

COLLECTION

Prose, Poems, Plays and Songs



by
Teresa Lynn Paris McDonnell

This is a work of original writing. I wrote all of it and I wrote most of it a long time ago. So, don't believe anyone who says they wrote something matching something in this book. They are lying. I've read tons of stuff over the years and I'd know if someone wrote it before me. They didn't. Any similarities to any person or event, past or present, are purely coincidental. However, I am responsible for any similar events that happen in the future. Warning: Some of these stories deal with dark or sensitive subjects because life is like that sometimes for some of us. I remind you again: this is a work of FICTION; it's only true when I say it's true. Please don't ask me if some of the other stuff actually happened because I'll only tell you: IT IS JUST A STORY. That's what writers do: they make up stuff.

~Teresa



This book was typeset by the author in Cambria and Wingdings 2 fonts. This is a work of original fiction and drawings by the author, except for the Bible quotes (thank you, God) and the song lyrics (thank you, Elton, David, John and Paul).

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This book is dedicated to
'two men standing next to each other'
(i.e., my husband David McDonnell
and my brother David Paris),
My oldest friends, Patty Orona McClain and Janell Mahler,
And Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour

About the Author



I was born Teresa Lynn Paris, October 29, 1956, to Dwight and Donna, and raised in Ottumwa, Iowa, my hometown. I wrote my first fiction story when I was in third grade. It was about what an old coin thinks about as it lay on the sea floor; my teacher said it was incredible I wrote in first-person as an inanimate object at the tender age of eight. And, thus, a writer was born.

I graduated from Ottumwa High School in 1974 where I had tried to start an acting career until my mother told me I was too fat (thanks, mom). So on my first day at University (British people do NOT call it college—that is an insult; college is for people who can't get into University with a capital U!), I changed my course of study from Theater to Journalism. Because I couldn't be an actress, I set my sights on writing reviews about music and theater—in other words, those who can't "do," criticize those who can. I got a grade 'C' (average) from my first magazine writing class and promptly decided I'd major in something that would get me 'As'. I switched to Graphic Arts which was a good decision: I was good at it due to my creativity and technical thinking abilities.

I graduated in May 1978 from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the School of Journalism, College of Liberal Arts, with an Area of Concentration in Graphic Arts (the production side of media: photography, typesetting/typography, page layout and printing processes). My minor was Fine Arts (music appreciation, art appreciation, English, and theater techniques).

One year after university, I lost all my excess weight and worked for Weight Watchers International, even

spending one summer at a camp in Connecticut as a leader for the head office in New York City. (See, if I'd lost weight at Uni I might have been able to be an actress. But, hey, I'm not bitter!)

I absolutely loved every single minute of my 'media' career. I've been a photographer, marketing copywriter, magazine editor, newspaper reporter, proofreader, page layout designer, and a print production manager. I have ink in my veins and wish I had always held out for journalism jobs instead of wasting time in other jobs. Like my many years in retail sales (staff discounts—very good, but very hard work!) and accounting (so very boring!). At last count, I've had 46 jobs because (a) I like working so (b) I usually had more than one at a time. It was never about money; it was always about job satisfaction.

I had a nervous breakdown in 1996, a few months before my 40th birthday and my eventful trip to Liverpool which led to me living there. My breakdown wasn't about my age, though; it was about my depression. I was hospitalized in 1996 and diagnosed with dysphoria (profound sadness), anxiety, post-traumatic stress syndrome (that's where you have the symptoms of a trauma, but no traumatic event to cause them), and clinical depression which is a medical condition. Most people experience reactionary depression as a result of a depressing event: loss of a loved one, loss of a job, loss of a limb. Mine is medical: My brain just isn't wired right. I've always had it. People called me 'moody'. Some just called me 'weird'. That's OK though; being weird makes me special. It also made the people who took the time to get to know me special as well. Once I got proper medication, I could experience all the happiness I'd always knew was inside me, but that my brain wasn't able to let me feel.

My favorite place to live in the whole world would be Colorado Springs. I lived there for two years, couldn't find

a job, so I left financial broke and very in debt. If my husband ever wins the lottery, that's where we're going.

In 1998, I sold my house, all my furniture, gave away my car, my dog and my three cats. Then, I moved to Liverpool, England to get married. I like England and I have no plans to move back to the USA, but I do plan for my ashes to be buried in the Paris Cemetery in Paris, Iowa (aka Bunch).

I met my husband through the mail; I tell that story in this book, so you'll have to read it. Everywhere I go in the UK, I'm asked the same five questions: (1) Where you from? (I'm originally from Iowa in the United States, we don't call it 'America' because America is the actual continent and the people in the other countries of the continent say they are Americans, too); (2) How long have you been here? (Since 1998, you do the math); (3) Why did you come over here? (To marry a British man I met through a pen-pal club); (4) Don't you miss America? (Nope, only the pets I had in 1998, my black Italian-made dining set, Wells Blue Bunny yogurt and cake—British cake sucks); and Question (5) Gee, isn't it amazing you haven't lost your accent? (I came over here when I was 41 years old, I was really too old to learn to talk differently. Ask my husband or me to tell you about our first trip to Ireland. It's hilarious.) My accent makes me interesting, apparently, and gets people talking to me. I like that.

I've had an amazing life. I'm happy and loved, especially by God. It's sad that after the deaths of my dad, my brothers, and myself, our family line dies with us.

I put together this book as my legacy because I have no children or nieces or nephews or even children of friends who like me enough to remember me once I'm gone. I always wanted to get published and I've been blessed to have had things in print through the various jobs I've held and opportunities I've found where people would

overlook my weirdness to print my stories. But the stories in this book were always my passion and I wanted the world to read them. I hope you will keep them for me, or pass them on. It would be nice to be remembered. I have always loved science fiction, so many of my stories are in that genre. I have also always considered myself to be a 'righter' of wrongs, so a lot of my stories deal with social injustice, mine mostly, but I think we can all relate.

And, because I have no one to leave my stuff to, if you want anything, bring by a sticker with your name and phone number on it and we'll put it on the bottom of whatever you want. Otherwise, it's all going to be landfill.

Best wishes and happy reading.

~Teresa



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PROSE



The Nature of Mr. Cosmo's Memory

Author's Intro: Ah, good ol' Mr. Cosmo. My first piece of doomsday fiction, circa 1970. Remember: Having a bad day will never be old-fashioned.



Mr. Cosmo stopped the escalator halfway between floors. Something was hanging on the edge of his thoughts and he wanted to catch that something before it fell over the cliff of his mind. The lady behind him pushed her purse into his back and told him to move on. He pushed the GO button and moved in a zombie-like fashion up the stairs. After pushing the button to let himself off the stairway, he sat down in one of the chairs in the corridor. His mind was still concentrated on saving that thought.

It was no use. His body was exhausted from the five minutes of mental exertion, but he couldn't save the thought. It lost its grip and went screaming down into the deepness of his mind.

"How unfortunate," thought Mr. Cosmo. "I can't keep one little thing in my head for any length of time. Product of getting old, I suppose."

But there was one last hope. Within a few minutes he entered the Memory Bank, a remembrance help station. After filling in the necessary forms, he was shown to a small room where he waited the customary 20 minutes to be seen.

Finally, a tall, slim young man came into the room.

"I'm sorry to trouble you," said Mr. Cosmo. "I just can't seem to keep a hold on my thoughts lately."

The attendant nodded, but did not smile. Without speaking he placed the electro-cap on Mr. Cosmo's head and asked the routine questions.

“When did you have this thought?”

“Fifteen minutes prior to arriving here,” replied Mr. Cosmo, as his hands were locked in the grips on the chair.

“How far back would you like to trace your memory?”

“Since I got up this morning.”

The young attendant nodded and went out of the room. A few seconds later, Mr. Cosmo felt the chair vibrating with electricity.

The screen in front of him lit up and he watched what he had seen at 6:30 that morning: the eggs frying in the pan, the water coming out of the shower and the dresser drawer shutting. The walk to the shuttle was clear in his mind until he saw the corner. Funny, he didn’t remember standing there. His watch in the film showed two after eight, he had had three minutes to wait for the shuttle.

Now he saw certain things which had not registered in his mind. A small boy was sitting on the sidewalk playing “junior executive travelling salesman.” He stopped to look at Mr. Cosmo, holding out his tiny sales-order e-pad and pretend 3-D catalog. Next, Mr. Cosmo’s shoes appeared on the screen, next to the child. There was a small yellow dot between his feet. The shuttle arrived then and Mr. Cosmo watched his feet go up the stairs.

“Stop! Stop the screen!” yelled Mr. Cosmo. The screen froze on the shuttle driver’s face.

The attendant entered the room, but did not speak.

“Turn it back.” Mr. Cosmo shouted, squirming in his chair. “Turn it back to the small boy.”

The attendant pointed to the poster on the wall stating that it was against corporate law to yell at the employees. He then went out and the film was rewound. The small boy again looked up at Mr. Cosmo. Then, the dot between the shoes appeared.

“Stop!”

The attendant came back in, but did not speak. "I want a print of that," said Mr. Cosmo, shaking. "That dot. Enlarge it as much as possible. Just get me that print as quickly as you can."

Again, the attendant pointed at the poster.

"Please," pleaded Mr. Cosmo.

The attendant paid no attention to what was on the screen as he unhooked the grips and removed the cap from Mr. Cosmo's head. The yellow dot faded off of the screen. "Take a seat in the corridor. I shall hurry your print, but you realize enlarging takes longer than a regular print. It will probably be a whole minute."

"Fine. Fine." Mr. Cosmo replied nervously as he sat down. The attendant went back into the room and shut the door. As soon as the door was shut, Mr. Cosmo rose and began pacing. His mind was in a state of turbulence.

That yellow dot, he thought. What is it? It seems like I should know, but I just can't remember.

An attendant returned to the where Mr. Cosmo was waiting. This attendant looked exactly the same as the last one, except this one had black hair. He handed Mr. Cosmo a blue envelope. Mr. Cosmo paid him with a white stamp and told him to keep the change.

Mr. Cosmo patiently rode the staircase down to the ground floor, but he didn't bother with the conveyerwalk. His legs got him to the Computer Library office in a much shorter time than the walk would have. Besides, Mr. Cosmo would never forget the old and out-of-date, unused adage: Walking is Good for You. He was in too much of a hurry to notice the stares he was getting for walking next to the conveyerwalk.

The receptionist at the Computer Library Office jumped when Mr. Cosmo slammed the envelope down on her desk.

"May I help you?" Her eyes narrowed at Mr. Cosmo.

"I want to know what this is." He opened the envelope and pulled out the print. "I've seen it before, but I can't remember what it is."

As the receptionist slowly fixed her eyes on the print, Mr. Cosmo looked at it for the first time, too. It was a furry-looking thing and it stared at them from a hole in the concrete. The receptionist had a puzzled look on her face as she raised the picture closer to her eyes.

"Where did you get this?" she asked.

"It came out of my memory. Apparently, I saw it this morning when I was at the shuttle stop. Do you know what it is?"

"No. I'll have to run it through the computer and see if it can come up with anything. Please have a seat. She took the print and went out of the room. Again, Mr. Cosmo could only pace. When the receptionist returned several minutes later; she carried two sheets of paper.

"Our computer did not know the answer. It referred us to the Encyclopedia Computer." She handed the two pieces of paper to Mr. Cosmo. "These contain all the information we have on the subject."

Mr. Cosmo trembled as he read the first few lines, "Taraxacum officinate. An extinct weed. Quite common before it became non-existent in the late 2000s. Often referred to as a flower. Description: yellow jagged toothed leaves." Mr. Cosmo's voice trailed off as he looked at the receptionist. "What is it though? What does it mean?"

"It's on the next page, I think. There."

Mr. Cosmo began reading where her finger pointed. "Extinction caused by over-development of urban society. The 'dandelion' could not exist without an organic substance called soil to nourish it." Mr. Cosmo's eyes were gleaming. "A dandelion. A dandelion!"

Mr. Cosmo placed a purple stamp in the receptionist's hand as he bolted from the room. He repeated the name of

the plant all the way up to the two-hundredth floor of his office building. He did not stop at the secretary's desk nor did he ask for permission to be admitted. The secretary didn't even get a chance to look up before Mr. Cosmo entered the inner office of Mr. Ultra.

"Ray!" Mr. Cosmo began speaking as soon as he entered the office, "Look at this; you won't believe it. We've got to get some people out there immediately—"

The secretary had followed Mr. Cosmo, and was now standing beside him. "I'm sorry. Mr. Ultra, this man just barged right in. Do you want me to call Security?"

"That's all right, Ms. Sparkle. I know this man. I'm having a special conference with him now." Reluctantly she went out of the room. "Now, Cosmo, sit down and tell me, calmly, what is going on."

Mr. Cosmo sat on the edge of his chair as he explained, "I've found an extinct flower, Ray. A dandelion. It's more of a weed, than a flower. But it looks like a flower. It's at my shuttle stop. Get some people out there. It's a great opportunity for the foundation to show how worthwhile our project is."

Mr. Ultra pressed his hands together slowly in front of his nose. He stared at Mr. Cosmo for what seemed like an eternity to the older man.

"Look, Ray," Cosmo sprang from his seat, "here's the print that was photographed from my memory and here are the papers explaining what the dandelion is." He spread out the papers on the desk and Mr. Ultra slowly looked over the sheets laid before him.

To Mr. Cosmo's relief Mr. Ultra finally spoke, "Okay, Cosmo, get out there. I'll call the head of the researchers and she'll meet you in the lobby. I'll get the newspaper there also. Don't forget these." Mr. Cosmo grabbed the papers and ran out of the room. Mr. Ultra calmly pushed a

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