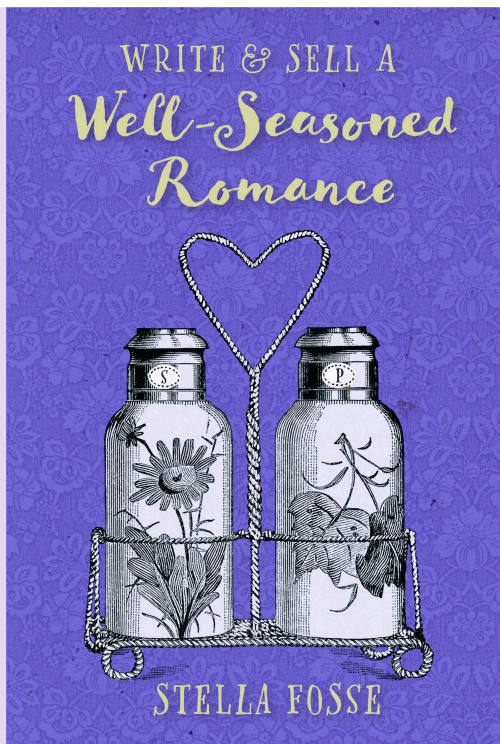




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## **The Winter of Our Discontent Edition**

What the devil to say about January 2025? The first couple weeks weren't so bad. Damned cold here in North Carolina though.

I've just finished the almost-final round of edits on my essay collection (which now has the new name *Queen for a Decade: How to Be Sixty*). It

includes sections on Creativity, Beauty, Sexuality, Purpose, and more. The rush of finishing (yay!) was closely followed by a humbling realization: I wrote a book about the world as it was when I was in my sixties, parts of which may soon be obsolete. For example, my sage advice to go for original Medicare, not the capitalist version (Medicare Advantage), will be out of date if the capitalist version becomes the only choice. Similar problems may crop up with my advice about managing Social Security. We'll be sure to discuss any changes in the Stella Blog, if and when they happen. Most of the topics will still pertain, regardless of what happens in the coming months. So there's that.

To deepen the writing in the Spirit section of the essay book, I signed up for a class this month with death doula Holly Menard. Her class is about making awareness of mortality an active part of our lives to enrich our experience of living. As you might expect, the class is a mix of the sublime and the absurd. Deep revelations alternate with the kind of conversation you might hear on a late-night talk show. Last night someone suggested we host a death doula slumber party and bill it as a Pre-Wake. Lots of chat about whether the dead are still with us, invisible. And I shared this absurd thought that keeps cropping up, whenever something goes wrong with my health: *Oh well. That will get sorted when I get my next body.*

*Next body? What? Where did that come from? How does the unconscious mind of a confirmed atheist come up with that?*

Also makes me wonder if one of the vampires in the *Matriarch* series should become a Death Doula.

Speaking of which: While Beta readers review the essay collection (thank you, saints!), my partner/publisher and I are off to France to research medieval locations for the next book. *The Vampire Vivienne* will be the prequel to *Vampires of a Certain Age*. **Spoiler alert:** Vivienne, a swordswoman in the service of Henry V, fights at Agincourt and later falls in love with Joan of Arc. Talk about divided loyalties...

Take heart, all. We live in strange times. Our creativity keeps hope alive. Let's keep our pens moving or our keys clicking, and do what we can to help others.



All the best,

Stella,

[stella@stellafosse.com](mailto:stella@stellafosse.com)

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## From the blog and podcasts this month



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### **The Fear of Freedom**

**Stella Fosse**

We spend much of our adult lives racing around like chickens with their heads cut off. Sadly, the entry of most women into full-time employment, which happened in



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### **Becoming a Cool Grandma**

**Lisa Harris**

On a sunny morning last Thanksgiving, my grandchildren and their cousins were getting

our lifetimes, did not mean that spouses took on half the unpaid toil of keeping house and raising children. Plus the greater supply of labor in the workforce led to lower real wages across the board. Soon two incomes were needed to support a family in any sort of comfort. And so women were trapped in that dual role of worker and homemaker.

The [Second Shift](#), as Arlie Hochschild's 1987 book suggests, is the Faustian bargain that second wave feminists made to attain economic freedom for women in the United States. To this day, heterosexual couples with children mostly rely on the woman to keep it all going once her paid workday is through. But then in our sixties the whole catastrophe resolves. When the children grow up and our careers wind down, the occasional load of laundry is all that remains of the trifecta of kids, work, and home that we carried for so long.

You might expect women to greet this liberation with open arms, and many of us react to retirement like a seventh grader on the first day of summer break. The world opens up: Wilderness trails await our wandering feet. New recipes tempt us. Political campaigns welcome our volunteer energy. There are

restless. And who could blame them? They'd discovered the kid-sized buckets and shovels hidden in a closet, the beach beckoned, and their parents were busy chatting and preparing food. Looking for an adult to accompany them, our eldest grandson finally implored, "Can Mimi take us?" He knows I'm always up for an adventure.

So after I secured buy-in from their fathers that they would rinse the sand off little feet and other body parts upon our return, this cool grandma was off, strolling to the beach with four boys, ages five to eleven.

We had a ball. The kids dug in the sand, their cousins' new puppy exercised his short, wide-set legs, and Mimi's Fitbit recorded almost 3,000 steps. Plus, the boys left behind their devices and Hot Cheetos while they constructed multiple sand structures and built up an appetite for the big feast. It was a win on multiple levels.

Are you a cool grandmother? I consider such women, so engaged in their grandchildren's lives, in the same category as fairy godmothers. A cool grandmother shows her grandkids how to bake and how to use a metal detector. She's not just sitting on the

galleries to fill with our paintings and readers to beguile with our books. Everything we ever wanted to do, every dream we postponed during those too-busy years, is suddenly right in front of us.

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sidelines and watching. She's involved, teaching, interacting, laughing.

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Stella Fosse



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