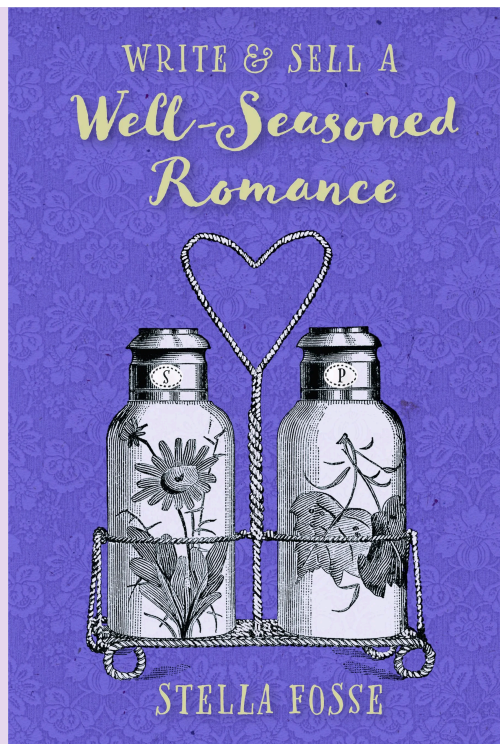


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## Reality-Based Edition

I promised I would stop talking about my health saga, whose twists and turns are endlessly fascinating to me and, no doubt, endlessly boring for you. Suffice to say that I am still here cranking out words and therefore functional. And on the upswing.

Plus one little detail: My last radiation therapy session was November 5, a day that is memorable for a totally different and much more significant reason. Endless words have been written in a (perhaps vain) attempt to discern how we got here; I will not add to that pile of verbiage. Instead, a reflection on what to do next.

### What, Me Worry?

The remarkable preacher Nadia Bolz-Weber suggests in a [recent sermon](#) that we each write our Autobiography of Worry. Using her own history as an example, including past worries about Y2K and making her \$325 rent, Bolz-Weber makes the point that worrisome stories float around the culture like

viruses that come and go. She tells us, "The dominant story is not the ultimate story." She exhorts us to embrace the joys of the day while consigning our worries to the long reach of history.

Quite the juggling act, but a great feat if you can manage it. Want to try? My own worries over the course of my life have included things that never happened, things that did happen but were not as bad as I expected, and worry about death (as if that would prevent it). So here we are post-November 5: The scope of things we could worry about for the next four years is vast indeed.

But as my friend the columnist [Mary Smich](#) wrote, "Worrying about the future is as effective as trying to solve an algebra equation by chewing bubble gum. The real troubles in your life will always be things that never crossed your worried mind."

### **Things that Might Actually Help...**

Packing up our worries is a great start, but let's be pragmatic. What can we do that might help move the needle?

**Engage in Retail Politics** — It's well known that reality-based folks have lagged behind when it comes to local engagement in everything from school boards to election boards. Support candidates for your state legislature. Run for office if you can, or at least get involved and know what's going on at the local level. Right now is a great time to engage, well before the next election cycle.

**Support Litigation** — Legal experts all over the country have studied Project 2025 for clues about what comes next. State attorneys general have been readying litigation to launch on Day One. Meanwhile nonprofits including the [ACLU](#) have geared up as well. Those of us in a position to support those nonprofits can contribute directly to slowing the damage to come, in whatever form it takes.

**Pick a Cause** — We know from Project 2025 that there will likely be challenges on many fronts, from free speech to women's reproductive rights to queer rights to immigrant rights. I don't know about you, but I would be overwhelmed if I tried to be active on all those fronts in the years ahead. Last week my meditation group talked about which cause most spoke to each of us, and the answers ran the gamut from education policy to book

banning. Don't worry about the causes you did not choose; someone else in your circle will take those on. Focus on your own top issue.

**Practice Humility** — I recently listened to a [podcast interview](#) with Jill Abramson, former Executive Editor of the *New York Times*, in which she says that the White House threatened reporters who came close to exposing Biden's mental fitness for office in the months before the debate. Abramson says that only Fox News was bringing up this inconvenient truth. This podcast brought home to me in a big way that no side of the political spectrum has a monopoly on the truth. Let me be clear that I am way past nauseated by both-sides-ism (for example, every flipping time someone exposes the gerrymandering of state legislatures across the country, somebody brings up the Democratic history in New York State. That one example is not a pass to corrupt democracy everywhere). Bottom line: It's past time to get over ourselves and apply our much-vaunted critical thinking skills to every story, including our own.

### **What Won't Help...**

A shock like this election result naturally triggers all the Elizabeth Kubler-Ross [stages of grief](#), including denial. [I wrote about denial](#) back in 2020: "Humans use denial as a way of coping with our losses... so we are not overwhelmed by suffering. The problem is, denial robs us of empathy. Denial makes other people less real to us."

The impulse to step away is totally understandable. Many of my friends have stopped reading the newspaper (keeping in mind that only [12% of Americans](#) read the newspaper anyway). We may be enticed by the illusion that the changes to come will only affect others. Some call this mindset "[internal emigration](#)," a sort of nesting instinct that many Russians experienced after trying to prevent Putin from coming back to power in 2012. Many of us are similarly exhausted by our own efforts to prevent what just happened, not to mention the incessant hair-on-fire fundraising texts of the election season.

We get to feel what we feel: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Working through these stages can take time. But acceptance must lead us to action, because the dominant story is not the ultimate story. We each have a part in writing the next chapter.





All the best,

Stella,

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## From the blog and podcasts this month



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### The Unfettered Joy of Trying Something New

Stella Fosse

#### Grandma Magic: A podcast from the Grandmother Collective

Grandmother Collective

SOCIETY & CULTURE · UPDATED BIWEEKLY

When it feels like things are falling apart, we  
We'll hear from older women who are leading  
initiatives in their local communities, regions,

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### Empowering the Creative in Later Life

Stella Fosse

In this episode, we introduce the  
inspiring Stella Fosse, a writer who  
transitioned from a career in  
biotech to championing creativity

Here in the Interregnum, we don't know where we are going and aren't sure how we got here. That makes it tough to decide how to spend our time. Cycling through all five stages of grief at intervals is tempting, along with survivalist planning. Maybe self-care makes it onto the post-election list. Maybe even creativity. I hope so; the personal truly is political, and our creativity will continue to shine a light on what is true for each of us. And may I suggest spending at least some of our time trying something new.

Creating in familiar ways leads to certain expectations. Our Inner Critic has particular standards for what we do on the regular. I'm always looking for ways to sidestep her (especially relevant while we second guess how many more postcards we could have mailed). I found the perfect method to circumvent the Critic years ago, when I was invited to Sanctuary, a retreat hosted by my friend Susan Ito.

Susan (whose adoption memoir [I Would Meet You Anywhere](#) was shortlisted for the National Book Critics Circle Award) first discovered the [Santa Sabina Retreat Center](#) when she attended a calligraphy workshop there. She

and empowerment for older women.

**Lynsey Farrell (Host):** Welcome to *Grandma Magic*, a podcast from The Grandmother Collective. We are a non-profit organization that supports and advocates for a world where a grandmother's power is seen, cultivated, and activated for positive change. The *Grandma Magic* podcast is an opportunity to learn more about the unique roles that grandmothers, aunties, and other older women around the world play in advancing positive social development by talking to and learning from grandmother changemakers. We hope this series inspires you, brings you joy, and helps you recognize the enduring magic and wisdom that comes from grandmothers everywhere. Today, we're excited to introduce Stella Fosse, an author who began writing in her sixties as a response to ageism and sexism. Through her books, workshops, and blogs, she empowers older women to explore their creativity and embrace their stories. Author of *Aphrodite's Pen* and *Brilliant Charming Bastard*, Stella leads workshops on romance, erotica, and memoir writing, encouraging women to celebrate love, passion, and life

fell in love with the place. No wonder. Santa Sabina is on the campus of a religious school and was once a novitiate, a home for nuns in training. Built in Spanish style with monastic rooms around a lush central courtyard, the retreat center invites us to gaze inward and to find serenity. After she returned for several solo writing retreats, Susan decided to start hosting annual gatherings at Santa Sabina every New Year.

[Read More.....](#)

beyond midlife. Her latest book, *Write and Sell a Well-Seasoned Romance*, helps women craft vivid stories of love later in life, continuing her mission to champion older women's creativity. Stella, thanks for joining us.

**Stella Fosse:** Oh, thank you so much. It's great to be here.

[Read More.....](#)

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Stella Fosse



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