

May News



Image by kalhh from Pixabay

Hey {{ contact.FIRSTNAME | default : "there" }}. How are you? I hope you are keeping well and busy.

I'm amazed I'm even here already after such a long time between newsletters last time. But we go on holiday soon and I won't have another chance to catch up with everyone before the end of the month.

Holiday

We're off to Symonds Yat in the beautiful Wye Valley where we're renting a holiday cottage for a week. The cat and the dog are coming with us.

I do love the River Wye and surrounding area and I have fond memories of travelling to Yat Rock in Symonds Yat in the depths of winter to see the peregrine falcons. I don't think the peregrines are there any more, but there are still some amazing views from Yat Rock.

I set a short story in Symonds Yat once, many, many years ago. I published it as a standalone as part of my publishing challenge in 2021/2022 and I include it below in this month's newsletter. I hope that you like it. There once was a lot more descriptive prose in it, but I deleted a lot of it for the story to fit an existing slot.

Lord Rufus

Our lovely dog Lord Rufus (it's his real name) isn't very well. He has a degenerative condition of the spine that's common in dachshunds and he's really struggling to walk. His rear end is weak and sometimes

unresponsive, and he can't walk very far. There's not a lot wrong with his personality. He's still the happy, goofy, yampy dog he's always been. He just needs some extra time now and he has good days and bad days.

We've been lucky enough to access some of my late mom's money that isn't tied up in probate and I used some of my share to buy Rufus a set of wheels. He loves his wheels and whizzes about as though he's a puppy again, and it's something Mom would have liked to see. She's currently paying some of his vet fees too. He isn't insured, but because of his age and his condition (seizures), an insurance company wouldn't cough up anyway and we'd have to pay it all ourselves.

We've taken him out to try the wheels out a couple of times, including to the seaside, and it's as though we've got him a bike. He gets as excited when he sees it as he does when he sees his lead or his car harness. So we try to take his 'bike' out with us wherever we can in case we get another chance to let him have a run.

Hopefully, his 'bike' will enable us to get out and see some of the Wye Valley while we're there.



What I've been working on in May

I've been working on a number of short stories that need to be out and on their way by the end of May. I've already sent *Autumn Fayre* to *My Weekly*. The last story I submitted was *The Kite Festival*, but *My Weekly* didn't accept it, so I've been tweaking that one to suit *The People's Friend*. I'll send *The Kite Festival* off today (Thursday).

Both stories were already submitted to *12 Stories in 12 Months*, a monthly challenge on [Deadlines for Writers](#). Access is restricted to registered users only, but it's free to join. I had to remove *Autumn Fayre* from their database before submitting it to *My Weekly*, but I did receive some nice feedback beforehand.

Another story I submitted to *12 Stories in 12 Months* was *Killer Queen: a Marcie Craig short story*. This one went down particularly well and a number of readers suggested Marcie ought to get her own book... (*ahem!*) I need to extend this story from 2,500 words to at least 3,000 words so that I can submit it as one of my Dean Wesley Smith/WMG publishing pop-

up workshop assignments. That one's currently percolating but, again, I had some good feedback and intend to incorporate some of the suggestions.

I did start out with eight short stories to write or tweak in May, but with a week's holiday and three 4-day weeks, I'd left it too late to start some of them. So I reduced it down to just five:

- *Autumn Fayre*
- *Paper Roses*
- *The Kite Festival*
- *Killer Queen*
- *A Death in the Night*

Paper Roses is this month's submission for *12 Stories in 12 Months*. I worked on it in one sitting on submission day and managed to get it down from 2,066 words to exactly 1,500. *A Death in the Night* is for an anthology call at the end of the month.

Aside from the short stories I'm also currently working on two books.

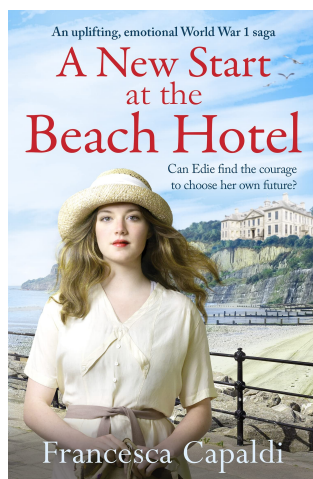
Firstly, I'm adding the finishing touches to *Diary of a Pussycat: a year in the life of a freelance writer*. This is the sequel to *Diary of a Scaredy Cat: a year in the life of a frightened writer*, and I'm adding in the weekly exercises as well as editing the text.

Secondly, I'm writing (in longhand) *The Fool: a Horvale Mystery (Book 1)*. This started out as a 'Stevie Tarot Mystery' that became a 'Stevie Beck Mystery', but now it's a 'Horvale Mystery' set in my fictional Yorkshire Riding of Horvale. It still features Stevie Beck and it's still loosely set against the Tarot. But I've done it in order to expand if necessary. I don't want anyone thinking Horton Magna in this Horvale mystery is as unlucky a place to live as Midsomer in *The Midsomer Murders*.

Next month I hope to add *Catch the Rainbow* and *Project Management for Writers: Gate 3* to the mix.

Currently reading

I'm currently reading *A New Start at the Beach Hotel* by Francesca Capaldi.



Francesca is an online friend of mine. We met in the now defunct Facebook group *The Seriously Serious Scribes*. The Beach Hotel series is the second one of Francesca's, but I still have to catch up with her first one.

The sequel to *A New Start at the Beach Hotel* was published this week and I have that one from NetGalley too. So when I was choosing my holiday reading, I made sure to add this first one.

Other holiday reading, if I get around to them all:

- *Broken Angels* by Gwyn Bennett
- *Summer in Tuppenny Bridge* by Sharon Booth
- *A Corruption of Blood* by Ambrose Perry

They're all loaded onto my Kindle and ready to go.

In case you missed it...

Some of you started subscribing to my newsletter over at Substack and when I migrated the newsletter to SendInBlue, you all came with it - thank you! In the past few days, SendInBlue has changed to Brevo and I have yet to find out how reliable (or not) it will be. It's already crashed twice as I've been working on this newsletter, so I'm keeping a close eye on things at this end.

In the past fortnight I rebooted the Substack newsletter, and those of you still subscribed over there will have seen the writerly posts I've been sharing there. Substack and Brevo will continue at no extra cost, other than for 'premium' content on Substack, and when I say 'premium content', I mean content that isn't freely available anywhere else on the internet.

As the Substack newsletter is going to be writerly based, I'll only be sharing writerly content there but the premium content will initially be serialisation of my writers' guides. I'll start with *Project Management for Writers: Gate 1 - What?* in June and that will run through to September, and I'll continue with *Diary of a Scaredy Cat: a year in the life of a frightened writer*.

This content will not be freely available anywhere else on the internet and it will still be available to buy in paperback or as an ebook from [books2read](#).

Substack subscribers do not have to pay for this content if you don't want to receive it, but you can if you wish. Likewise, anyone subscribed on *this* newsletter but not on the Substack newsletter may [subscribe to Substack here](#) free of charge, and then it is optional to pay for the premium content.

I hope that's as clear as mud, but if you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me at diane@dianewordsworth.com.

Next newsletter

As I managed to write this May newsletter by the end of May I'm going to stick my neck out and say the next one will be at the end of June. If we manage to get out much in the Wye Valley, there will hopefully be a few pictures to see as well.

Over to you

What would you like me to tell you about in future newsletters?

- Do you read the short story?
- Are you interested in my work processes?
- Would you like to know when I'm looking for beta readers?
- What kind of freebies would encourage you to stay as a subscriber?

- Would you like to see my latest book reviews?
- How interested are you in seeing some of the poet's photographs from our travels?
- What else would you like to see?

You can email me at diane@dianewordsworth.com with your replies, and thank you in advance.

Here's your free short story

wordsworth flash fiction



- Diane Wordsworth -

tea for two

Tea for Two

Hannah Watts parked the tractor. She'd done enough and it looked like rain. She plopped on a cap and began the short walk home. As the storm broke, she quickened her step, zipped up her coat and pulled

the cap down over her ears.

"Hi," called a familiar voice.

Hannah looked up to see Gareth hanging out of his car window. "Oh, hello."

"Do you want a lift?"

"No thanks. It's not far now."

"Okay. See you tomorrow then." He waved and drove off.

Gareth lived on the farm adjoining Hannah's. They'd grown up together and everyone assumed they'd marry. Unfortunately, Gareth was in love with a girl from town, but was always trying to fix Hannah up with his mates. However, none of them would be prepared to exchange their existing life for this one, and she wasn't prepared to give up the farm.

She continued on her way. After the recent dry spell, a lovely grassy aroma hung in the air. A few yards away from home she saw a car parked in a lay-by. She peered through the window to see the keys still in the ignition. "How strange," she murmured, continuing up the road into her drive. The little farmhouse always welcomed Hannah after a day's work. The garden wanted doing, the path needed re-laying and a good coat of paint wouldn't have gone amiss. But it was home.

"Hey, Dad," she cried pushing through the front door. "Looks like someone's broken down in the lane... oh hello."

Her father was sitting at his own table by the fire, in his own little world. At the other table was a man she didn't know. He twisted around to face her, then pulled himself up. He looked down at her, his mop of thick, red hair tousled and damp from the weather. His face broke into a cheeky grin.

"Can I help you?" she asked sharply.

The grin lost its confidence momentarily, but soon recovered. "I'd be grateful if you could let me have some water for my car. Then I'd like a nice pot of tea and some cake."

"The water I can do. But you can forget the tea and cake."

"Sorry?"

"Do you think this is a teahouse?" They hadn't sold teas since her mum had died.

"Yes."

"Well I don't know where you got that from. As for the -"

"From the sign down the road."

"What sign?"

"There's a sign down the road advertising afternoon teas."

"There's obviously been a mistake," said Hannah. "I asked the salvage people to empty the garage last week."

"Maybe the sign fell off their wagon. It was lying face down on the floor. I thought the wind had blown it, so I stood it up again."

"What's wrong with your car?"

"I think the radiator's boiled dry."

Hannah smiled and went into the kitchen for a jug of water.

"You go and fill your radiator. I'll put the kettle on." He didn't take long. "Everything all right?" she asked, handing him a mug of steaming tea.

He shook his head gloomily. "Water just came out through the bottom. May I use your telephone? The signal's not very good on mine."

"That's because we're down in the valley. Ours is in the hall."

He called the garage, but after a short discussion, looked more depressed than ever. "They said they'll have to tow my car in and replace the radiator, but not until Monday." It was six o'clock on Friday. "When's the next bus?"

"Monday morning, I suppose. Were you going anywhere

special?"

"Only a friend's, but I was staying over in the village. I'll have to ring him."

"I'll run you into the village if you want."

"That's very kind of you. The name's Jonathan by the way."

"I'm Hannah."

Later, in the pub, they sat in the bar looking out through a window at the swelling river. "I don't know what I'm going to do over the weekend," he said.

"You can help me on the farm if you want."

Jonathan burst out laughing. "Me?"

"Yes. You can drive straight, can't you?"

"All I have to do is drive a tractor?" Hannah nodded. "It's the least I can do," he agreed. For a while they watched the fire and chatted. Soon, however, it was time for Hannah to go, but she'd had a lovely evening.

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On Saturday Hannah was amazed at how quickly Jonathan picked things up. What amazed her even more was how much work they got through. Since her dad's stroke, she'd had to struggle alone.

"This is the life," he said. "I didn't think I'd enjoy myself so much."

"It's not such fun in the winter," laughed Hannah.

They finished at around three and went back to the farm to wash and change. At dinnertime the front door burst open and in walked Gareth, all spruced up for an evening's entertainment. As he saw the little group, Gareth's face dropped.

"I thought we were going out this evening... oh," he said, seeing Jonathan. "You're here?"

"Yes," said Jonathan.

"But you said your car had broken down."

"It did, down the lane. You must have passed it on your way in."

"I could have collected you."

"You two know each other?" asked Hannah.

"Gareth was the friend I told you about," said Jonathan.

"He was coming out with us this evening," said Gareth.

Hannah looked at Jonathan, then back at Gareth. "Not another blind date?" She turned to Jonathan. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I didn't know it was going to be you. In fact, I cancelled with Gareth because I didn't want to go on his stupid blind date anymore. I'm hoping I've already found someone..."

"How do you guys know each other?" she pressed.

"It's Jonathan's little sister I've been seeing," said Gareth.

A log cracked in the fire. Jonathan picked up her hand. "Am I forgiven?"

"No you're not... not yet," she smiled. "So don't think you're off the hook. You've got a lot of making up to do."

"I'll start with the washing-up shall I?"

Hannah felt a tingle rush all over her body. Maybe Gareth's numerous blind dates weren't so bad after all...

the end

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## Diane Wordsworth

Rotherham, England

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