

**February 2026**



**Inland Empire  
California Writing Club**

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello Writers,

Our next presentation is from an author who will talk about her writer's journey and her debut novel, *Madame Sorel's Lodger*—a Van Gogh-inspired story about an artist and the quiet, lasting impact he leaves on a small French village.

I'll admit it upfront: I love Van Gogh.

I visited the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam as a teenager, and it left a profound mark on me. The museum presented the artist's life in layers—his early works on the ground floor, his (let's be honest) boring Japanese phase sandwiched in the middle, and at the very top, a fireworks of impressionist paintings created during his mental unraveling. My favorite piece? Not a sunflower. Not a self-portrait. A simple painting of worn-out boots. Earthy. Common. Human.

In 2022, I visited Arles, a town in Provence where Van Gogh lived and painted. The French have a museum dedicated to him. The exhibit centered around *Starry Night*, filled with celestial art and swirling skies. That experience rekindled my love for modern and fine art. I added a new favorite: *Starry Night Over the Rhône*—a canvas filled with glowing orbs of light reflected in the water.

Van Gogh was a man shaped by longing. (Longing is this month's Fresh Ink theme.) Vincent's letters to his brother Theo reveal a soul desperate for connection, purpose, and healing—both for himself and for others through his art. Longing fueled his creativity, even as it fractured him.



February brings us Valentine's Day celebrations. I have often experienced Valentine's Day as a time of longing. Longing with a persistent, bittersweet ache for something distant, lost, or just out of reach.

And, what do writers long for?

A finished manuscript.

Words on the page.

A message sent into the world.

The rush of inspiration, writing in a magical state of flow.

An audience—any audience—that makes the work feel meaningful.

Change. Impact. Stability.

A bestseller? Sure.

Fame? A movie deal? Why not?

Perhaps writing supports your travel habit.

Maybe it's therapy.

Maybe it's simply an expression of who you are.

In this club, we have writers who long and write for a myriad of reasons—and maybe a few who desire everything!

Whatever you're longing for, I'm grateful you're here. Keep writing. Keep longing. And may you find writerly satisfaction as tasty as a box of chocolates.

See you in February!

Judy Kohnen



# EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue was edited using

Canva



Hello Readers!

While much of the country is facing freezing temperatures, we're fortunate here in California to enjoy sunny skies and only a light morning chill. That warmth has been a small comfort during a difficult time, as I recently experienced the sudden loss of a dear friend.

Ironically, the theme I chose for February—*longing*— now has taken on a much deeper meaning for me. What I originally imagined as longing for loved ones far away has become a personal reflection of grief: longing for my friend to still be here, and for simpler times before this loss. While we can't control life's unexpected turns, we can choose where to place our energy. For me, that meant channeling creativity into this issue, my craft and leaning on the love of my partner, family, friends, and cats.

In celebrating Valentine's Day and the month of love, I wanted to honor all forms of love—not just romantic, but also the love we share with friends and family. This issue embraces shades of pink and red, hearts, and Valentine-inspired touches to complement the heartfelt stories from our writers, who truly captured the spirit of the season.

Life is unpredictable, with both joy and heartbreak, but it's a reminder to cherish our loved ones and say "I love you" whenever we can. I'm incredibly grateful for the support I've received and for the opportunity to be your editor. I hope you enjoy this issue as much as I enjoyed bringing it together.

Take care everyone!

Ink to page, tales unveiled.

Anais Hamel



@globetrotteuse99





Saturday, February 28, 2026, at 10:10 am  
 Ovitt Family Library,  
 215 E C St, Ontario, CA 91764



**The Journey to Becoming an Older Debut Author**  
**Presented by Tracy Wise**

**Program Description**



I have written since I was small, and I always received encouragement from others in the feedback they provided me on my writing, from elementary school on through college. As an adult, writing became a part of many of the jobs I held or the volunteer roles I filled. But finally finding the time to focus on my own writing, and then learning about the whole pitching and agents and types of publishing houses and forms, was a whole other lesson. The thread through all of this was persistence--but what is persistence, really, and does it look the way we think it should look? This is one writer's journey to having her writing professionally published.

**About the Author**

After an international childhood lived throughout Asia due to her father's aid work, Tracy Wise spent her career in theatre, opera, and higher education administration. She earned a BA in Theatre and Spanish from Washington University in St. Louis and an MA in Cultural Studies from the University of East London. She places a strong emphasis on visual art and music in her writing, and her debut work, *Madame Sorel's Lodger*, is a Van-Gogh- inspired story about an artist and the impact he has on a small French village. In her free time, Tracy designs social media for her local Friends of the Library in Redlands, California.



**JANUARY 2026 MEETING**  
**WHAT'S COMING UP**



# Benefits of IECWC

# MEMBERSHIP

- ALL AGES are welcome!
- Entrance into monthly meetings
  - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Access to monthly speakers on topics related to the craft
- Exposure & practice by submitting to our monthly literary newsletter, FRESH INK
- Network with other club members
  - (various levels of expertise, mentors)
- Participation in Critique Groups
  - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Your OWN PAGE on our Club website at no additional cost
  - Highlight your bio, photo, website, social media, and published books
- Opportunities to serve on the board or on committees of our branch
- Camaraderie among other writers at all levels, all genres, and all ages!
- Partake, volunteer, and/or help plan our Spring and Fall Conferences which are provided at little (or sometimes no) cost to our members
- Annual opportunity to showcase your work at Open Mic events.
- Annual opportunity, each January, to attend/appear on our Panel of Authors
  - Members who were published the year before
  - Learn/share advice on the publication process, ask/answer questions, and buy/sell your books on site
- Annual opportunity to submit, read, and assist with judging the competitive Statewide CWC Literary Review, with readership of about 2,000 members and their readers and associates
- Simultaneous Co-Membership into California Writers Club
  - Our state-level parent organization at [www.calwriters.org](http://www.calwriters.org), with additional volunteer opportunities

- Read/advertise in the Tri-Annual CWC Bulletin available online, free of charge
  - Access to news from the other CWC Branches throughout California, gaining perspective about other serious, mostly published, writers, editors, Web designers, graphics experts, etc.
- Potential for your writing to be chosen to be displayed in the Southern California Writers Showcase at [www.socalwritersshowcase.com](http://www.socalwritersshowcase.com)
- A wonderful addition to your curriculum vitae or resume!
- Access to the monthly IECWC Blind Review Team
- Utilize our FACEBOOK PAGE to get your works word out to the public interested in writing

**JOIN or RENEW at:**  
<https://iecwc.com/membership-meetings/>

**Active**  
**\$65**

**Supporting**  
**\$65**

**Student**  
**\$15**  
 ages 8-22

**Renewal of Membership**  
**\$45**

Renewal deadline September 30.  
 On October 1, CWC shall drop all delinquent members from the rolls. If dropped, you must pay the new \$65 member enrollment fees.

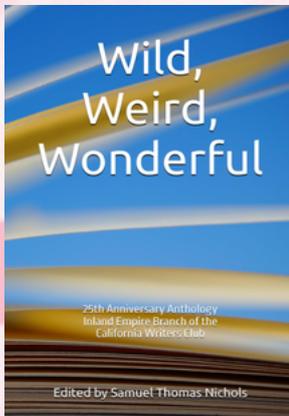
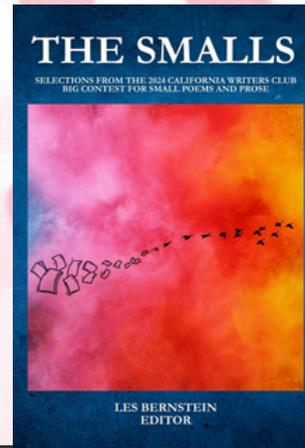


# C W C

## THE SMALLS

The Smalls includes selections from the California Writers Club 2024 "Big Contest for Small Poems and Prose." This is a vibrant collection of unique voices chosen from the contest entries.

<https://a.co/d/45iqsdm>



## Wild, Weird, Wonderful: 25th Anniversary Anthology Inland Empire Branch of the California Writers Club

<https://a.co/d/0SVxuPT>

This collection includes short stories, poetry, memoir, nonfiction, memoir, original drawings and photographs, and one novelette entitled *Murder in Huckleberry Heights*.

This anthology contains the varietal work of eighteen members of the Inland Empire Branch with several genres being represented.

## Vision & Verse: A Fusion of Art, Photography, Prose and Poetry

The multi-talented artists and writers featured within these pages have come together to create a dialogue between their respective mediums. This collection showcases the beauty of visual art married with the magic of the written word.

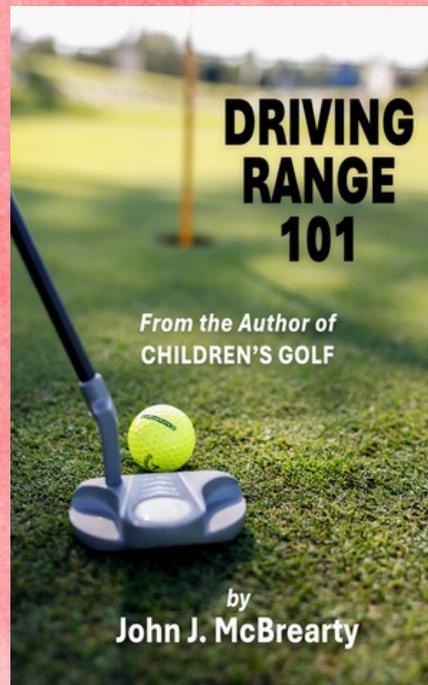
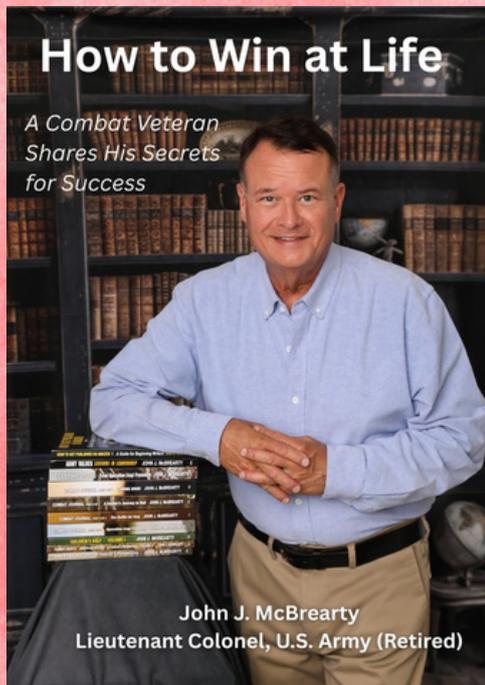
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# BO OK S



# KUDOS KORNER



Congratulations to **John McBrearty** on successfully promoting his novels on YouTube. You can find in-depth videos covering three of his books: *How to Win at Life*, *Driving Range 101*, and *Combat Golf*. He is currently in negotiations with publishers for these works and may also choose to self-publish his self-help book, *How to Win at Life*. These are major achievements—well done!

Check his chanel via the link here  
<https://www.youtube.com/@JohnWritesHistory>.

## Upcoming Videos releases

February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026

### **FROM SERVICE TO STORY**

In this video, disabled combat veteran and award-winning author John J. McBrearty shares powerful insight into his life after the uniform and how writing became a path to healing, purpose, and success.

February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026

### **CALLED TO CREATE**

In *How to Win at Life*, disabled combat veteran and retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel John J. McBrearty shares what it truly means to succeed beyond the battlefield.

# KUDOS KORNER



**VISION & VERSE II**  
*A Fusion of Art, Photography, Prose and Poetry*  
EDITOR LES BERNSTEIN

Congratulation to **Cynthia DeMone** for having her *Ekphrastic Challenge* poem featured in the Statewide California Writers

Club Publication:

*Vision and Verse II*

*A Fusion of Art, Photography, Prose and Poetry*

Check her poem here:

<https://a.co/d/9R0NVhV>

# Help Wanted

WE ARE LOOKING FOR PEOPLE TO FILL  
IN THESE BOARD POSITIONS!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:  
SAM NICHOLS SAMUELTHOMASNICHOLS@GMAIL.COM

**TREASURER**

**WEBMASTER**

**PROGRAM CHAIR**

**SECRETARY**

**CENTRAL BOARD REP.**



# DIAMOND VALLEY WRITERS' GUILD

## World-Building for Writers

Presented by

# Jonathan Maberry

Saturday, February 21, 2026, at 9:30 am  
Hemet Public Library  
300 E. Latham Avenue, Hemet.

Unable to attend in person?

Email [DVWritersGuild@gmail.com](mailto:DVWritersGuild@gmail.com) for a Zoom invite.

Whether it's a fantasy realm, an alien world, an unknown past, an apocalyptic future, or our very own planet Earth, the 'world' of any story should be real, interesting, unique, and useful. Building these worlds, including variations of our own can enrich any story and even serve as a kind of character. NY Times bestseller Jonathan Maberry will take you through fun and surprisingly easy steps to show how to build the perfect world that will bring your story to life.



**JONATHAN MABERRY is a NYTimes bestselling author, 5-time Bram Stoker Award-winner, 4-time Scribe Award winner, Inkpot Award winner, poet, and comic-book writer. He writes in multiple genres: suspense, thriller, horror, sci-fi, fantasy, and action. V-WARS (Netflix) was based on his books/comics; Alcon is developing his teen post-apocalyptic novels for film; and Chad Stahelski, director of JOHN WICK, is developing his bestselling Joe Ledger thrillers for TV. Marvel's BLACK PANTHER: WAKANDA FOREVER was partly based on his work. He's president of the International Association of Media Tie-in Writers, and the editor of Weird Tales Magazine. [www.jonathanmaberry.com](http://www.jonathanmaberry.com)**

And don't forget to join us afterward for our monthly no-host networking luncheon at **Emilio's Mexican Restaurant & Cantina** at 2340 S. San Jacinto Avenue. We have a 12:00 noon reservation, so if you get there first, let them know you're with the Guild.

All writers welcome!

DVWG Membership not required to attend.  
For more info visit us at [DVWritersGuild.org](http://DVWritersGuild.org)



## Deadlines

Submissions are due the 20th of every month



## Content Limits

**Submissions with the following will not be considered:**

- Excessive or gratuitous violence (violence for violence sake)
- Excessive or gratuitous profanity
- Excessive or gratuitous sexual situations or pornography
- Political or religious agendas that are meant to persuade or denounce



**FRESH  
INK**

*guidelines*



## Form

- Prose word count <1,200
- No line count on poetry

Send as an attachment  
Google or Word document  
Times New Roman  
12pt font



## Photos

Accompanying images are optional

We can only publish digital images that **do not violate copyright**

You are encouraged to submit photos you have taken



## Email

[iecwfreshink@gmail.com](mailto:iecwfreshink@gmail.com)

Check your email periodically for suggestions from the editor

# Poetry Musings

By Samuel Thomas Nichols

## Longing

As I trudge the somber corridors on the twilight side of seventy, I often find my pensive self longing for things that no longer are, or can no longer be, like butterflies. On the twelfth of January, we visited the Pismo Beach Western Monarch Butterfly Preserve to enjoy the overwintering butterflies. We had heard that the Monarch populations were dwindling, but we were little prepared for learning that this season's official count was ninety-five butterflies.

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;  
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,  
And live surrounded in the bee-loud glade  
By fragile works of art who flit from flower to tree  
Forming a fervent, living, and everlasting brocade



*My corruption of The Lake Isle of Innisfree by William Butler Yeats*

This past year I planted milkweed for our butterflies, and we treasured their beauty, albeit in smaller numbers than in years past. It is now January, time to plant, and I will soon have the milkweed seeds I ordered from the Phoenix Desert Nursery delivered to my mailbox. And, to be honest, I don't know that we had Western Monarchs feeding on our milkweed because there are something like eighteen butterfly species that look very much alike, including the Painted Lady, which had been rife during their previous migrations through our neighborhoods.



Thou spark of life that waviest wings of gold,  
Thou songless wanderer mid the songful birds,  
With Nature's secrets in thy tints unrolled  
Through gorgeous cipher, past the reach of words,  
Yet dear to every child  
In glad pursuit beguiled,  
Living his unspoiled days mid flowers and flocks and herds!

And yet the soul of man upon thy wings  
Forever soars in aspiration; thou  
His emblem of the new career that springs  
When death's arrest bids all his spirit bow.  
He seeks his hope in thee  
Of immortality.  
Symbol of life, me with such faith endow!



*From Ode to a Butterfly, by Thomas Wentworth Higginson*

Yes, I occasionally long for the impossible, but even in my age I can recall longing for something that, when acquired, I didn't really want - such as adulthood. It seems all children are in a hurry to grow up, and then we get there and wonder: Why? I believe Emily Dickinson clearly described the disappointment of acquiring the thing desired.

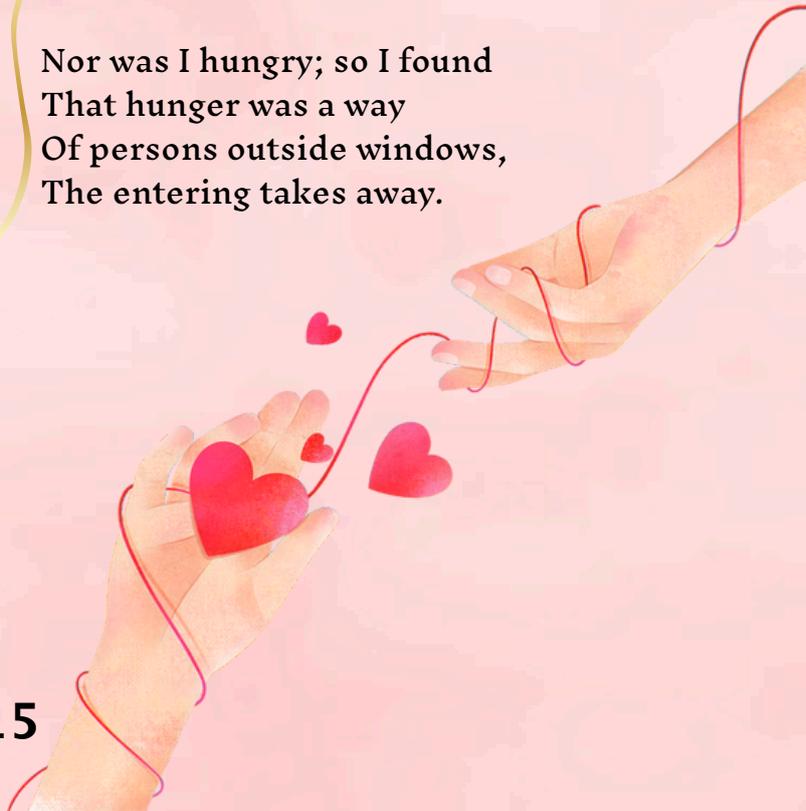
I had been hungry all the years-  
My noon had come, to dine-  
I, trembling, drew the table near  
And touched the curious wine.

'T was this on tables I had seen  
When turning, hungry, lone,  
I looked in windows, for the wealth  
I could not hope to own.

I did not know the ample bread,  
'T was so unlike the crumb  
The birds and I had often shared  
In Nature's dining-room.

The plenty hurt me, 't was so new,--  
Myself felt ill and odd,  
As berry of a mountain bush  
Transplanted to the road.

Nor was I hungry; so I found  
That hunger was a way  
Of persons outside windows,  
The entering takes away.



And yet, we continue to long for impossibilities, as, in my case, the haleness of lost youth, which is not an uncommon desire within my universe. Take, for example, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's sonnet *Youth and Age*.

Oh give me back the days when loose and free  
To my blind passion were the curb and rein,  
Oh give me back the angelic face again,  
With which all virtue buried seems to be!  
Oh give my panting footsteps back to me,  
That are in age so slow and fraught with pain,  
And fire and moisture in the heart and brain,  
If thou wouldst have me burn and weep for thee!  
If it be true thou livest alone, Amor,  
On the sweet-bitter tears of human hearts,  
In an old man thou canst not wake desire;  
Souls that have almost reached the other shore  
Of a diviner love should feel the darts,  
And be as tinder to a holier fire.



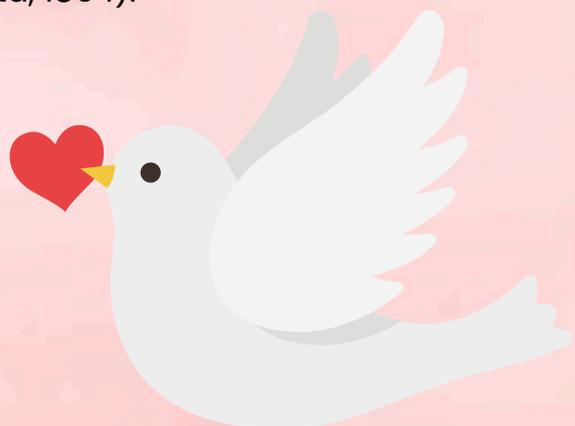
Although William Blake, in this next bit, is referring to a different longing, I relish his words from *And Did Those Feet In Ancient Time*:



Bring me my Bow of burning gold:  
Bring me my arrows of desire:  
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!  
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I often wondered why Blake didn't capitalize arrows in the second line, but the Christian longing in the poem is still clear even when it speaks to me of youth and sensual desire, another common longing among our species. Richard Lovelace, one of the 17th Century Cavalier Poets, expressed this yearning in his song, *To Althea, From Prison* (from *Lucasta*, 1864):

When love with unconfined wings  
Hovers within my Gates;  
And my divine ALTHEA brings  
To whisper at the Grates;  
When I lye tangled in her haire,  
And fettered to her eye,  
The birds that wanton in the aire,  
Know no such liberty.





# *Sunset Haibun*

## *By Cynthia DeMone*

Dad gave me all the family photos, two big tubs. Then he gave me the cabochons and big gigantic nuggets of turquoise. Dad knew I loved rocks. As a child I called them my pretties. In August doctors told Dad he was good to go—for a while. He went to Quartzite to sell polished rocks and easy-ups for the other merchants. I was going to meet him there to spend time with him. He got up early New Year's day, cooked breakfast, fell down on the camper floor—never ate his eggs. Keith, my brother, found him dead. Paramedics judged it was a heart attack. Keith called me. Craig, my younger brother, picked me up at at sunrise, 5 hours later Craig and I arrived, we loaded up the caravan of Dad's merchandise, three vehicles, two with trailers. We drove to the funeral home. Sat around a table making arrangements for cremation. My Daddy's body was covered in skin lesions from too much outdoor work. Drove the 5 hours plus back to California—all on deserted backcountry roads. At sunset, we turned onto the dirt road to the ranch.

A year's beginning dawned  
Yielding a sunset for my Dad  
Ashes are not rocks

# *The Wild Gentleman and the Church Girl*

## *Waiting to be Set Free*

*By Ann Casas*

True love comes in strange ways, not expected, but desired. Mark was a wild boy, and Lana was a church girl. Who would've thought they would ever stay together? They were so different from each other.

Lana was beautiful. Blonde, blue eyes, tiny, and fragile, she was demure, shy, and naive. Her family attended church every Sunday and were involved in religious activities during the week. She led a sheltered life, and she didn't even know it.

"What is life, really?" Lana would ask herself. She was curious, as she had a dormant wild streak to her that was waiting to be unleashed.

Mark's rampant ways were evident when he was a little boy. His dad died when he was just five. Mark senior was Mexican, and junior resembled him. He was swarthy, dashing and handsome.

His mother, Carole, remarried shortly after the death of her first husband. Unfortunately, her new husband was prejudiced against all people of color.

Mark's stepfather Hank resented his presence. He was abusive, called him "shit face," never by his real name. No wonder Mark grew up angry, a fighter, battling the hurt inside of him in a ferocious way.

He moved out at 16. There was only beer in the fridge and pot in the pantry, nothing to eat! And he continued to live his life on the fringe. Until...

Mark and Lana were seniors in high school. They met at a grad party.

He noticed her first. Mark was never serious about any girl. His motto was, "love 'em and leave 'um Mark." Yet Lana had something special about her, and it didn't hurt that she hadn't noticed him at all! He tried to get her attention. "This girl's different. What's her story?"

He brought her drinks. She wondered, "why is he being so nice? He came with someone!" Lana had a boyfriend, and he just happened to be Mark's childhood friend.



Mark kept his distance. When they were introduced, he was polite. Didn't interfere. Ever the gentleman!

They were opposites. Yet the immediate attraction to Lana prompted Mark to call her the following Tuesday.

"Are you busy on Friday? My friend Louie is in a band. They are playing at the Golden Nugget. I'd like you to come with me."

"Really? What about Joe, your friend? You know he and I are going together. And didn't I see you with Francine at the party?" replied Lana, although she was flattered that he had got her number and called.

"Come on, Lana. It's not like you are engaged or something. And about Francine – I only stayed with her at the party to make you jealous. We're just friends. She isn't my girlfriend or anything," he answered.

"Yeah, right. I don't believe that," she said.

*I get it. She's playing hard to get.* Mark stepped up his game, ready for the challenge.

"Don't go anywhere. I'm going to hang up and have Francine call you. She'll tell you it's true what I'm saying. Okay? Lana?"

Lana giggled. *He must really like me. "Okay." I'm having fun with this.*

After 15 minutes the phone rang. "Hello?" Lana answered.

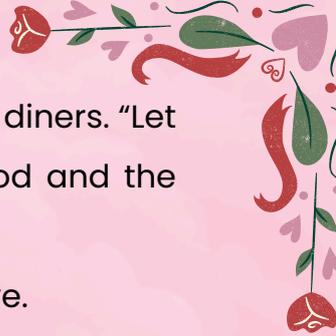
"Lana? It's Francine. We know each other from school. Mark asked me to call you. He's right, we aren't going out. He really likes you, so you can believe what he's telling you." Francine said.

"Well, he went out of his way to have you call me, so I guess so. Thanks for the call." Lana told her.

"No problem. See you at school." Francine hung up the phone. Lana smiled. *He's telling the truth.* She felt satisfied.

Joe was not so easy to handle. When she told him about Mark, he slammed the phone down so hard it rang in her ears for several minutes. "I guess that's it for Joe," she thought.

Mark wanted their first date to be special, so he took her to Luigi's, a magnificent Italian restaurant uptown. "Wear something fancy and a little sexy," he teased.



The maître d treated the two young kids as if they were seasoned diners. "Let me suggest a special dinner for you, something fabulous." The food and the ambience solidified their budding interest in each other.

After that first date, they stuck like a magnet on iron. They fell in love.

Mark loved motorcycles. He was a fast and reckless driver, but when Lana rode on the back of his bike, she felt safe. As if she was a part of him. She would never ride alone or with anyone else, only her Mark.

And he was hers. They became inseparable. She tried to tame him, especially after friends and family told her he was trouble. "He just wants to have fun, Lana. He never sticks to one girl. Don't go out with him." Her best friend Cherie tried to warn her.

Her mother Carmen also voiced her concern. "Mija, my precious daughter, stay away from Mark. He is bad news! I don't want my baby girl to get hurt. I've heard so many stories about him. Nothing good." Mama was speaking from her heart that had been broken so many times by men like Mark. She knew what she was talking about!

Lana lost herself for a while. Mark hooked her on the wild life, as if she had been introduced to a strong drug like heroin that once injected was hard to avoid and welcomed. She had that streak. Her real father had been a street preacher that one day decided he would take a "faith walk" and left Lana and her mother. He came back one year later, but Lana's grandfather ran him off. The marriage was annulled.

The time they spent together was a good thing, as he got to know her, and she began to like and trust him as a friend. Life hadn't been too handy in the love and acceptance part for Mark, and for Lana she was so happy that Mark cared to spend time with her. They began to share secrets that they had been afraid to tell anyone else. Slowly Lana began to open up to Mark mentally and physically. Then she got pregnant.

Mija, mija! How could you do this? This isn't how we raised you. Does Mark know? How far along are you, do you think? Dios mio, what will I tell your papa?" Mama began to cry bitter tears as she feared for her daughter. She remembered her own struggles at a young age. "I didn't want this for you, Lana. Not for you."



"I'm scared, mama. I don't know what to do. I feel sick all the time, and sometimes I throw up. I'm sorry. Help me, mama." Lana sobbed. She loved her mother so much. "I'm so scared!" She ran to her mother.

Mama's love for Lana superseded any anger and disappointment she might have felt for the unplanned pregnancy. Her mother embraced her daughter. "There, there, mija. Don't cry. I'm here. We will get through it. How far along do you think you are?"

"I'm three weeks late, I think. I took a pregnancy test yesterday and it turned up positive. I'm scared, but I'm glad I told you. And no, Mark doesn't know." Her voice shook.

Mama cried when she told her husband Bob the news of the unplanned pregnancy, and he joined her with his own tears. Although he was her stepfather, Bob loved Lana as if she were his own blood. "We must tell Mark and his family. Lana, you won't be abandoned, not by us or anyone else."

The following Friday the whole family went to confront Mark and his family. Lana felt encouraged, but apprehensive about the outcome. "What if he doesn't love me enough or want me and the baby?" she worried.

Bob knocked on the wooden door. "Who is it?" yelled Hank from inside the house.

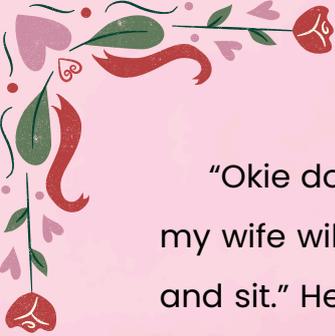
"It's the Casillas family. We would like to speak with you, your wife and Mark." Papa would not be intimidated by Hank or his rude greeting.

"You should have called first. We're busy." He didn't even bother to get up and open the door.

"This is important, and it can't wait. Will you please let us in so we can talk?" Bob wouldn't back down.

Hank threw down the remote and plodded to the door. When he opened it, he glanced at the family in front of him and snorted, "Is this what I think it's about?" He sneered at Lana. "Is this little girl in trouble?"

Even though Bob was disgusted, he realized that he had to choose his words carefully or he might ruin any chances for Lana's future. "Let's wait until we can discuss this with everyone."



“Okie dokie, I’ll let Mark know you’re here. He gets off work in a half hour, and my wife will be here at any time. She went grocery shopping. You can come in and sit.” He opened the door and then ignored them as he turned back on the television and continued to watch his program.

One hour passed. Finally, Carole and then Mark arrived. They wondered what the Casillas family sitting together in the living room would have to say.

Bob decided that it was better to get the news out and then they could deal with it. “My daughter is pregnant. Mark is the father.”

Hank immediately reacted. “How do we know it’s Mark’s kid?” He stared at Lana as if she was a tramp.

Lana began to cry. “I’ve only been with him. He should know that.” She buried her face in her mother’s lap.

Carmen was furious, but she too held her tongue. She didn’t want any complications, but her red face showed her anger. “My God! Must we take this insult?” she whispered to her husband.

Now Carole liked Lana. She felt that Lana was a good influence on her son. “Mark, what do you have to say about it?” She turned and looked at him.

Mark didn’t say anything for a few minutes. He was absorbing the news and kept quiet for a few minutes. “We should have been more careful. Took too many chances. Wow! Now what? I’m going to be a father! I’m not ready for this.” These thoughts swirled through Mark’s mind as he pondered the situation. Although he had apprehensions, he cared enough for Lana that he didn’t say what he felt aloud. “Lana, are you sure? Positive?” He turned and faced her and her family.

The tears began to flow. “Yes, Mark. I’m sure. I’m sorry.” She didn’t look at him.

Carole stood up and faced the group. “Lana, it’s not your fault. This is unexpected but not unwelcomed. A baby is a precious thing, and this child will be my first grandbaby. Mark, what do you have to say about it?” She walked over to Lana and held her hand.

Mark knew everyone was looking at him, especially his mother. The fact that his mother was not against this pregnancy gave him the courage to do the right thing.

“Lana, let’s get married. I haven’t been the best guy, but I can be a good father. I’ll get a job and take care of you and little Mark.” He went over and kissed Lana.

The whole room seem flooded with the sunshine of happiness. Even grumpy stepfather Hank warmed up to the idea of a new generation. “Yeah, you two can stay in the trailer parked in the back and save some money until the baby comes.”

Mark went and shook his hand. Then he hugged Mama Carmen and shook Papa Bob’s hand too. “I’ll do right by Lana. You’ll see. It’s going to be okay,” Mark assured them.

Lana seemed satisfied with Mark’s response. She was overwhelmed with the warm glow of motherhood. “We will be a family. I will love you forever.”

When Little Lana was born, the family was complete, mama Lana now set free by the love of her family. And the wild gentleman was now tamed by the two gentle women in his life.

“Their love story has lasted two generations and has continued to evolve into a lasting marriage full of love, laughter, heartache and pleasure.”



# March Theme

# Luck

