

May 2024

Reflections on Life's Interruptions



What follows is deeply personal.

I debated sharing this with you, but then decided that you've chosen to be on my writer's journey, whether you've been reading this newsletter since I was a fledgling author with a debut novel or you've only discovered me recently and this is one of the first letters you are receiving from me. You may wonder what this has to do with my writing life, but you'll see that life informs and shapes the words that make it into my books. So here goes...

It's been nearly three months since I've had a quiet moment simply to sit and think, let alone write. Much like my characters, who are confronted with often life-altering challenges and must find the internal resources to overcome them, I have encountered loss and change recently.

My husband became ill in February, sending us on a voyage to emergency rooms, testing, and finally diagnosis and treatment for metastatic cancer. We are grateful that he appears to be responding well.

In addition, two close friends experienced their own health challenges—one a shattered femur after a fall and the other a stroke.

All of this, as you can imagine, altered my focus away from writing as I took on the role of caregiver and navigator through the healthcare system for my husband and listener and sounding board for my friends.

During the early days, I was overwhelmed by the tectonic shifts in our lives—the "before" and "after" moments of receiving the diagnosis. Life seemed very fragile as the familiar comforts and habits of our daily lives were disrupted.

In the midst of the upheaval, however, were moments of light and hope that have helped me to sail a little more steadily on these uncharted waters. First, my children have risen to the family crisis by taking turns being present for us. They are far flung geographically (as you know, one lives in Tokyo), but each of them has made time to come home and help in myriad ways.

Our community has also showered us with assistance, providing meals and doing chores so that we could concentrate on medical needs. And my friends have been there over a cup of tea or the other end of the phone to listen and offer support. One of the more difficult things I've learned is that I cannot do it all by myself, and asking for help is actually a gift not only for me but for the people who want to support us.

It takes a village not only to raise a child, but also to heal, and we have been blessed with a very caring one.

Thank you for reading this.

With warmest wishes,

Linda

Finding My Writer's Voice Again

My novel-in-progress, *Paint the Wind*, has slipped to a back burner. It's an ambitious project that I want to be able to devote time and energy to it when life opens up again for me.

In the interim, I made an effort to find pockets of time in the last few weeks to create something smaller but still rewarding for me to write and, I hope, satisfying for you to read. If you can understand, my inability to write earlier this year was not only the lack of time but also the drain on my creative resources. I was exhausted, physically and emotionally.

What I've written is a short novella entitled *A Thing Miraculous*. It has its origins in a small nugget of information I gleaned when I was researching my Renaissance novel, *Love That Moves the Sun*. I discovered that Costanza d'Avalos, the chatelaine of Ischia and the woman who had such a profound influence on the poet Vittoria Colonna, is one of the women some art historians suspect may have been the model for the *Mona Lisa*. Like all writers of historical fiction, I chose to develop that supposition and imagine how she might have encountered da Vinci and inspired him to paint his masterpiece.

The novella is in production and I hope to offer it as a gift to readers soon. In the meantime, please read on for a taste of what's to come.

An Excerpt from *A Thing Miraculous*



Draft Cover

*“Painting seems a thing miraculous, making things
intangible appear tangible...”*

Leonardo da Vinci

I thought I had more time.

One always does, when one is young, strong, beautiful. The bells pealed from the cathedral on my wedding day when I stood on the steps with Federico, my husband, and he raised our hands together—in triumph, in acknowledgment of the crowd assembled in the square below. They roared their approval, most likely enhanced by the wine my father had made sure was flowing lavishly from the casks strategically placed around the perimeter.

The wedding feast lasted six days—one day for each year of the marriage. The bells pealed again, in that sixth year, but that time for Federico only. I stood alone on the steps, swathed in black, as the hearse and six black horses bearing his casket arrived at San Domenico Maggiore. I watched as his soldiers lifted the box and then followed it into the church.

After the priest had intoned his *Requiem in Pace* and shed drops of holy water across the gaping hole of the crypt, I returned to our villa and endured the muttered phrases and false sympathy of the Neapolitan nobility. I, too, as my father had done, opened the casks. It was easier to sustain my façade of the pious, bereft widow when everyone was distracted with good wine.

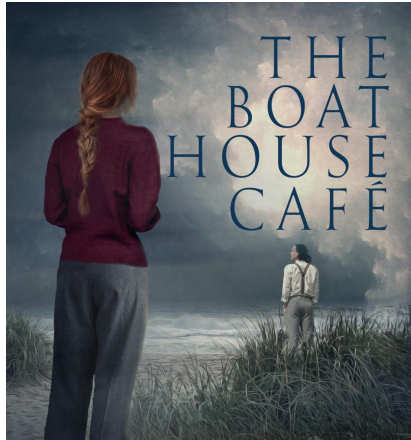
When the mourners were gone I gave the servants leave for the night, not wishing to

have them hovering, witness to both my grief and my relief.

I was not suited to be a wife, but it would be some time before I found my bearings as a widow.

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Upcoming Events



June 19, 2024
Book Club Meeting
Suffield, Connecticut

Contact me

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