the writing I had done. I don't know why or how, but it wasn't very good writing anyway, just the beginning of a few ideas about places I wanted to take the first protagonist, so no great loss. It was mildly upsetting, but I didn't let it derail me. I went to the website, watched the demo videos, and figured out some of the basic features of the program. I have yet to figure out the timeline feature; it just doesn't make any sense to me. I wrote out the timelines by hand on graph paper. I love graph paper. But after the semester is over and I have more time, I will sit down and figure it out. In the meantime you can check out how my first timeline looks after I committed it to the computer (Appendix B).

I have to say the timeline has been the trickiest part so far. Every time I've decided on a course of action, I've gotten redirected to another task. For example, writing the timeline, I'd composed quite a bit of Alice, the first character's, story, and I began writing scenes of another story, Peter's. I knew they would be interacting so I had to write a bit about him so I could see where they could coexist in the grand scheme of the story. Then I realized that if I didn't plot out all the other stories, I wouldn't know where they could interact, but I don't know where the four other character's stories are going yet, and I do not have time to write an entire novel this semester.

Back to the original question, Where do I start? The realization that I had not set myself up very well for success bothers me. I should have been more aware of how much time it was going to take to set up the process of writing a novel. Preparation, I now know, is key.

In order to move on with my writing I had to learn how to use Storymill effectively. There are quite a few interesting features, none of which I knew how to use. I explored each of them, learning how to use the scene windows, how to add characters, modify the locations, and utilize the research mode (Appendix A). I can save all my scenes and chapters separately, flag certain categories, and organize by events. Overall, I found it to be a very useful program not only for its word processing abilities but for its use as a way to visualize the novel as a whole. I found certain features especially helpful, such as the location feature, which allows one to name a place, designate its status, indicate which characters are associated with it, which chapters or scenes it appears in, and drag and drop photos, maps, and graphs right into the window. Suddenly, I had the structure for my thinking and a place to begin building the novel.

My experience in creative writing, previous to this semester's study was a few poems written for a poetry 101 class, and the short stories I'd written over the last two semesters. While I'm still concerned that I don't possess a large enough tool chest of skills from which to draw, I'm confident they will come to me as I continue to write, and I do recognize and acknowledge the progress I have made. I believe I have learned to think like a writer, and the one basic essential, recommended by most every writer I've learned about, is to take yourself and your writing seriously. One needs to demonstrate the importance of the work by scheduling writing time, minimizing distractions, and having a place in which to do it. It becomes easier to transition into

writing /reading mode once it is a habit and you have a place of support and comfort in which to do it, which I do.

Ensnconced in my bedroom, I began to tackle the research portion of my study. In the course of one weekend it all came together. I spent the entire weekend doing research. I've always thought doing research was fun. Even when having to unearth unpleasant information, the thrill of discovery or the mining of just the right bit of evidence to support your thesis is at least satisfying. Though I've done a bit of research previously, I was woefully unprepared for the magnitude of information at my disposal and it quickly overwhelmed me.

Back to George's book for advice. I hadn't made enough decisions beforehand. Though I knew a lot about the type of information I was looking for, it wasn't as clear as it should have been. In order to use one's time effectively when doing research, it helps to be as specific as possible. Had I developed the plot lines and expanded plot lines for all six characters, I would have had a list of questions that needed answering, and that would have given my research more direction. I don't think I've done too badly in this regard. When I attended Northern Essex Community College, I did a lot of academic research into childhood development, so evaluating sources for content comes easily to me. I'd read *The Craft of Research* by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G Colomb and Joseph M. Williams, so I have a strong sense of where to get good information and how to utilize the web efficiently. "When you start to look for sources, you'll find more than you can use, so you must quickly evaluate their usefulness; use two criteria: relevance and reliability" (76). And though this is more of a text for scientific research, I find its advice for finding reliable sources of information useful even for novelist.

I really enjoy this aspect of the writing process. The only facet of research I haven't engaged in yet is personal interviews. This is something that intimidates me, but I know one of my characters will require a personal accounting of an experience that deserves to be as authentic as possible, and the only way to attain that will be to speak to someone who has lived through it. That will be a big challenge for me in the coming year.

My novel is set in three fictional towns approximating the North Shore of Massachusetts. I grew up in Boston, but my experience of the North Shore was limited to drive-bys on the way to Maine. I've been reading Joseph Garland's excellent book about the North Shore. I will also be visiting and photographing places of interest all along the North Shore, adding these images and information to the Storymill program.

I don't recall making the decision about where the novel was taking place, it just seemed to keep popping into my head that it would be the North Shore. I have, however, carefully considered the particular areas that my characters will inhabit. Of the six protagonists, one male is homeless, one middle-aged woman owns a modest home in a lower-middle-class neighborhood, one is a poor PhD candidate who lives with his mother, one homeowner is a middle-class male sports enthusiast, another woman lives in a upper-middle class household in a high-end neighborhood, and the last woman I haven't found a home for yet.

I have imagined these people--how they move through their lives, the neighborhoods they walk through, where they shop, buy clothes, the type of people they come into contact with. I see the

weather changing, the seasons pass, the chores that'll need to be done. Each character embodies their surroundings in some way, reflects the landscape through their actions and reactions. I want readers to be able to place themselves within the story, see what the character sees when they walk out the front door. I want the reader to know these places, to see the landscape so well that I don't have to tell them what is around the corner. If I tell you Carol lives in a middle-class neighborhood of brick-front colonials built in the mid 1990's, you most likely know what that looks like. You know there are no sidewalks, and that light green utility boxes decorate every front lawn, Palladian windows grace every façade, and every home is mounded atop a two-car garage.

Elizabeth George discusses the importance of landscape: "... if you're able to make the landscape of place real, you can make the land itself real, which gives you a leg up on making the entire novel real for the reader" (George 30). This is something I'll try to keep in mind as I roam about the North Shore taking in the details of what makes it come alive to me.

Using actual maps of the three cities I'm drawing inspiration from, I've adapted and redrawn them to reflect the locations I want to portray. The areas I'm interested in emanate such strong character that I became very interested in their history and found a wonderful book detailing the growth of these towns in the years between 1823 and 1929. The personal histories of my characters, and the elements of the past that influence some of them, harken back to the days this book covers. This passage really sets a tone of grandeur for the times:

Besides Presidents, members of cabinet and congress, and justices of the Supreme Court there have been victorious and less than victorious generals, an embarrassment of ambassadors, some denfuls of literary lions, heirs and heiresses real and apparent, various princess and princesses of the blood, and one flush fellow who was Knight of the Bathroom. In the checkered course of its history the North Shore has been the refuge or hunting ground of crooks and confidence men both high and low, of writers by the bushel and artists by the basket, of idols of the matinee and others who idled all the hours away, of knaves, jokers and jacks of both sexes and of all trades and of none—and the destination for a few weeks or hours of surcease from baking sidewalks of several million citizens with neither credential nor pretensions who found respite in their cottages or simply bought a ten-cent round-trip ticket to the beach for a day. (Garland xiii).

Besides researching for place and landscape. I found it necessary to look back at popular culture and political climate. Peter is especially influenced by the music and social scene as he grows up during the sixties and early seventies, and knowing what he would have been listening to or watching on TV helps explain the conditions in which he is living in the novel. It wasn't till I started writing his story that I realized how much research I needed to do (Appendix C). Half the characters in the book are older than I, and have different manners and expectations that were imprinted by the mores of the eras in which they grew up. I found it advantageous to make use of web sites such as [brainyhistory.com](http://brainyhistory.com) that list important events by year. Information such as



election results, music events, sports highlights, and global interests may be integral to bringing a sense of realism to the writing.

Both Alice and Peter lose their mother to violence. While Peter, who has witnessed his mother's death, awaits the police, the radio is playing "Hit the Road Jack" by Ray Charles, a top-forty hit, and Alice, who is left home while her mother goes to work, is watching the last episode of "I Love Lucy," which aired May 5, 1957. Unless one is writing fantasy fiction, it helps to bring in true-to-life details. These details make connections and engage with readers, give them hints as to motivation and create controversy and tension. Alice becomes rather fixated on things that remind her of her mother, and collects Fiesta ware, Bakelite, and I Love Lucy and nightclub memorabilia. I had to research each of these collectibles to find out what's available, in what years the items would have been available, and how popular they are. If anyone should ever actually read this novel, I would want him or her to feel as though the details are authentic and plausible. I'd hate to have someone reject my story because I didn't know that the 12" compartment plate did not come in turquoise.

Above all else, I've found writing to be an intellectual challenge, something I thrive on. Over the years I've fought with knowing a little about a lot, feeling it lessened what I did know because I'd mastered nothing. But when I'm writing, all these little tidbits of information come in handy. I've always been obsessed with learning new things, and writing this novel is all about learning new trivia. Not only that, but I can feed any interest I have by giving it to a character. If I want to learn about quilts, my character is a quilter; if I have a sudden need to know why bees swarm, I create a situation for the knowledge to appear in my work. Genius!

I used to love roller coasters. Now I love writing. It's the same sort of anxiety-building thrill as you climb that first hill, (brainstorming ideas): The calm pause at the top (when you decide on your story) before plummeting towards earth (you realize you don't know anything about the Botswanian Bat-Eared fox) only to be drawn away in a completely new direction, (Botswana's Lentswe-la-Odi weavers-cool!). Then comes a moment of relief as you smoothly round the edge (reading research material) Followed by a series of loops totally disorienting you (Botswana doesn't allow the export of Bat-Eared Foxes which play a pivotal role in an extortion scheme, your plot has holes big enough to pass a hippo through, and you realize as your laptop slides off the roof of your car onto the hood, splintering under the wheels of the UPS truck that is delivering the foam pillow you need to sit on because you fell two days ago, in the very merry month of May, trying to remove the Christmas lights from the front porch but it's dark out because it's midnight and you can't see the parade of ferocious feet-eating beetles along the rail but you feel them when you step up on to the banister and fall six feet into the yews breaking your coccyx and waking the whole neighborhood, that you haven't backed-up your writing in months) and finally, the slow sigh-inducing slide home (you finish your first draft).

Wasn't that fun? Then you get in line and do it all over again (revising). We'll skip the discussion on publishing, which is akin to the Round-Up, both of which make me want to throw-up.

## **A Brief History of the Modern Novel**

All novels are modern in the times in which they are written, but an-ism, meaning a particular practice or philosophy, added in equates to a movement, thus begetting Modernism. My perception, after reading a half-dozen or so books and essays on the subject, is that modernism was a movement of change, a deconstruction of what reality meant in regards to time, space, and language, in response to a world of unprecedented transformation. “Sometime around 1900 (1910,1922) to be modern meant something else, something more, because modernity meant everything. It seemed to be breaking the world in two, snapping all continuities with the past, putting human character and life itself into a state of constant change” (Matz 1) It is as much about what it isn’t as what it is; no one style or genre can be ascribed solely to it.

There are many traits and attributes that are the hallmarks of this change. Experimental forms reign, using multiple devices such as parallels, changing perspectives, juxtaposition, and shifting characters. Narratives become unstructured streams of consciousness, “. . . when they let outer reality dissolve into chaos of real mental life, and when they tried to follow out the strange evolutions whereby sights and sounds and theories blend and scatter and pursue themselves on into ever new formations, then they helped to make this most distinctive of modern narratorial styles” (Matz 54). Random inexactness, rather than “Perfect heroes, artificial plots, false endings, and excessive detail . . .” (Matz 51) There are new psychological perspectives, analysis using myth and symbolism, and differing comprehensions of reality, “. . . as writers continued to transform narration in whatever ways necessary to get fully inside the mind” (Matz 53).

The landscape moves inside as opposed to the outward world of romanticism or realism, which concerns itself with exterior interactions. Time becomes nonlinear. Narratives move back and

forth, breaking the sequential, successive mode of storytelling, and time becomes symbolical instead of quantifiable.

There are no happy endings where everything is explained and all questions answered; endings become ambiguous, open-ended, and unresolved. Questions of reality are foremost: “Modern novels emphasize perspective” (Matz 51). Nothing is inviolable. There is no truth, no God, and no order, “. . . because no real person ever gets the whole truth . . . the omniscient, panoramic, impersonal standpoint gave way to the limited, focused, personal point of view” (Matz 51). The meaning of anything and or everything is examined and searched for through symbolism using device, allegory, and epiphany.

Optimism is replaced by the dire depiction of the everyday life, pessimism and despair. The writer reflects philosophically on the state of being rather than knowing. The subconscious is explored. Religion, politics, traditions, history and social mores are denounced, and their conventions repudiated.

Modernist writers utilized many styles, themes and forms: absurdist, magic realist, dystopian, epistolary, expressionist, futurist, gothic, imagist, naturalist, picaresque, political, realistic, romantic, surreal, symbolic, transcendental, utopian. “No single view or style of explanation could ever be adequate to the diversity of the modern experience and fiction therefore evolved towards greater inclusiveness, greater variety, and greater versatility” (Matz 59).

Why? What caused such sweeping changes in novel writing?

The end of The Industrial Age, particularly the Second Revolution powered by technological advances in the late 1800's, transformed the world. Machine tools that could make other machines wrought many of the tools of destruction utilized in war-time such as the tank, flame-thrower, hand and rifle grenade, machine gun, poison gases, and, of course, the aircraft.

The atrocities of a world at war left an estimated 7,956,888 from twenty-three nations dead between the years 1914-1918, and left the world emotionally devastated. In addition, the 1918 worldwide outbreak of influenza at the end of the war killed an additional 50 million people.

The development of the textile industries, the steam engine, and iron-making, among many other industries, created unprecedented growth in economy. Factories needed workers; cities formed around them, citizens had money to buy mass-produced goods creating booming economies, which brought public health, public education, and a build-up of the middle-class.

Science and technologies saw an emergence of knowledge across a multitude of disciplines. Darwin's Theory of Evolution, Einstein's theories on Relativity, the discovery of radioactivity, Louis Pasteur's identification of the connection between microorganisms and disease, Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and his psychoanalysis of the unconscious mind informed and elicited new thinking. In response to the universal upheaval, "...between 1890-1900 sociology became an integral part of the academic scene" (Janowitz 109)

Photography, motion pictures, the telephone, and later television exposed people to the world. These developments changed what they knew, whom they knew, and how they saw themselves. Popular culture began to drive economies, societies and contributed to the rise of the United States and Britain as dominant nations.

In response, writers, dissatisfied and disenfranchised by a world of Victorian values, were transformed. Writers were being affected by the growing unrest in society, World War I, World War II, the booming field of psychoanalysis, the great depression, etc. The underpinnings of an elitist intelligentsia (one of the many factions of modernist writers) that watched society growing ever more materialistic, self-centered, and educated, fought back against the bourgeoisie with literature that was ever more complex, layered, and esoteric.

### **The Writers**

Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856) is often referred to as the first modern novel, though I believe he and the following author's work foreshadowed more than fully embodied Modernism. In Francis Steegmuller's translation of *Madame Bovary*, he notes, in his introduction, the importance of Flaubert's work: "It was not only the most realistic novel of its age, it was also the most psychological. More than any of his predecessors or contemporaries among fiction writers, Flaubert probes his characters' minds trying to account fully for their actions and emotions." As is the norm with any movement, there were other works that helped shape the coming shift in the novel's form. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* (1850) "His pessimism has captured the imagination of many disillusioned contemporary Americans . . . *The Scarlet Letter*, an inimitable mixture of romance, allegory, myth and psychological realism . . ."

(SS 154), and Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (1862) “. . . brought to the novel a new intensity of emotion, a newly precise kind of observation, a perfect combination of complex and simple, and a bracing nihilism” (Matz 15) were also adding their influence to the new modernist manifesto. “. . . People did not tend to put fiction on a par with poetry, music and painting. Those were serious arts; the novel, by contrast, was something less entertaining, and edifying in its way, but not art” (Matz 15). This began to change around the late 1800's, specifically with the publication in 1884 of an essay by Henry James, “The Art of Fiction.”

More people than ever could read, more works were being published, and the population numbers were rising. One change significant to the writers of the day was the growing education and literacy of the masses. “It was to cater to the post-Educational-Act reading public that the popular newspaper came into being” (Carey 6). Some writers were dismayed by the burgeoning bourgeoisie and deliberately set out to make literature the art of the intellectually elite.” . . . The popular newspaper presented a threat, because it create an alternative culture which bypassed the intellectual and made him redundant. By adopting sales figures as a sole criterion, journalism circumnavigated the traditional cultural élite” (Carey 6,7). It was now not only that they (the intellectuals/elite/aristocrats) wanted the fictional novel held in the same esteem as fine art, poetry, and architecture, but that it be withheld from the public too, for only the truly intellectual could understand it. The manner in which it was withheld from the people (the masses) was to produce works “. . .too much geared to the cultural élite – for those with excellent education, fine tastes and aristocratic priorities” (Matz 102).

James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), written in stream of consciousness style, is often remarked upon for its' deliberately incoherent allusions, puns and epiphanies. There are several jokes out there about how no one reads James's *Ulysses* but everyone studies it, meaning it is so obscurely written that no one can understand it, and that it was meant to be so. "The intellectuals could not, of course, actually prevent the masses from attaining literacy. But they could prevent them reading literature by making it too difficult for them to understand—and this is what they did. The early twentieth century saw a determined effort, on the part of the European intelligentsia, to exclude the masses from culture. In England this movement has become known as modernism" (Carey16).

The intellectuals sought to keep literature to themselves and away from the middle-class - "Most of these self-styled 'modernist' 'avant-gardists' and 'experimentalists' came from the same privileged WASP castes as their academic opposite numbers, but they sought to deny their bourgeois origins by passing into the non-class, or meta-class of 'bohemians' or 'intellectuals'" (Fiedler 58). They represented themselves as the new keepers of literature, mocking the "Old Academy" for their adherence to traditions, breaking those traditions to bring new meaning and objectivity to their writing. Though these writers and poets, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, André Gide, Gertrude Stein and W.B. Yeats, D.H. Lawrence and others, upheld the dogma of elitism, they also sought to reflect the society in turmoil.

Not all writers of modernism felt that writing for the masses detracted from their work, and some who did still profited by it. There was, after all, money to be made, and the more pragmatic of those did very well to write to the demands of popular culture. There were writers who believed



in the masses' potential as readers of literature and that they need not just be the purveyors of tripe; Arnold Bennett was one. "Without being patronizing or elitist, he introduced his readers to what he believed was truly valuable in modern literature" (Carey 156)

The middle-class wanted adventure, romance, fantasy, human interest, women's perspectives, and they were first satiated by newspapers that proliferated during this period. The newspapers were the bane of the British aristocrats and literati, not only for lowering the standards of what they considered literature, but for daring to market to women. With the success of the newspapers, the book market had legions of writers now flocking to fill the demand. The intellectuals could no longer deny the masses' power, and instead of reconciling they became even more insular and determined to keep their "Art" from the masses of popular culture. As the modernist movement evolved, initial changes, such as the disposal of plot, were reexamined. "Plot was false, plot was an encumbrance, and only without it could the modern novel explore consciousness and present ordinary life as it really happens" (Matz 102). But plot was what appealed to the masses, and writers, especially the Americans who came to modernism later in the movement, ". . . would try now to make its experimental forms more flexible, and better able to engage with the fullest range of modern problems and modern needs" (Matz 103).

There was a growing concern that the new modernism couldn't "engage with real world problems and issues" (Matz 78). Even though the modern novel's forms suggest self-centeredness, ". . ." concerned only with its own styles and structures – it was utterly formed by public problems and responsibilities" (Matz 79). Novelists such as Willa Cather showed the American West, not as "local color," but just as "...real, using modernized styles and approaches

to describe regional life as something just as gritty, just as ordinary, and just as interesting as life in the centers of culture” (Matz 80).

Even when some writers denounced the masses’ effect upon the world, they couldn’t ignore the ugly class-consciousness which created a self-consciousness among those writers. “As Virginia Woolf wrote, the writer who had stood comfortably atop a tower of privilege, ‘scarcely conscious of his high station or of his limited vision,’ found himself around 1914 far more conscious, and felt his tower leaning down towards the ground” (Matz 83). The fantasy of high-minded lifestyles became the fodder for debunkery; imperialism, wealth, and privilege addressed in E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* “ . . . laid bare the hypocrisies and inauthenticity of British government in India,” while F. Scott Fitzgerald exposed the wealthy in *The Great Gatsby*. “ . . . changed the class-consciousness by exploring the fantasies that perpetuate inequitable systems, the delusions about wealth that make aristocracies seems worth keeping” (Matz 85).

Modernism now moved to serve the interests of many by showing life accurately, honestly, and with purpose. Choosing which of modernism’s experimental objectives and styles to use, what form to use to achieves the writer’s purpose, depends on who is writing. The cultural context in which fiction is being written, such as the women’s movement and the Harlem Renaissance created dilemmas about the purpose and “ . . . duty of fiction . . . Was it to be beautiful, or useful?” (Matz 89)

“Art or politics; form or content; experimentation or accessibility: these dilemmas would subsequently become the action of a kind of pendulum, swinging the novel back and forth

between its aesthetics and social commitments” (Matz 89). I don’t believe we have to settle the debate. As I see it modernism serves the purpose of the writer as he or she sees fit to use it since experimentation was the hallmark of the movement.

I’ve included a few brief descriptions of the writers of modernist literature and their most acclaimed novel (Appendix D). I’ve noted the style or forms and any other modernists take that seemed relevant to their inclusion.

## Fiction

I believe it is important for the beginning writer to see a work in progress, therefore the following fiction works appears here as an unedited first draft.

### Alice: Chapter One

Swinging maple doors keep all but murmurs from escaping out to the carpet hushed foyer. Alice passing through the empty reception bay raises a hand to her throat stopping to listen to the muffled din of activity coming from the recreation room. She'd rather sit here, blank and dull on the taupe and cornflower blue upholstered love-seat than respond to the brown code she'd received moments ago. Like the patient's families who mingle here, she finds comfort in the warmth and elegance of the carefully chosen decor. At least for the first few visits. It is not until they've viewed the paintings on the walls a few times, paintings that evoke vista of distant lands, that they realize they gaze into worlds none in this place will ever see again. That's how you can tell they're new. In the beginning they treat this place like a sanctuary, a place of peace and hope. But really, there is no getting around the fact that it's a nursing home, and most people come here to die.

The churning sea is Alice's favorite. Frothy green and mad, the salty waters of the Mediterranean appear warm and inviting despite the stormy surge. She hiccups a small laugh, chatting to the ferns, "I'd just as soon take a dip in that painting than the waters of the Atlantic down the street here. I never could get used to swimming in the ocean." Alice smooths the skirt over her knees, ankles crossed tucked primly under her. "It's just the same as Uncle Ted's pond, cold and dark at its' depths. But I been swimming there most of my life and it's okay in the high heat of summer. Before I lived with him, Momma and I would visit the whole month of July just sunning and swimming, eating tuna sandwiches on white bread, crunching potato chips and using the tall frosted World Fair glasses to ice our tonics, usually Pepsi but sometimes a A&W cream soda.

An antique grandfather clock chimed the quarter hour. Heaving herself out of her reverie, Alice heads down the hall. I best get a moving on before that Mr. Swanson starts hollering. Glancing in at the class being taught, Alice catches Mona mid-eye-roll. Her hand on her father's, guides the brush across the paper. Theo's agitated, as usual. The other men are grouped like a pack of high school boys at a dance, eyeing the ladies with suspicion. Nodding her way along, Alice finds the tools of her trade and gets down to the business of being useful. Because, I'm nothing- if not useful.

Mona turns her attention to the others in the class. Peals of laughter bounce around the room landing with a thud at the gentlemen's feet.

"Why the hell can't you just paint instead of going on like a bunch of ninnies?" Theo, throws his brush aside, rips the paper from his easel, challenging his daughter with a stare.

Mona reaches up slowly, deliberately making him wait for a response, and straightens out the clips holding Helen's page. Breathing in measures before she replies, Mona tilts her head, staring back at her father, fists jammed into her aprons pockets. Locked and loaded as Gramps

would say.

"Dad, the idea is to find the joy in the moment. To express the happiness of being. To conjure up and remember a happy moment from your past and let it breath through you now. It might be easier if you'd stop focusing on what others are doing."

"I don't know why you're bothering. You're not going make artist out of any of these people."

"You know," Rebecca, chimes in, "I remember a quote from Bob Ross. You know Bob of course?" Rebecca flails her arms around gesturing to everyone, drawing them in like an old E.F.Hutton ad. "Well, he said, 'Yadda, Yadda, Yadda.'"

Most of the ladies nod their heads approving of her wisdom, well Bob's wisdom anyway. Mona making her way around the room, stopping to whisper encouragement, praising effort here and there; she gives Rebecca a brief hug from behind, thanking her for the solidarity.

"We artist have to stick together." Rebecca says winking back at her.

Thirty minutes later, their allotted fifty-minute class is over. Three down, five to go. Mona pushes her hair back under the poppy kerchief she wears for these classes. She learned long ago that names are pretty useless but a eye catching detail can fight back the forgetfulness of old age.

Mr Swanson must have been high on the sweets his daughter snuck in at lunch time today. He was pretty upbeat for someone with a load in his pants. Not so last week when he near pitched a fit at being changed out of his favorite pair of Dungarees. They do get so set in their ways. Not that I blame them. I got my ways set too I guess.

Up at dawn, walk, eat, read, clean, go shopping if I need to. Go to work, come home, eat, read, go to bed. I watch a little tv on the weekends. You know Mr. Swanson, farming gives you a strong sense of routine that's for sure. I guess that's why I don't mind the work here. It's the same pretty much, day after day, week after week. Going on year after year, now. I sometimes wonder how long I can work here. Don't see no reason why I'd have to leave, but it does seem that most of the aide help moves on after not too long a time. I been here longer than most except the managers and a few nurses, one a the doctors that started the place retired, but the other one is still here.

That teacher has a nice way of talking, real positive, encouraging. Not like the knitting lady, who snapped every time she had to repeat herself. Which was all the time. She wasn't asked back, was she Mr. Swanson. This teacher though, I think she'll be back even when her daddy passes. The others like her too, The Poppy Lady! She sure has made the list of hot topics at the dinner circle. Someone suggested they ask her to stay to dinner next week but they chickened out. Rejection is hard when you don't have much to look forward to. Why ruin a good thing?

Alice tucks away her things, checks on the Merten twins to see if boys need anything. They stare at the tv. Alice stops to stare into its blank screen for a moment, straightens the bed clothes, tosses the stray bits of refuse that have missed their mark. The odor of food reminds Alice of her other duties and she heads back towards the rec room to round the troops for their next meal.

Someone has left behind a book for her. A note written in purple ink, "Red Poppy- thought you would enjoy this book, R." R would be Roger Thackery. Poetry, I don't like poetry, mostly because I don't understand it. I cried for a week in high school when I had to read "Ode

to a Grecian Urn" and thought I'd flunk out of school because I didn't know what to make of it. Uncle Ted, let me stay home from school for two days before he figured out why I was really avoiding school. Then he kicked me out to the front porch the third day before I was even dressed. I didn't flunk out but I never understood it either.

The paintings weren't much to look at. Some had just smeared around a bunch of colors. Other ones you could tell they were trying to show you something. Mrs. Reed, Rebecca, her's was pretty good. It might even be as good as some of those out in the lobby. You had to look at it the right distance away to see it, but still it was nice and green and you could tell what is was supposed to be.

Picking up the brush, Alice moves around a blank sheet of paper. I heard what Red Poppy was telling the group when they started. "Close your eyes and bring up the happiest memory you can recall, something you can see in your mind. Then open your eyes and feel the colors flow out the brush. Bring the happiness into your mind, let it flood your body, and flow like water through your veins..."

"The only time I feel alive is when I'm painting."

Alice starts, dropping her hand and wiping a swath of cerulean blue down the plum skirt of her uniform.

"It's a quote, by Andy Warhol"

Alice stares at Mona puzzled, whether by Mona's sudden appearance or her conversation, neither is sure.

"Look," Mona maneuvers the painting Alice has been working on to compare it to another, "Do you see how different this is? Your choice of color, how you mixed them, the yellow contrasting here. And see this balance of weight. The blue's depth nearly pulls you into the page. You're methodical, this line, this line, this line, but the color is- boom! You're a natural."

If Mona had walked in and slapped Alice across the face she'd have been less shocked. What is this women talking about? Is she playing around with me? Is this just that positive reinforcement stuff? Suddenly fearful, Alice sputters out, "I'm sorry, I just came in to clean up. I didn't mean to use your things. If you tell me how much what I used cost, I'll pay you what I owe you next week."

Mona, regards Alice a moment, and adds her up, sees her as a women, as a potential artist, and even as a fearful child. No one has ever seen her before. She's never even seen herself. How does that happen? How do you go through half your life and not see yourself?

"I tell you what. We'll call it even if you help me put my stuff away. It's not your job to clean up my mess. Would that be okay?" Mona asks.

Nodding, Alice places her right hand upon her shoulder slipping her finger beneath her bra strap, her elbow bent out forming a shield across her chest. She keeps her body facing Mona, as she swishes brushes in cups of water.

"You could take lessons, I know a man who just started offering classes to beginners. And there's another in my study group that takes on private students. Come to think of it ,Andy is putting together a group for his town art in the park group, any of those men would love have you." Mona said.

Pushing a broom hastily towards the exit, Alice tells Mona she is needed else where and departs down the hall toward the dining room. I don't know why she'd say those things. They aren't true. I was thinking about my mother. Those are her colors. That's her style. Momma was

so stylish, so beautiful, she would have been a great painter if she'd wanted to be. That was the first time in a long time I thought of her like that. Remembering what she was like. What we were like.

That last day they'd gone shopping for new shoes. I got Buster Browns, I didn't like the fancy patent leather like the ones Momma wanted me to get. She would sometimes get mad at me for not caring about clothes the way she did. But most of the time, she'd just say I'd grow out of it. When the time comes for me to be a lady, I'll start caring about powder, perfume and pretty dresses. That's what she thought. I guess maybe it's a good thing she didn't live long enough to see me grow up. She'd be disappointed, because I never did like those things. I never did learn to put on make-up or buy clothes, or sew like she did. All those fashion magazines and movie starlets just made me uncomfortable, especially when the girls at school went all boy crazy and started only caring about what everyone was wearing. And caring more about being seen with others who was wearing what they were. Uncle Ted, he never thought to buy me anything other than what I needed to help around the farm in and I never thought to ask.

Cousin Myra came by once when I was about eleven and told him I needed women things. I held my breath when she said out loud like that. I thought Uncle Ted was gonna be embarrassed but he just muttered something like, he never thought of that and sent us out to buy stuff like bras, and sanitary napkins. She showed me where to go in the drug store, and how to get help from the lady at the department store to fit me for a bra. After that I'd just go the drugstore myself but ordered all my clothes from the Sears catalog. I didn't like trying things on in public and I sure didn't like that old woman barging in on me making comments about my breasts. Ever since then, I pretty much been buying all my clothes through Sears, though once in while I might order a blouse from JC Penney.

Three days later Mr Theodore Reynolds died. Mona never did come back. But I started to think about what she said, and I hung that painting on my bedroom door. I looked at every night for three weeks and I thought about what Red Poppy said to me. I even woke up one night and wrote it down because I was starting to be afraid that I'd forget what she said, and I didn't want to forget it. For the first time in my life I wanted it to be true. I wanted to have natural talent for color just like my momma did or something pretty much like it.

## Alice: Chapter Two

Walking through the quiet house crowded streets of her neighborhood, Alice carries the art supplies she bought on a whim earlier in the day. This morning the robins song had put her in rather melancholy mood and she'd been thinking of her mother. Her momma said the return of the robins was the first real sign of spring. So when Alice sat up in bed and contemplated her painting it made her think of starting over and she decided then and there, that today she would set out to find Mona Reynolds.

When Mona first bought her father to live at Preston-Worth Commons Home, she had spoken of her art gallery located somewhere in a town north of the nursing home. After an unsuccessful thumb through the yellow pages, Alice had the idea to head downtown. Leyton has a nice touristy area where there are all kinds of shops including art galleries. Alice thought maybe someone who works in one of them might know of Mona or where her gallery is.

Robed in a plain black slicker, Alice carries her favorite bag, a felted wool purse a neighbor had given to her shortly before she'd moved away from the farm ten years ago. Alice likes its ruby leaves with gold and sky petals though she worries it doesn't match her clothes. I know I never would have bought it myself. I look at things like this all the time but... Those little shops along the waterfront, where Alice heads now has lots of interesting hand sewn bags and belts, scarves and ethnic skirts, but I don't bother to buy anything.

If Momma were here she'd love to pop around all the little store fronts. I sometimes imagine she's with me, nosing around the bins and racks to find just the right accessory, it was like treasure hunting for her. When we were out browsing, I'd pick up little trinkets for her to see but after awhile she'd just tell me to leave things alone.

"Alice darling, why don't you wait out on the stoop. If I have to look at every little thing you pick up we'll never get out of here."

One day I turned to leave and I heard the owner remark to my momma, that her little girl sure seemed anxious to find something that she'd like.

"Yes, she does try so hard; unfortunately, its rather bothersome since she hasn't got my sense of style, she just choses the most inappropriate things. It's not her fault mind you, she's just, well, she pretty much has no style, no sense of fashion."

Pretty much right about that. I never can decided what goes with what.

I even had to have help when I bought all the furniture for the house from that discount place, Wendy and Walter's Warehouse of Rooms. It was just like that too. You go in, and there are all these rooms set up according to which room in your house you were buying furniture for. And they had all kinds of color choices for the materials and pillows and such. I was looking for a bedroom set, a living room set and table and chairs for the kitchen. They led me all around the place asking me what I liked and didn't like. I'd never been furniture shopping before; it was pretty scary. I worried the whole time I'd make a mistake and buy something that didn't go together. I think Amanda, that was the saleslady, I think she was getting concerned I wasn't going to buy anything after she'd spent so much time showing me all over, but while we were sitting on one of the sofas I told her I was nervous about things matching and she said she help me pick out everything so it all would go together. Then she ask me how much I was looking to spend and I told her I could spend however much I wanted because I'd inherited my uncle's farm and sold it three month ago and now I had my own house.

She asked if I had any furniture at all and I told her only the old bed and dresser that I



brought with me to have in the room I lived in before Uncle Ted died. And a small round pine table with two chairs that I'd bought after I moved here. But I was gonna put that stuff in the spare bedroom and get my very own new furniture sets. I only kept a few things from the farm; I thought most of it was so old it wouldn't be good to put them in a new house. To tell you the truth I didn't like the way the old stuff smelled caused uncle smoked cigars and all the surfaces were tacky and stinky from it. So, I just might as well buy myself my own things. Now that I'm here though I don't know exactly what I should be buying. I thought maybe there was someone who could help. I saw an ad about in-house designer, someone who can me help pick them out so I don't make a mistake and get ugly things that don't match.

Amanda was nodding her head and smiling so I could tell she was sympathetic, and we walked around the place again, this time with a form to write down all the items I wanted. We started with the living room and she asked if I knew what pieces I was going to need. I knew from the nursing home that I liked the blue and taupe stripe fabric and that there was a love-seat, a sofa and two chairs, so that's what we put on the list. Amanda said I needed pillows and lamps, then I needed tables to put them lamps on and I'd better get the coffee table that matched them. I was so happy she was helping me, she asked lots of questions about what my house looked like and how big it was. She asked if I liked the color of the walls, and what the woodwork and the floors were made of so we didn't pick out anything that clashed. I never thought about the woodwork or the floors. I did think the wall color was going to be okay because it is white and even I know anything can go with that. That and black. That's why I buy a lot of black and white clothes and then everything looks neat and tidy hanging in the closets and lined up on the shelves.

After a while I was getting hungry, and I asked Amanda if we could take break, and do you know what she did? She called a deli across the street and had them bring us both sandwiches and drinks. I thought that was the nicest thing to do. We ate at one of the tables in the back of the store. Then we started right in picking out more furniture. This time we looked at the all bedroom pieces. Amanda said she had one just like the mahogany four poster bed with the matching night stands. I thought it was grand, maybe way too fancy for me. But she said "Alice, who is more important than you right now? You have got to treat yourself right because no one else is going to do it for you." So I got the dresser, the bureau, the bed, matching night stands, lamps, and they even sold me a whole new comforter and dust ruffle set that matched the one on the showroom floor so it would look just like it when I got it all home. I love that store. I still send Amanda a card for every holiday and she sends me personal invitations to sales for special clients like me.

The bus downtown trundled heavily through the narrow city streets. Alice liked to gaze out and steal glances through other people's windows. The houses on the avenue were real close to the street so every once in while Alice would get caught looking in when the bus stalled in traffic. This just made her laugh. She caught a man throwing his cat high in the air one day, and the same man playing guitar in his underwear a week later. People are funny. What they do when they think no one is watching is like opening presents Christmas morning. You look inside the box and surprise! You can be really happy or really disappointed. Like that old woman who was always being yelled at by that younger one. I guess she must be her daughter. The old lady rocks in her chair and the younger one stands over her jabbing her finger in her direction. The bus has to stop for a red light outside this house so I can see the old lady almost every week. I wish I could invite her over to ask her what the girl is yelling at her about.

When the bus nears her stop, Alice makes her way to the front of the bus, reaching over a

girl with limp hair the color of tar to pluck at the cord signaling her stop. Nelson nods goodbye as she descends the stairs leaving Alice midway down the main through fare of town. Store fronts offer a variety of clothing, books, spiritual aids, bagels, used cds and videos. Interspersed among the shops are tiny brick fronted restaurants offering Vietnamese, Korean, Indian, Chinese, and Brazilian foods. Alice would often stop in and ordered one item, usually an appetizer just so she could say she'd had Korean food that weekend when she got to work on Monday. The younger staff members were always impressed by this and it thrilled Alice to have them think she was adventurous. After a while the Dominican ladies started bringing in bits of their cooking for her try. She always said yes, even when it was something she didn't like, she didn't want them to stop trying to please her with their offerings.

Past those few blocks of eateries, the more expensive shops lined the tree shaded streets that ran along the coast. Here's where the art galleries and jewelry stores are, the china and gift shops, and the upscale restaurants. Alice paused to admire a slender sloop with intricate riggings in the storefront of the Admiral's Sale. A figure walking past the other side of case caught Alice's eye, a man she'd seen before was dusting. The bing-bong startled her as she entered and the man turned to view who'd come in.

"Alice? What a surprise to see you."

Henry Long Warren, spoke as if a long lost friend had suddenly appeared before him. Smiling, though a bit confused, Alice raised her right hand to her shoulder slipping her fingers through the strap of her bra. Seeing her shaking hand disappear, Henry reached out, lightly embracing both of Alice's shoulders and quickly brushed a kiss along her now very rosy cheeks.

"I can hardly believe my eyes. You haven't changed much in the last ten years."

Still beaming down at her Henry recognized the blank expression that had come across her face and gently prodded her memory. Laughing conspiratorially, head tilted into hers, Henry posed a few deliberate questions.

"You remember my wife Edwina, she used to make the most extraordinary jelly every summer, and you used to bring us the best pumpkin pie."

Alice sighed her relief and agreed,

"Yes, sir, your wife made the best jelly in the county and had all those ribbons to prove it."

When was the last time I saw the Warren's? Quickly scanning the deep recesses of her mind, Alice came up the name of the their dog,

"Do you still have Browser?" said Alice.

Henry shook his head sadly, inquiring about Uncle Ted. "I'm sorry Mr. Warren, but Uncle Ted's been gone ten years now." Alice felt bad about the pain that swept across Mr. Warren's face but there was no way of not telling him.

"Alice, I'm so sorry. I guess after my Edwina died I lost touch with the old neighbors. I came up to Glenbay to live with my daughter and her husband, I guess it must be eleven years now." Alice felt a part of Mr Warren slip away, no longer really here with her, he was walking and talking with his old love Edwina. As he wandered away towards the case of glass spheres Alice let her gaze take in the objects displayed around the shop. Unsure if she should wait or leave, she slowly turned to look more closely at a painting on the walls. Henry made his way back towards her, absently remarking,

"This is my gallery, I bought it after I'd been here for a year and decided that I was ready to get back to work. My daughter co-owns it with me. Turns out she's quite the bookkeeper and office manager."

"Mr Warren" Alice speaks suddenly, rushing out her question.

"Do you know any local artist's? I'm looking for Mona Reynolds."

Blinking back tears, Henry returns to the land of the living, answering Alice's question in a most unexpected way.

"She's upstairs." Henry gestures to the ceiling, "How do you know Mona?"

Alice audibly gasps, then tries to explain.

"I have this painting I was working on and I bought it home, then I began to think about what Mona said to me-That I could have any man I wanted." Alice flushes madly, at her inference, stammers, and almost turns to leave as Henry's laughter fills the gallery.

Blazing orange suns decorate the yolk yellow walls of the kitchen. Mona is just turning off the kettle she'd put on to make tea.

"I wasn't able to come back. I had no idea his death would affect me like that." Mona gestures for Alice to sit. She placed the gold-rimmed tea cups on a tray with a lovely deep blue edged Limoge plate piled high with homemade butter cookies.

"I'm glad I found you, I thought I'd have to search the whole eastern seaboard for that gallery you was talking about. I don't know if you remember but you told me I was good with color and I wanted to ask you more about that. I wanted to ask you if you could teach me, like you were teaching the patients." Alice adds sugar to her tea cup marveling at the silver teaspoons ornate decoration.

Mona watches Alice's face, thinking- such a good face to watch. What is it about her face? She could tell the woman was nervous, maybe even a little scared, but what of she didn't know. Oh, you see all types of people who'll say they can't paint or draw or that "they don't have a creative bone in their body" but there's something different about the urgency in Alice's plea, she just cuts right to my heart.

"How long have you been working at the nursing home? Mona asks.

"About ten years, it'll be ten years in two month. I started working there when I moved to Leyton after my Uncle Ted died.

Alice went to regale Mona with the coming and goings of life in the nursing home and being an aide, how she gets along with the other people. The way they like to bring her things, and have her try their food. How much she is praised and appreciated for her dedicated sense of duty. "I started out working in the kitchen, but they moved me out to the dining because the patients liked talking to me. The after a few years they asked if I'd like to train as an aide, they thought I'd be real good at it because I was so neat and precise and treated the all the patients kindly, even the ones no one else liked."

"I heard they might be giving me a party but I don't know for sure. I'd like to have a party . I never had a party before even when I was little. Mamma and I move around a lot so I didn't have many friends. Not until I moved in with Uncle Ted and lived in one place long enough to know the other kids one grade to the next. But even then I didn't have a lot of friends just people I knew." A deep sigh and Alice's conversation was over. Mona watched Alice's hand slid up to her left shoulder and she wondered what to do with her.

"Well, if you are going to start art classes, I guess we should figure out what you'll need. Do you have any paints or brushes, things like that?" Mona asked, while clearing away their tea things.

Alice shook her head. "What do you do? I mean as a creative outlet? Do you sew?"

"No."

"Do you knit or crochet?"

"No."

"Do you sketch? Draw? Color with pencils?"

Alice shook her head.

"Have you ever painted? In school maybe?"

"Never."

"Alice, you must do something with your time off from work. What do you do?" Mona pushed.

"I organize my collections. I look at magazines. I learned how to search on the internet from work and bought myself a little computer," Alice sat upright as she went on, "I search for pieces for my collections. I'm a buyer and seller on ebay" Alice beamed now.

"That's great, what do you collect?" Mona asked.

"Oh, anything about 'I Love Lucy', only original things though, I don't like reproductions. And I collect Nightclub memorabilia, you know, menus, photos, matchboxes, anything with the clubs names on them. I used to collect autographed photos from the 40's and 50's but I traded them all for a Bakelite Collection another woman had. My momma was real fond of her bakelite jewelry which I still have and I have her bureau set and a set of tableware with golden handles that looks like ivory. I once knew a man who was a friend of my Uncle Ted who was a real fine carpenter and I asked him if he could make me a special box for Momma's jewelry. It has real fine woods, curly maple and cherry, it was almost more special than the jewelry I put in it. I couldn't believe it when he unwrapped it and handed it over to me." Alice spent her voice, eyes now pleading with Mona for the questions to end.

Alice rose to leave, but Mona, begging her pardon, asked her to stick around a few more minutes. "I'd like to make a few calls about beginner classes for you and write down the address of the art supply store. You could stop there today and get started." Mona without waiting for an answer picked up a phone out of it's cradle walked over to the window murmuring to someone on the other end.

What have I done? Now that she'd found Mona, and she been happy to see her, and wanted to get Alice started learning, she was afraid. How can I paint? Or draw, or do any of those things that artist's do? I don't have any color sense. I didn't know what I was doing when Mona saw that painting. I can't do this. The color drains from Alice's face as she talks herself out the door. Fleeing down the stairs, through the gallery, past Henry's shouts of goodbye and out to the white sun glaring off the grey-bleached roadway, Alice freezes not knowing where to go next.

Before she'd made it two blocks, Mona's hand grasped her upper arm and gently swung her round.

"I know, before you even protest, I know." Mona holds both Alice's hands in hers rooting her to the spot. "You are so afraid of being thought of as a fraud that you can't even try. But Alice you came here. You came here to find me and you asked me for help. That is so meaningful. Whatever it is that is holding you back, your will to be creative is stronger."

Alice is speechless. Here is this artist chasing her through the streets, going out of her way, to help me— why? I don't know her, she don't know me. Why is she needing to help so bad?

"Why did you come after me? Alice asks.

"You just mean something to me, I can't explain it. I think you remind me of someone, I just don't know who. I feel like I need to help you. I'd be honored to help you, to help you find

whatever it is you are looking for. You know, part of my experience as a teacher, it helps me see, it helps me create. It has become a big part of my process. I feel a bit empty when I haven't taught a class for while, when I haven't had students. That's why I volunteered to hold the classes at the home. It gives me hope, to see others emerge and flourish and discover new things about themselves. I need to help you, please."

Mona drops Alice's hands, hanging her own from her trouser belt loops, waiting for Alice to speak. They stand there for ten minutes, not talking, not moving except to shuffle their feet. Alice didn't run away, Mona didn't get impatient. They both watched the world moving around them.

Finally, Alice locks eyes with Mona. "Where is the store?"

Mona reaches into her pocket coming up with an address not far from where they were stand. Also, written in the neat block print Mona perfected as a child, is a list of supplies to get Alice started and the names and numbers of three men.

### Alice: Chapter Three

As soon as Alice gets home she spread the art supplies on the kitchen table, laying out the small and large filbert brushes, a few rounds in various sizes, Golden brand acrylics, a large sketchbook, a black covered Moleskin (is it really moleskin?) a pencil set in different hardnesses, a set of 24 colored pencils, erasers, jar of retarder medium (medium what?) stretched and primed canvas panels, a pad of stretched acrylic paper (paper is stretchable?) and gesso (guess who?). Disgusted, she throws away the shopping bag, returning to stare at her purchases.

Ignoring the rising panic, she turns away from the table and arranges raw vegetables, carrots, green beans, and strips of yellow peppers on a red 12 inch divided Fiesta plate with ranch dressing for a dip while the homemade tomato soup left over from yesterday reheats. Pouring the hot soup into a Fiesta red-striped covered onion soup bowl, gives Alice a slight feeling of satisfaction, it is one of a pair she owns. Alice first learned about Fiesta ware from another farmer who'd owed her Uncle Ted money. He'd come to the house to make a deal and remarked on the display of bowls Alice had on the dining room hutch. Mitch asked if she was a collector, which she wasn't, she was only fifteen at the time, she hadn't even known anyone collected it. They were just the dishes her mother had bought when they moved the last time. He offered to make a trade. He had a few pieces his mother had left him and he asked whether Ted would let Alice take them in trade to pay off his debt. Alice hadn't thought of collecting anything, but her Uncle trusted Mitch so he advised her to accept. Uncle Ted said he'd take the cash from her account, so this was her very first purchase. A set of four 10 inch divided plates, circa 1938, 4 water tumblers circa 1940, all in red, ivory, cobalt and turquoise, a red creamer and sugar set, circa 1940, that had a turquoise plate and the single striped onion soup bowl. Years later she found the second striped soup bowl at a yard sale in Maine. She paid one dollar and thirty five cents for it. By now she'd learned all about Fiesta-ware and she was pretty sure that one bowl could be worth thousands, never mind what having a pair would be worth.

Appetite satisfied, Alice return to the kitchen table, plunking herself down onto the hard maple chair. Now what do I do? Alice sits back, arms falling to her sides. What am I supposed to do with all this stuff? I wish the art store had carried those books Mona told me to get. I'd feel better about buying all these things if I knew what to do with them. Right now, I just want to throw up or throw them out. Her right hand finds its place upon her left shoulder, fingers slipping beneath her bra strap as Alice slides forward so that her elbow rests on the table and her head upon her arm.

Tears drop to her forearm, roll towards the table and make tiny plinking sounds on impact till a small pool forms and the drips now turn to splatters. How am I supposed to paint when I don't even know what I'm doing? How can you learn how to be an artist. You either are or you aren't and I am not. With her last sob, a heavy sigh draws in a wave of black as deep as the midnight sky. It pushes her up and out of the chair, away from what she can't do towards what she can. Alice makes her way to the bedroom, shoving aside the books and catalogs stacked on the end the bed, toppling some over the side, the binding cracking open on the 8th edition of Collector's Encyclopedia of Fiesta as it hits the floor. Laying her head back she stares at the ceiling trying to find a light in the dark. Then she does what she always resorts to in times of despair. She lift the laptop from her bedside table and logs onto ebay.

The UPS man knows Alice on sight. He even recognizes her out of context. Not something he can do with many of his regulars. But ever since she moved onto his route Ms.

Noland has stood out. It isn't just the amount of packages she receives, (which rivals most of his business clients) but her excitement at his arrival. Oh, I know it's not me she's excited to see; she's all hepped up over her stuff arriving, but her enthusiasm is contagious. Even on my worst days I can count on Ms. Noland to pick me up.

She's invited me in on several occasions though it's against policy to enter people's homes. But seeing as how she has been such a long time customer I felt obliged to accept her fresh squeezed lemonade in summer and hot chocolate in the winter, and the hot apple cider in the fall, and well, the iced tea in spring. Really, she's such a nice lady. Last year, I even bought her a poinsettia for her front hall table. I've never done that before, buy something for a customer. Maybe, she's starting to feel like more of a friend. I wonder if she'd like to go to a movie or to an auction with me, maybe she can teach me about collecting? Although, I believe she is a bit older, I see no matter, I think it would be nice to treat her after all she has done for me. She doesn't seem to have any family or friends. I've never seen anyone else here and she never speaks of anyone but her patients and dead uncle.

But I could be wrong, she doesn't speak much about anything except her collections. She's always making some remarks about her packages, I never asked, that would be rude and unprofessional, but she likes to share her finds., I think. I've certainly learned about all manner of subjects I never would have otherwise. Like that elusive Feista-ware platter in a color long discontinued she bought three years ago, or an I Love Lucy item long thought to have vanished that she found in the bottom draw of a dresser at tag sale, or a menu someone's grandmother had saved from a hollywood club which burnt to the ground some 40 years ago. She almost always tells me what's being delivered or warns me about what's coming.

I've seen some of her collections up close also. I have come to know all about them since I deliver so many of the pieces to her. People all over the world send her packages. Once a man from Singapore sent her a dress Lucille Ball wore during one of the episodes Lucy were was trying to get Ricky to let her perform at the Tropicana. That's when I got the first glimpse into the garage.

When Alice first moved in she had a heating and air conditioning unit added to her garage turning it into a store room. Most of her collections need special care. Humidity could ruin the lot especially the paper things. Not to mention bugs, heat, and even the acid in your hands. Alice is very careful of her treasures. Acid free papers, archival glues, special display cases, she certainly is a meticulous keeper of memories. That's what my mother says about her, when I tell her about Alice. I think I like the sound of it, meticulous keeper of memories.

When the dress arrived she asked if I could help her put it on the dummy. I told her I'd come back when my shift was over that evening but she goes to work twelve to eight so we arranged for me to come back Saturday morning. She had me put on gloves and a paper apron, seriously. She is very professional when it comes to her collection. I think maybe that's what she does for a living, works in a museum or something. I was very shocked when she told me she was a nursing home aid. But I guess taking care of people is almost the same as taking care of things. Though I think she might care a bit more about her collections than people. Not that she's ever said anything to the contrary, she has nothing but kind words for her patients and her coworkers. She even likes her bosses, and that is a rare thing indeed, I think. But you know all those packages, and all those objects I see in the garage, makes me think about how alone she is and how much all that stuff must be worth. It must be worth very much, a small fortune, I think. And I hope that she is insured.

Which is what I tell Ms Noland when I arrive Saturday morning.

"Good Morning Mr Joyo, I'm so happy you could come help me. I hope I'm not keeping you from anything." said Alice.

"No, Ms. Noland, I was free as a bird. My mother is visiting with her sisters in Connecticut for the week so I am a man on my own"

Alice gestures for him to follow her back through the house out into the rear garden which is alive with color. "Oh, your garden is so very vibrant, you like bright colors I see." said Nusair.

Alice laughed, pausing at the end of the patio steps, "I've only just started. The pinks, purples and reds are all annuals I put in to brighten up the place till the perennial beds take hold. It'll take a good three years to get them all blooming at peak."

She moves aside for Nusair to step down before her, takes the keys from her pocket and unlocks the side door. Before they take two steps in a barely audible beep gets Nusair's attention. Alice moves to the panel on the wall and punches in a code silencing the alarm. They are in a small white walled hallway with three doors, the one that led them in and two more along the wall that runs all the way to the other side of the garage. Now, Nusair can see that there is a wall built in front of the garage doors which are still in place so that one looking in from the street would think it is only a garage. Alice opens the door nearest them, flips a switch, and sends Nusair straight to mid-century America.



## Alice: Chapter Four

Nusair Jyo left the "Barn" around 8:07 a.m. After twelve years on the same route, he felt he could do it blindfolded, though he wasn't willing to give it a try. As usual, Manny is sitting on the loading dock sipping on his own over-sugared, half cream coffee and has a large black no sugar from DD's waiting for Nusair. After Nusair backs his package-car up and has unloaded his cargo he takes Manny place sipping the bitter brew while Manny checks off the paper work.

For the next two hours he greets his business customers, delivers their packages, chats amiably to secretaries, office managers, salesclerks, bank managers and printers. Taking ten minutes to eat his lunch around 10:30, he is back on the road headed to his mixed business/residential route. Nusair's first stop is the new apartment complex which begins the next block after the print shop and the business section. Here the seven-story building demarcates the transition into the new mixed use zone. Where used car lots, liquor stores, and check cashing fronts used to dominate, now stand restaurants, jewelry stores and clothing boutiques beneath two and three bedroom condos whose granite countered kitchens and maple floored living rooms sport water views.

Nusair walked briskly about the complex enjoying the spring air, hoping the spring rains would hold out another few days. He reached back into his truck preparing for his next delivery, smiling when Alice's address pop up on his DIAD. Turning on to the familiar street, he started to look for the yellow streaks knowing the daffodils would be in full bloom along the path to her door. He rang the bell and waited. He doesn't wait for most customers, policy and time dictate his schedule. But he always spared a few moment for Alice signature needed or not. She know exactly when her packages will arrive and worries if he's more than fifteen minutes late. Nusair thinks there have been less than a half-dozen times in all the years he been delivery to her that's he's missed a drop or pick-up. Always because of snow, and never once has Alice not been there to receive her packages.

Nusair's heart makes a sudden lurch forward when the bell remains unanswered. Don't be silly Nu, she just didn't hear you, ring the bell again. But he watches his hand, finger extended, head towards the buzzer fully confident that she would not be answering, and that something is wrong. He reaches for his phone dialing the home phone number on the order. He hears the ring through the door, there is no answer. He ends the call. His heart, a lead sinker pounds it's way down to his stomach. He almost falls, tumbling backward down the top step, taking the other four in one leap. Jumping the white picket fence surrounding the front garden he rushes to the rear of the house towards the garage. Pounding on the steel door, Nusair calls out Alice's name. Nothing, no response.

If it was anyone else he'd have left the box on the step and driven away. But it wasn't anyone else, it was Alice, always there, never been late, constant, consistent Alice. Nusair dials 911 and waits for the officers to arrive.

## **Fiction: Peter**

### **Peter: Chapter One**

From his vantage point, lying atop multiple layers of cardboard, Peter could see the spotlights illuminating the spire of the Congregational Church. Most nights the lights are off, only a high holy day afforded the electricity to burn the lights all night long. Peter didn't mind the distraction. Most nights it was counting the stars that bought him peace and quiet enough to sleep but there'd be no sleeping tonight. The puppies would be coming soon and Peter wanted to make sure Perdita and brood made it through the night alright.

Perdita who had been pacing for two hours, now began panting hard. 12:30 am and not too long after the first of the caul covered packages slipped forth into the cool night air. Perdita dutifully began the innate ritual of birth, lapping away the covering, fluids seeping through the bedding of newspaper Peter had prepared for her. He stayed close but watched Perdita for signs of discomfort. Some dogs are not too keen on people being close during birth but Perdita wagged her tail at Peter's low voice so he took this as her approval and stayed near.

That's right girl, you go on doing your job. If you need help I'm right here. Nothing I can't handle you'll see. Back home I had dogs galore. My Aunt Rachel raised show dogs, Keshonds, cute little things all fur, and I helped her at whelping time. So don't you worry about anything, I know all about how to take care of those puppies if you get too tired. And I'll take care of you too.

Peter moved a water dish closer to Perdita so she could get a bit of water between contractions. By morning six puppies had made into the daylight hours, but try as he might Peter couldn't save the seventh. Gently, Peter touched her head, it just happens girl, most likely for the best. He'd tried to massage the last one into taking a breath, had held it high in his hands brought it whooshing down towards the ground to force the fluids from its' lungs but no heart beat ever took hold. Perdita seemed to understand, she licked Peter's hand when he'd offered her a morsel of food, as if to console and thank him for trying. Man and dog tired from the exertion fell fast asleep for three solid hours, till the whimpering of hungry pups roused them both from their dreams.

His usual routine had been interrupted by the pups arrival, but Peter knew if he didn't get going on his rounds, his packages would be tossed. Earlier when Peter's absence was noted by the delivery men on his route, calls went out to other drivers and then to the gas station manager. Peter is as punctual as the sun and there was a murmur of concern till Fred the egg-man shouted to Ray the bread-man, that Peter had warned him yesterday that Perdita was about to give birth. Heads nodding, they all returned to their tasks, placing a few extras in the box behind the dock door hoping Peter would be by soon enough to collect them.

By agreement, the proprietors of the supermarket and the delivery men would leave Peter a few items in box by the dock doors if he picked it up before 9. They didn't want any of the other homeless in the neighborhood thinking they could get handouts or invite the rodents to a free lunch. Peter had been around these parts for over ten years now and he'd earned the respect of most of the morning people and store owners he interacted with. The tall erect handsome man, most were surprised to find out, was one the cities chronic homeless. The town's police force and most of those in the cities employ knew Peter by sight if not to speak to. Though not known to be a drug addict or alcoholic he was troubled. Occasionally, he would let the workers of local

homeless shelter bring him in and give him a physical, check him for malnourishment, tuberculosis, hepatitis, and the other usual homeless ailments. But for the most part Peter kept to himself and his animals.

When the dogs get a whiff of the carcass they bark like demon hounds from hell. Jack heads to the freezer, placing the deer inside. Killed just a few hours ago at dawn's light the meat would supplement the dry feed for the eight dogs and twenty-three cats for a week at least. Walking back through the kennels Jack, hushes the animals, calling them out by name as he releases them into the run. Fresh air breezes in, taking with it the stale wet dog smell the permeates your clothes after five minutes of being in the office.

Happy baying and the sound of many paws bounding across earth wakes the overnight crew who'd been slumbering in the bunks just off the main office. Larry and Ed had both stayed late in to the night to work on re-flooring the medical suite. Even though they don't offer regular vet services, they do have a few volunteer vets who come in to help care for the animals when needed. Most of the time they parcel out the strays to the other humane shelters but when overcrowding prevents it, they try to keep as many animals as they can till space opens up. Or when funds are especially tight, they reluctantly euthanize those less likely to be adopted or those whose health care cost are prohibitive.

Spring sucks. People think winter is tough on the animals but they manage to get through it without losing too many animals. You find a frozen cat once in a while but it was usually so ill it wouldn't have mattered what time of year it was. But Spring, damn mother nature for making everyone want to procreate at once. Not that the cats and dogs stop once the summer hits they just keep at it all year long. The puppies are easier to get rid of than the cats. The shelters down south are always willing to take a few dozen puppies. But the cats, we just can't keep up with the population explosion. Jack gathers water bowls as he walks.

Why don't people keep their darn cats in the house? And why can't they just turn them in to a shelter when they don't want them anymore so we can at least keep the stray population down. If they'd just stop throwing them out into the streets to fend for themselves and procreate like rabbits we'd win the battle. Jack is at least glad they live in town that has an active animal rights group who helps raise money for spaying strays. They also help pay for spaying the shelter cats if those adopting them can't afford to, dogs too. Though they aren't as big a problem around here as they used to be. Yesterday, had been tough. They'd had to put down nine cats who were so infested with fleas and ticks that no bath in world was gonna save them. Maybe if they hadn't ben full-up and all the other shelters in the area hadn't been full-up and they all the money and volunteers in the world...Jack slammed the bowls on the counter. The cat population explosion is bad this year.

For the last ten years, wild dog packs have been getting scarcer and scarcer. Most people hadn't notice, they never had to pay any attention to things like that. But the police, the fire dept., the city crews, they all know same as Jack who is responsible for changing that. Peter the Picker. He moved in under the bridge down by the old river basin and soon took charge of keeping it free from marauding packs that used to threaten anyone who'd want to walk the field and river banks. Five years ago, after building up such a good reputation the city paved a walking path that goes all the way from the downtown, right through the fields and along the river, through an abandoned industrial park and ends with a play park across town. You can now walk, bike or roller blade the whole way, thanks to Peter the Picker. Jack often wishes Peter would find a wife who liked cats.

Jack petitioned the town to put in a dog park along the way about three years ago and that was the beginning of a revitalization plan along the whole path way. It really got the whole planning committee looking at what was going on down there and they held a bunch of public meetings to get ideas for what else could be done to improve on what was developing. There's really only a handful of people who know it all traces back to Peter moving in and cleaning up the strays. Jack knows about Peter, has seen him around plenty of times but for some reason he always seems to disappear whenever Jack is near by.

"I'd like to talk to him myself, Kev." said Jack, leaning down on his right forearm that rests along the edge of the officer's vehicle. Kevin Houston nods. "I understand, I'll see if I can convince him to drop by the shelter. How's that? I think maybe he'd feel less intimidated if you weren't trying to invade his space, you know, his turf?" They agreed, Jack headed off to his truck while Kev reached down grabbing hold of the radio's mike and calls in a 10-20 on Peter the Picker.

Kev rolls his cruiser into the station's third bay radioing in his status, leaving behind the stick he normally carries. He didn't want Peter to get the impression of trouble from him. The stroll along the water's edge, from behind the station to just past the dog park is about a fifteen minute walk. Kev does it in 25. Huffing and puffing he curses his metabolism, disregarding the lumberjack special he'd wolfed down for breakfast-which he does five days of the week, and the pot roast chili he'd made to go with the cornbread-slathered in butter of course, which he'd had for dinner the night before. And completely dismissing the fact that he would, no doubt be devouring a large Italian with fries and rings about an hour from now, if he lives that long.

Leaning over the stone corner cap Kev took deep breaths in hoping he'd stay standing long enough to call for help. No, I'm okay, you dunce. Jesus H. Christ I have got to start working out. Peter heard the labored breathing and fearing a corpse would bring unwanted attention, set out to help the heaving hulk atop his makeshift home.

"Officer?" Peter's genuine distress at Kev's appearance touched Kev. "Sit down, you are red enough to substitute for Rudolf." Peter placed his jacket under the officer's head and wondered if he should go for help. "Kev, Do you think you need... ah, should I call someone?"

Kev's thunderous protestation was loud for a man who looked near enough to self-immolation that Peter was sure he'd find a pile of ashes when he got back. But Peter wasn't one to push his views since he didn't take kindly to others' opinions himself. So he walked down to his supplies returning with a facecloth and bottle of water. "Damn it Peter, I was just coming to ask that you stop by and talk to Jack. I didn't think it would result in my having a God damn coronary!" Kev seemed to be recovering as he slowly sipped at the water. His face had returned to a light tomato red instead of the beet red it was. "Why does Jack want to see me?" Peter tried to remain calm and let Kev answer. Of course Kev swallowed some water the wrong way and this gave Peter's anxiety a long enough chance to take hold. Peter stood straight up turned neatly on the spot and walked off under the brush which blocked his lair from view and out the other side. Straight down the dry river's bed which once teemed with fish, and he walked till he could walk no more. Ten miles from home Peter finally stopped. He swayed where he stood, rocking back and forth, sole to toes, toes to soles. His palpitating heart returning to its normal rhythm. He found a shrub, curled himself around his knees and slept for ten hours. He woke, peed, and walked right back to his dog and home in the wee hours of the morning, where he again fell fast asleep for several more hours.

Perdita walked in like she owned the place. Strolling past the desk she hopped the chain link gated runs in one eight foot leap. Landing delicately, continuing on till she reached the outside and the other dogs romping in the yard. Jacks wry smile and open hand reached Peter at the same time putting him at ease. They shook hands and followed Perdita out to the run. Both men remained quiet for some time neither feeling the least bit uncomfortable. Finally though Jack knowing he had to leave soon spoke up. "We've never had a chance to talk before, though its not for lack of my trying." Peter straightened up at this but Jack held his hand up to stop him from speaking. "I have nothing bad to say, so I hope you'll hear me out." Jack now paused giving Peter a chance to respond.

"I don't know what you..." was all Peter got out before snarling wails from the pack commanded their attention. Perdita's hackles were raised and she was growling out a protest. Several of the stray pack headed back in to the safety of the pens but two males stood ready to fight for what seemed to be, the ladies honor. "Damn Spring! Was all Jack said. He let Peter round the other side to call out Perdita while Jack got a hunk of venison from the freezer. Locking in the other dogs on his way back out, he was about throw a chunk of meat to each of the boys but both dogs were laying down at Peters feet who stood over them talking low and firm, while Perdita waited, sitting patiently towards the front corner of the building about six yards away. Jack just stood there shaking his head.

"Peter, I wanted to tell you I've never seen anyone who could handle animals the way you do. I hear the stories, everyone talks about you and how you rid the park of the strays. How you are Peter the Pied Piper who rid the mall of rats. I know its you who put the strays needing more help than you can give them in the pens out front. I don't know anything about you, I don't know your troubles. But I do know a natural when I see one. You should be working with animals. You could do a lot more for them. If you ever want to try, if you ever need help just let me know. I went to school a few towns from here. I became a vet assistant then a technician. I think you could do the same." Jack raised his shoulder at Peter, who remained absolutely still.

The phones ringing forced Jack to abandon Peter, who was gone by the time Jack returned.

## Peter: Additional Scenes

Streaming light warms Perdita's shanks where Peter is stroking her awake. Overnight cold air that had settled around the overpass begins to drift back over man and beast shuddering them both. Peter's favorite time of day is the awakening at dawn. Muffled by the shrubs, traffic becomes more varied and hurried, swarms of electronic buzzes rise, the bang and screech of metal doors collide, music thumps, voices sharp with laughter and low with sleep follow the air under the overpass to Peter and Perdita setting the tone for the day.

When the world is happy Peter is happy. When the world is angry Peter is angry. He's tried to disconnect. He is aware of the dangers being plugged in brings him. Against his own will to be warm and loving, the ugly side overcomes to bring him down and isolate him. Peter's routine varies very little. Up at dawn, he washes at the gas station, cleaning both the ladies and gentlemen's rooms after himself. Gus, the Lebanese owner long ago gave Peter keys in exchange for keeping the restrooms clean, even giving Peter a closet in which to store his personal belongings. It is here that all of Peter's extra clothing, important papers, and the mementos of his life are kept. Neatly stacked in rubber bins, his life tucked away often drier and warmer than he, for safe keeping.

Semi-rigs making the wide turn across from the station downshift coasting into the parking lot and around the back of the L-shaped building. It's a nice strip mall with wide sidewalks illuminated at night by old fashioned replicas of gas lights. There are stone benches of varying design, winners of a local competition when the mall was first built. Most are grouped beneath native trees that after fifteen years have filled in and offer considerable shade. Peter crosses behind the supermarket, greeting the early delivery men, grabbing his supplies from inside the dock door. He sets about surveying the entire rear area of the nine business that comprise the mall. Walking first along the outer edge, Peter uses a back-saver to pick up the loose trash, cans, and stray papers that litter the six foot swath Peter keeps trimmed low. Animals that would usually inhabit the area are kept away by Peter's constant trimming and Perdita's stalking. About four years ago Louis, the mall manager was persuaded to "hire" Peter to keep the rear building policed for trash and vermin. Though the mall employs a nursery to upkeep the trees and other planters around the public spaces they didn't touch any of the off limit areas. Even the exterminator who comes four times a year to bait and trap noticed the drop off in vermin, voicing his approval to Lou.

After, trimming, picking, sweeping and washing Peter places the food and other items left to him in his sling pack, whistles to Perdita who had been sunning in her usual spot beneath the willow and heads out to his third stop.

Tick-clacking heels rouse both Peter and Perdita from sleep. A hand lightly over her snout keeps the bitch from yelping and the arched eye brows exchanging concern bought a smile to Peter's eyes. The foot falls pause as they approach the near side of the overpass, then the swish rustle of wet grass trod upon by the tiptoes of a woman trying to keep her toes dry and heels from sinking head right for the hidden lair. Peter turns to face the approaching footfalls which stop a few feet from where the arch and ground meet and Peter's makeshift bedding sits high and mostly dry.

Taupe platform pumps support slender ankles with toned calves leading up, under an umber brown pencil skirt.

"Louboutin?"

A lilting voice from above snickers, "How did you know?"

"I keep informed on a wide variety of subjects."

A delicate hand sporting several gold rings sweeps behind the knees as they flex downward to give the lady a view of the underworld inhabited by Peter.

"Hey Cousin!" Peter grins widely. Perdita sensing the ease of tension thumps her tail at their new visitor.

Unfolding himself, rising up, offering a hand to Rose as she springs upward, they embrace both bursting out in giggles.

Looking her up and down, he notes "You look expensive."

There has never been anyone else who could lighten her heart .

Holding her at arms length, hands tightly ensconcing her shoulders as if afraid she'd float away, Peter says, "Rose, my rose, what are you doing here?" Peter locks eyes with his cousin keen to understand what would bring her out this early in the morning. The sudden loss of all pretense drops like a rock in pond. Grief spreads out in rings around her eyes to her mouth, undulating down her body. Peter feels her shoulders slump with a heaviness so leaden he was sure she would have crashed to the ground had he not been holding her so tightly.

"Peter, she, Robin..." Rose loses her nerve. Peter knows. There was never any doubt this day would come. The how, the when, the where were just guesses.

They sank to the ground, holding on long enough to lose all feeling in their legs and the sun to rise. Finally, Peter pushes Rose away reaches for a clean handkerchief to wipe her eyes and gently kisses her forehead. He calls Perdita out, who stretches and lets out a yelping yawn so ridiculously comical neither could help but laugh at her.

"Lets have breakfast." Peter said and Rose nodded. Hand in hand they walked back over the old stone overpass whose long dry river bed served as an unofficial secret pass through half the city. Trudging past the gas station they made their way past the mall to the Leyton Diner. Stopping occasionally wipe an eye or dripping nose they composed themselves as best they could before stepping inside. If Peter had know it was the last time he'd see her, his Rose, he'd have promised her everything shed asked of him and then some.

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## **Annotated Bibliography**

Abel, David. Profiles of the Homeless. 16 Sep. 2002. Home page. 17. Sep 2009.

<<http://davidabel2.blogspot.com/>>

This blog is by David Abel, a reporter with the Boston Globe who spent a year documenting the lives of Boston's homeless. I was interested in it for background on a character who is homeless. I don't think his original questions about why well-educated people find themselves homeless or why people choose to live outside in subzero temps, were ever answered. For the most part the stories were about the chronically homeless, but there were a few that were circumstantial such as those who find themselves homeless because of joblessness or health. I did find the twenty-nine stories to be intriguing and illuminating. After reading the same statement made by quite a few of the chronic homeless about needing to have control, I began to wonder what psychological machinations are at fault to cause such abhorrent behavior. Because I do think it is a biological compulsion even though some can speak of it as if it is a rational decision to live outside the typical social frameworks; to chalk it up to eccentricity is dangerous and disingenuous. I found a great variety of stories here to mine for character development.

Bergner, Niel. The Other Side of Desire. New York: Ecco-HarperCollins, 2009.

A journalist's empathetic account of people's sexual fetishes and compulsions which includes a man with a foot fetish, one with an amputee fetish, a pedophile and a dominatrix. The four share personal reflections, and are interviewed about the impact their urges have had on their lives. Bergner also interviews a well-known psychiatrist, one of the few who treats pedophiles. I was impressed by how well Bergner conveyed the need for compassion in treating and understanding people who have innate compulsions that fall outside of the societal norms. I really found this to be an interesting book that helped deepen my understanding of an aberrant aspect of human nature and how important it is to have sympathy for one's characters even if one doesn't like them.

Card, Orson Scott. Ender's Game. New York: Tor, 2006

A science fiction novel set in a future in which where genius children are bred to fight the next alien invasion. Although accolades place this book on the sci-fi list of classics and many commend the author's genius, I found it overtly adolescent and tedious to read. Since this book is so heavily reliant on flat characters to drive the story, it really requires a supporting environment but it is stylistically plain as the author describes it. I believe stories no matter their genre, need a certain amount of plausibility for the reader to connect with and this book didn't have enough realism in regards to human behavior to satisfy me. This helped me realize how crucial building the landscape is to my storytelling.

King, Stephen. Duma Key. New York: Scribner, 2008.

Nearly killed in an accident on a construction site, King's main character, Edgar Freemantle needs a change of scenery to help him recover, and heads to Duma Key. After a few weeks of recovering physically, mentally engaging in a new artistic endeavor, and developing new friendships, Edgar's life takes a turn for the worse. His paintings start predicting the future and he finds he can deliberately alter reality by re-imagining it through his paintings. As in any good King novel, there has to be something scary messing with Edgar, in this case the island's past and its connection to his elderly landlord. A long, deliberate build up of the characters and their relationships leads to a deep investment for the reader. I cared what happened to Edgar and his friends. I appreciate King's restrained hand in building up the characters before he pulls the rug out from under the reader. I enjoy his skill in building a story around the reader's growing awareness of the character's inner compulsions and core needs. This really helped me develop a eye for how carefully one needs to build characters so that readers connect with.

Maisel, Eric. The Atheist's Way: Living Well Without Gods. Novato: New World. 2009.

It's not always easy to explain what being an atheist means, other than not believing in God or religion. Maisel not only explains what it means to be an atheist, free from religious dogma, but how to make meaning and become the hero in one's own life. How we live, what we decided to invest meaning in, what our values and morals are, he asserts are the true paths to happiness, fulfillment and peace. We do not seek meaning, we make it. We create purpose and passion by deciding to. He affirms that life is a beautiful, amazing and wondrous journey and one does not need gods to explain natural phenomena. Another book that helped me understand human motives and helped inform my own belief system.

O'Conner, Patricia T. Words Fail Me. San Diego: Harvest-Harcourt, 1999.

A great book for beginner writers needing to get down the basics. O'Conner talks the writer through the preparatory stages of the process, the fundamentals needed for basic communication, and offers tips and tricks to make the process easier. I always need a refresher in grammar when I start a new writing project. This book is humorous, fun and educational even for more experienced writers.

Sotiropoulos, Ersi. Zigzag Through the Bitter-Orange Trees. Trans. Peter Green. Northampton: Interlink. 2007.

This is the first of Greek writer Sotiropoulos's books to be translated into English. She weaves four stories together through chance meetings, revenge and coincidence. The characters are young adults, including a sister who is dying and her drifting brother, her male nurse, and an adolescent from his hometown. Their stories are alternately dark, sad, and funny. I found the writer's sometimes lyrical quality easy to read with touches of the Greek culture shining through. It didn't have a particularly interesting plot but the character development made it worth reading.

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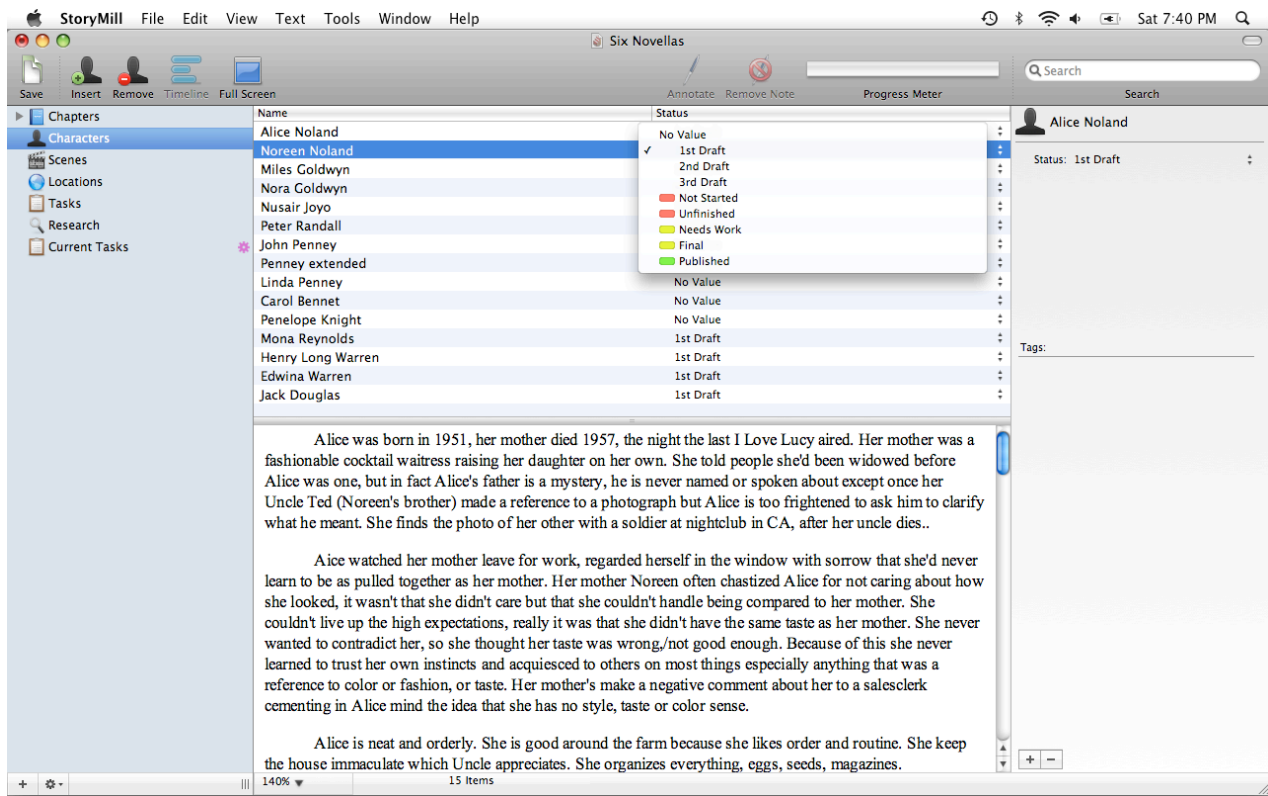
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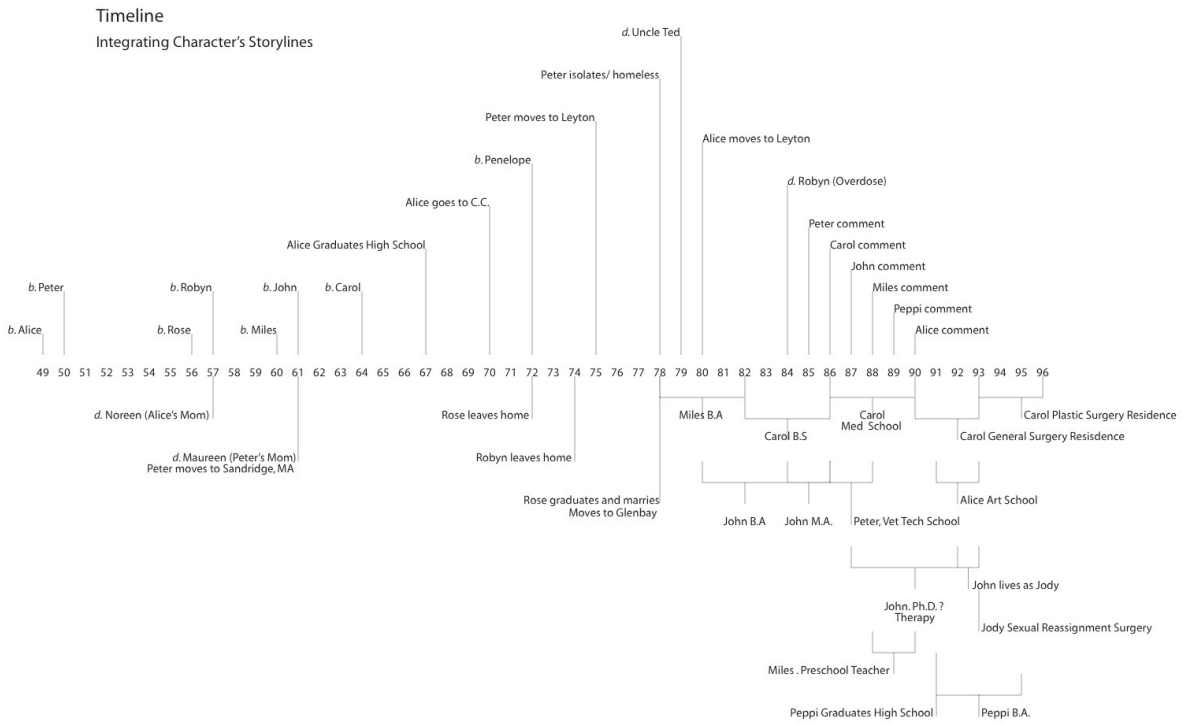
## Appendix A. Novel Writing Application: Storymill

This is a screen shot of Storymill, a Mariner Software, Mac based writing application I began using at the beginning of the study. As you can see it has several categories for organize your work. This shot shows the character feature. I have a list of characters, some information about them, and their status; the Research, and Location feature work similarly to Characters and you can also add images.



There are many writing/processing programs out there. I tried two of the most popular and widely available application for Mac, Storymill and Scrivener's. I used this head-to-head review to help me decide which to try. <<http://www.creativityist.com/2008/10/27/head-to-head-comparing-scrivener-and-storymill/>> I recommend trying out the demos till you find one that works for you.

# Appendix B. First Draft Timeline



## Appendix C. Research

Here is a partial list of some topic headings of the web sites I used researching the novel.

1950s Accessories Fashion History - Fifties Glamour glasses, hats, bags gloves  
Irish-English (Hiberno-English) terms, phrases, and expressions  
How to Become a Doctor - wikiHow  
Article: THE WORST OF BOTH WORLDS: NURSING HOME REGULATION IN THE UNITED STATES.  
HowStuffWorks "How Nursing Homes Work"  
Health Care Fine Art: What is Evidence-based Art?  
Facility Care Magazine  
City of Lynn Website  
Welcome to Swampscott, MA  
1950s Timeline - History Timeline of the 1950s  
Six Common Traits of Creative People (Snowflake Model) - Tara K. Harper, Writer's Workshop  
Profiles of the Homeless  
Sandersdale, Worcester County, Massachusetts -- Sandersdale,MA  
Maslow's hierarchy of needs - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia  
Fundamental human needs - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia  
A dog giving birth? how to help  
SoYouWanna get a sex change? | SoYouWanna.com  
Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) - AAMC  
Postbaccalaureate Premedical Programs - Program Detail  
Police Scanner Codes  
HowStuffWorks "53 Slang Terms by Decade"  
Mind Science Foundation  
Learn to Paint -- Learn How to Paint Your First Ever Painting  
Gouache, information about gouache paints and painting  
Vintage Menus - Collector Information | Collectors Weekly  
Vintage Fiesta Gallery  
The making of a UPS driver - November 12, 2007  
Barberton, Ohio - Part IV: Depression Period through the 1950s (1930-1960)



## Appendix D. Writers

Arnold Bennett: 1867-1931, English novelist, journalist, and critic. He was a realist writer of great compassion. *The Old Wives Tale* and *Riceyman Steps* are two of his better-known novels. He was viewed as more of a traditionalist than modern writer and criticized by members of the Bloomsbury Group for it. John Carey calls Bennett a "hero" because his writings 'represent a systematic dismemberment of the intellectuals' case against the masses" (Carey 152).

Ford Madox Ford: 1873-1939 English novelist, critic, poet, editor and a member of the artistic community of Montparnasse in Paris. *The Good Soldier* is his most acclaimed work that uses flashbacks. He is known for his pessimism, and a few historical romances. Founded *The English Review*, in 1908 in which he introduced D.H. Lawrence, and published, H.G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, Henry James and Y.B. Yeats. Founded *The Transatlantic Review*, which influenced the modernist writers.

E.M. Forster: 1879-1970, English novelist, short story writer, essayist and humanist. His best and last novel is *A Passage to India*. Noted for his fine characterizations, sympathy, use of symbolism and sexuality.

Knut Hamsun: 1859-1952, Norwegian author, poet and dramatist, won Nobel Prize for Literature in 1920. Wrote what may be the first modernist novel, *Hunger* (inspiration for Kafka's *A Hungry Artist*) and *Mysteries* his first two novels were nihilistic, and employs inner monologue. Work is overshadowed by his unwavering support of Hitler.

Henry James: 1843-1916, American author by birth but became British subject, also a playwright. His brother James was prominent psychologist. Used POV of character in work,

interior monologues, some stream of consciousness, and wrote from a psychological perspective. He strove to interpret morality versus immorality; themes of moral judgments permeate his work. *Daisy Miller* and *Portrait of a Lady* critics pick as his better work but he considered *The Ambassadors* his best work.

James Joyce: 1882-1941, Irish novelist, and poet. Another major author in the modernist movement. The deliberately incomprehensible *Ulysses*, *A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man* and *Finnegan's Wake*, his easier reads. He uses epiphanies, interior monologues, stream of consciousness, parody, and allusions. Considered very unique and hard to imitate.

D.H. Lawrence: 1885-1930, English author, playwright, poet essayist, and critic. Very controversial, prominent figure in modernist movement. Involved with the people publishing *The Egoist*, a major modernist literary magazine. His beautiful writing is at odds with his vehement rantings against the masses and industrialization. *Sons and Lovers*, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* are two of his works.

Gertrude Stein: 1874-1946, American writer, lived mainly in France, a member of the artistic community of Montparnasse in Paris, She was an experimentalist, who had a repetitive, humorous style. She had studied psychology with William James, and was a major figure during modernism development and the avant-garde clique. She was very influential to the young artists at the time. *Three Lives* is her most critically acclaimed novel, though not the most well known, it concerned lesbianism.

Virginia Woolf: 1882-1941, English novelist, essayist, publisher, and critic. Utilized stream of consciousness. *Mrs. Dalloway* written using flashback, but then wrote *The Waves* using more conventional methods. Her work and life is widely viewed as being highly influential on the

modernist movement. Her novel *A Room of One's Own* related female writers struggles against the male dominated society.

Beginning a novel with action (rather than narration) makes it easier to captivate your reader because you can place the reader in the immediate scene. The reader experiences the intimacy and intrigue of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting or smelling what your character does. You can show action without any immediate explanation, creating more perplexed questions.

5: Introduce strong character motivations and goals. 7: Write a teasing opening line. Knowing how to begin a novel means knowing how to craft not only a great first chapter but also a great first sentence. It's a good idea to revisit the opening line of your novel when you've completed your manuscript, as a fuller knowledge of your story could inform a better choice of opening. What makes a first line good? The beginning of your novel is often the most challenge part to write. Use this article to help you navigate this difficult, but fun, part of your novel. As you work along writing your novel it is critical that you are also taking some time each day to learn more about the techniques of writing. In an earlier post I stressed the importance of your reference library and suggested the four books that should be on every writer's bookshelves: Plot & Structure by James Scott Bell, Stein on Writing by Sol Stein, On Writing by Stephen King and The Elements of Style by Strunk & White. As you study these books and others that you add to your library, as well as your Internet research, you will come across references to "Beginnings, Middles and E Beginning a Novel at the Beginning. There's no rule that says you have to begin a novel in medias res. You could start with the status quo, when nothing exciting is happening, and hook the reader in some other way. For example, you could... However you manage to hook readers in a novel that does not begin in medias res, keep the opening brief. Even in literary and mainstream fiction, readers will only wait so long before something exciting triggers the central plot. In Medias Res in Action. To learn how to use this technique in practice, simply pick a few novels off your shelves and read them. The odds are that a good proportion of them will begin "in the middle of things".