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A BLOOD SISTERS CHRONICLE

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THE SWORD *of* VIVIENNE



STELLA FOSSE

Release Oct 1st

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The New Improved Birthday

If you follow my blog, you already know that our preview visit to the [Lucas Museum](#) of Narrative Art blew my mind. The place is spectacular. Having that much art in one place, all chosen for the stories it tells, is wildly stimulating. On the other hand, the relative lack of female imagery was striking. That gap got me thinking about the importance of the Heroine's Journey in story and image. As they say at the [Geena Davis Institute](#), "If she can see it, she can be it."

Which makes me doubly glad that [The Sword of Vivienne](#) is about to publish, right after this newsletter comes out. It's the story of a medieval swordswoman who discovers her true purpose around age 60. Rare for the 1400s, but then, she's a vampire. And I was gob smacked when that museum visit made me realize I'd written a [Heroine's Journey](#) (and even better, a [Crone's Journey](#)) without meaning to.

Not that I was done with the book at the end of August when we toured the Lucas. We've had our own journey this month editing and re-editing the novel; everything from the timing and sequence of the Battle of Patay down to the tiniest placement of the last apostrophe.

But speaking of narrative art, I'm thrilled with the story the book cover tells. The juxtaposition of the filigreed background and the feminine name Vivienne with the thoroughly masculine bloody sword conveys so much about the story inside.

I hope you'll read and enjoy the book. And if you do read it, please post your honest review on Goodreads, Amazon, or wherever you review books. Please talk about it on your social media and with your friends. And there's a Study Guide at the back of the book in case you're in a book club that reads historical fiction, queer fiction, women's lit, or paranormal fiction—because this novel is all that.

We now have two volumes in the [Blood Sisters Chronicles](#), whose tagline is "Women Become More Powerful with Age—Especially after 500." This new one is the prequel to [Vampires of a Certain Age](#), my 2023 novel that introduced the ethical vampires of Camden House in medieval York. The books stand alone, so read in either order. And more to come: I'm already working on the tale of Sybil the Barber Surgeon, a Sister from Camden House who takes on a career with ethical access to plenty of blood.

In other news, [CroneHub.org](#) continues to grow, providing a showcase for the vibrant culture of women over fifty. Whether you're looking for a particular resource (like books or podcasts for us and about us), or a particular topic (anything from Creativity to Money to Health), CroneHub is your place to find it all.

And over at Crone Authors Together, we learned the ins and outs of Facebook advertising in August, and how to create and use a marketing plan in September. If you are a woman author over fifty, [register](#) to receive notices of upcoming monthly meetings and gain access to many resources.

This month I also enjoyed a terrific conversation with veteran journalist Phyllis Haynes on her show on [Profunde TV](#). We got into the nitty gritty of what's happening now: What if all that knowledge AI scrapes from our books makes us immortal? Not sitting-on-a-cloud immortal but something more interesting? That and more in our interview, [here](#).

Over on the Stella website we featured a terrific guest blog this month from Dr. Denise Taylor, one of my favorite Crone authors. Her essay, "[What if it Isn't about Staying Busy in Later Life?](#)" is a direct challenge to my workaholic ways (and well worth a read). Denise's new book, [ThriveSpan](#), is at the top of my To Be Read list. Our October guest essayist will be Teri M. Brown, whose new novel [Peg, Unhinged](#), is one of my 2026 favorite books.

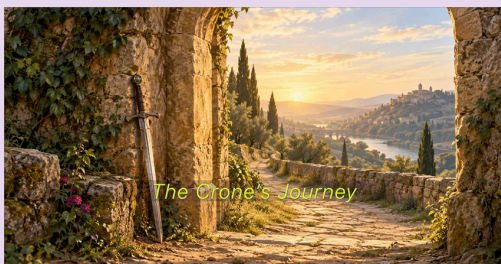
September is my birthday month and we're celebrating with a visit to the Bay Area. I'm turning 73, and our destination is infinitely better than my last birthday, which I spent in the operating room having a mastectomy. "A low bar," as my daughter says. I'm grateful to be contemplating a very different October in 2026.

And I hope that your October is filled with creativity, passion, and new experiences. Let's be bold and brave and ready to fail at something new. After all, as they say, we're meat machines hurtling through space. Fear nothing! Let's be brave and adventuresome while we're here.



All the best,
Stella,
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This Month's Blogs



The Crone's Journey

Stella Fosse

I was editing my novel, *The Sword of Vivienne*, when I toured the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art on a preview day. When I saw the sign for the first exhibit, "The History of Narrative Art: Heroes, Myths, the Sacred,"



Staying Busy in Later Life

Denise Taylor

There is a kind of tiredness that many women carry into [later life](#) that is hard to explain unless you've lived it.

it hit me: I had just written a Heroine's Journey. Not Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey, the one that inspired Lucas, but a whole new thing: a Crone's Journey.

They are all different, these hero and heroine stories. The Wizard of Oz, inspired by the work of early feminist Matilda Gage, is different from Lucas' Star Wars. Katniss in The Hunger Games is on a different mission than Xena, Warrior Princess. But these are all quests, and most of them resolve long before the Crone stage of life.

The author K.M. Welland proposed one version of a Crone's Journey and said, right at the outset, that there are few sources to draw from. As she writes:

"I believe these arcs are desperately important and under-served. It is, in fact, difficult to think of many suitable story examples. Most of the time when a Crone or a Mage shows up in a story (especially a popular or genre story), they appear as a supporting character within the arc of a younger protagonist."

Not simply physical tiredness, although sometimes it is that too. More the accumulated weight of decades spent being the reliable one. The capable one. The woman who gets things done, keeps going, responds to everyone, and somehow holds life together even when she herself is running on empty.

I look back now and realise how much of my life was spent in motion.

Building a career. Raising children. Managing a home. [Writing books](#). Working with clients. Completing a doctorate in my sixties. Trying to do everything properly, responsibly, thoughtfully. Like many women of my generation, I became very good at coping.

And for years, that competence was rewarded.

People admire women who manage everything well. We are praised for resilience, reliability, productivity. Even now, when I speak to women in their sixties and seventies, I hear how much emotional labour they are still carrying, for partners, grandchildren, elderly parents, friends, communities. Often

These stories are so rare that Welland ends up using male examples (like Gandalf in The Lord of the Rings) to illustrate the stages in the Crone's Journey. With such a paucity of sources, it's no surprise that the stages in Welland's Journey emphasize wisdom and acceptance over reinvention and action.

A Cultural Gap – And An Opportunity

“Desperately important and underserved” means the Crone's Journey is ours to create.....

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quietly. Often without anyone really noticing.

But somewhere over the past few years, something in me began to shift.

Not dramatically. There wasn't a breakdown or a major life event. It was more a growing sense that I no longer wanted to live at the speed I once had. That the constant pressure to keep producing, achieving, organising and proving myself no longer fitted who I was becoming.

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