



**MY
WRITING
SAMPLE**

**G A R I E
M C I N T O S H**

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My Writing Sample

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in reviewing my writing. I like to tell a story, so I have coined my “brand” of writing as storytelling communication. This is because I believe that storytelling is, simply, analogous to communication. Consequently, my goal is to say something succinctly while making the description vivid. I like to practise and stay focused for sedulous craftsmanship.

About me

It's my life's purpose to use my educational and grammatical editing model to support educational processes and meet traditional publishing standards. My talent lies in discovering learning opportunities to create unique processes and methods through grammatical and linguistic studies.

It all started almost seven years ago. I had aspired to write a novel since I was in high school, which was the period where I began to experiment with writing and also began to read prolifically. In 2016 as I now delved into the writing of that novel, *What's in a Name*, I soon realized that I needed to have a deep, and a great deal of, understanding of my main tool, English. This realization marked a pivotal part of my personal evolution in finding a new career and figuring out my life's purpose. I'm now a writer.

So I have developed my website, gariemcintosh.com, to share the meaningful wins throughout my evolution. Therefore, this is a way of sharing my successes as a writer and promoting my professional development through insightful and educational content.

Also, through my own organization operated on the [Microsoft Azure](#) platform in collaboration with [Microsoft Education](#), I utilize [Microsoft applications](#) to develop and formalize pedagogical solutions that help me produce manuscripts that are highly readable and semantically sound. These solutions encompass both the linguistic and the grammatical.

What's in a Name

Who's Christine? Who's Dell-Dell?

A NOVEL

Garie McIntosh

REVISED EDITION

Now part of the forthcoming The Barred-Spiral Trilogy



What's
in
a Name

A NOVEL

Garie McIntosh

Revised Edition

They say [that] the name of a man is a soul and a
sword.

—Iyanla Vanzant

GARIE
MCINTOSH

What's
in
a Name



PROLOGUE

Takeoff

Sunshine, you measure life by loss, not by gain and
not by the wine drunk but by the wine poured forth.
Because love's strength stands in love's sacrifice and
because he who suffers most has more to give.

—MAXINE MCCALLA MCINTOSH

Milestone

CHRISTINE WATERS had stood in a doorway and witnessed something life-altering, so when her husband stood in their kitchen doorway, she knew what that meant.

He seemed indifferent to not only the smells but also her exposed back. She became concerned about the payoff that would be for every stir and step of what she was cooking. The payoff was the list of indulgences, which she alone chose from afterwards, that had become an expectation. She was not so sure of such latitude this time around, this meal. That'd be a first.

His gaze was steadfast, and his usual calm coolness seemed to be vying for control.

Then there had been only four words. Not only did she hear them, but she also did believe that she knew what he would follow them up with if she allowed him. So she proceeded to solve what she thought was not so much a mystery as an obscurity in about as few seconds as the number of words *she* then spoke.

It was now the second week of August, a Friday evening, and Christine felt like a showpiece. Her car was amongst rows of many illuminated by the airport parking garage lighting. The light distributed evenly and made the vehicles look as if they were in a showroom. It also reminded her of her own light, though a flicker, which had emitted, just like these ceilinged ones, during the return

leg of her flight. That marked not only the end of her flying, but the start of a new phase of her life as well. She would begin that phase with new employment now that the last eleven years of working with colleagues over the course of countless takeoffs and landings were over. But she did not feel celebratory. However, flying for a career should have been a cause for a celebration because it had allowed her to remain above things and keep the bad ones in the clouds.

Earlier today about midway through her flight, of which Lena (born Christine) was a cabin services director for the final time, she had been alone in the forward galley. She was shelving empty meal trays when a young woman who looked about her age of thirty-three came out of the lavatory. She sniffled and passed a finger under her eyes quickly, hesitating momentarily next to the flight deck. They were puffy and red.

Lena cast the passenger a reassuring glance, but she looked away sheepishly. Then Lena offered her a couple of squares of serviette and said, "You can take some more time here if you need."

As she took the white squares, she said, "I just don't understand why anyone would do this to me."

Lena laid her hand reassuringly on the passenger's arm and negotiated her into the nook of the exit door. "I hope everything'll be okay."

The young woman dabbed her eyes. "Thank you."

"Whatever it is, it's not your fault. Keep reminding yourself of that, okay?"

As the passengers were deplaning, Lena made the usual eye contact, said the usual: Thanks for flying with us. It was a pleasure having you on board. But when the young woman walked by, Lena also touched her on the shoulder. She slipped Lena a note then. Later while alone in the silence of the empty cabin, she had read the scribbled line aloud:

THE FLIGHT WAS BETTER AFTER WE MET. THANK YOU. TRACI.

The bright orange paper reminded Lena of something, but she could not remember what.

As soon as she had reached the parking lot, she started rummaging through her car for something on which to write. A

four-by-five-inch notepad in the glove compartment greeted her. A slither of bright orange lined the padding.



Memories recede, but eventually, they come forward. So Christine was no longer just familiar. She was known as Lena Brown. But she's now a Waters.

In the silence of the vehicle, she felt as if her mother were here. She also felt ready for a conversation with her. Propped up by her thighs and supported by the chipboard back, the pad of twenty-five sheets rested against the steering wheel. The bottom of the barrel and the tip of a retractable pen stuck out from the side of her left fist like a dagger. Her thumb circled the clip. She gazed down at the ruled white spaces of a brand-new page and thought carefully about what to write—say, really.

Over all her visits, she had never opened her mouth and uttered a single word about what had happened the day her mother got sick. She lost count of the number of times that she had been tempted to do so under an open sky that would hang over her sombrely. She had been beholden to her secret pact with her name since before her first visit.

As Lena contained thoughts about her father, so she also contained thoughts about her mother's illness and death. Upon her next visit, if she so much as broke her silence out in the open, where all around was littered with the dead, her mother just might turn in her grave. It was a good thing that the dead did not speak, or did it? Certainly not the way Traci had just spoken to her. Their fortuitous meeting matched the gravity of her now sudden desire to say something, let loose her thoughts, write them down.

Yet she knew that any number of words she might write—well, they would barely fill in the space left cavernous by time. But that space, a breach, was deceptive. It only resembled a crack. It was ugly. Silence had been covering that ugliness over for nearly twenty-two years.

She leaned her head back against the headrest and click-clicked the pen. The sound punctuated rather than undermine how she felt.

She looked over at the passenger seat forlornly. This overwhelming sense of her mother's presence, her having met Traci and the desire to write had all come together to make for a day that was already a milestone.



PART ONE

Death and Intuition

Life has a lot of things in it that we have not come upon yet.

—MAXINE MCINTOSH-MCCALLA

Chapter 1

A Mother Always Knows

THEY HAD just been left alone. The girl, whose name is about to change, stood at the foot of the hospital bed. Loretta May's eyes were trained on her while Loretta May, whose intuition had grown deep and strong by now, lay in the bed.

There had been ten members from her church, and she would not have found that the group was complete without Reid Brown, her husband, and Mother Laird, her daughter's godmother. They were both a part of the circle around mother and child, and they were all shepherded by Loretta May's pastor, Reverend Paul Robby. The grizzled man often used prayer to eschew superstition. Loretta May appreciated him in a new way because she now felt that he provided every one of them with perspective and clarity, through his familiar authority: just as Christine formed and informed Loretta May's burning care and intuition, so he formed and informed the group's singular purpose. He pacified the now hand-joined circle while he walked her through the valley of the shadow of death.

"For we fear no evil, dear Lord, for thou art with your servant Loretta May with your rod and your staff. They comfort her. You've prepared a table before her in the presence of her enemies, you've anointed her head with oil—"

Loretta felt a heavy hand lie on her forehead.

“Her cup runs over. Surely thy goodness and mercy shall follow your servant even unto eternity!”

She heard the circle groan.

Tears had pooled in the folds under Loretta May’s eyes. She reopened them.

One twisted; another rocked from side to side; and Mother Laird winced and wept. Loretta knew that their sorrowfulness was an expression of their gratitude for the time that they had had with her as their church sister. She also knew that that time was going to be as brief as what it would also be for both her only child and her.

Loretta locked eyes with her now. She thought that there was a change in Christine. In fact, she knew that something was wrong with her. That something lingered until it took permanence even at the hem of the window curtains.

Loretta turned inwardly, but without taking her eyes off her. Something sinister was going on with Christine. It was in the room. Lying in this cumbersome bed, she felt that sinisterness, which was unwieldy, unbearable. She feared what her mother-intuition told her as she had never feared anything before. The fear and the sinisterness now gave her something more than reason to beat back that shadow of death. And so Loretta commenced a beating in a way that she had never beaten anything before in her life.

She was not prepared to leave her only child behind, especially not through the indignity of a disease that had stricken her without warning. She knew that leaving Christine was reckless without the protection she had perfected as her mother. Leaving Christine was reckless because she, Christine’s mother, did not know what was wrong or how it might affect Christine. Worse, Loretta could not even measure the sinisterness for severity. She became desperate to know what had gone so wrong.

She cried out inside her head for her: Christine, Christine!

Loretta wanted everyone to leave and the sadness to be over with now. What would remain behind after she was gone—not what awaited her—concerned her. It seemed that they had merely attempted to acquiesce in her earnest request that they leave her child and her alone together, for the gatherers were now only

dispersed. They ambled about the room concernedly, but to Loretta they were a loitering nuisance.

Only after a kiss on her cheek or her forehead and a lingering gaze into her eyes did they march out of the room, one by one, mirroring the duty with which they all seemed to have entered it. Then Mother Laird, who was the last to leave, said her farewells. Loretta May looked around and wondered whether Reid was the first to have acquiesced.

As she peered at Christine at the foot of the bed, Loretta squinted. She looked just like a baby again. Then while she imagined that she was pulling Christine to her with her eyes, she also felt her lower extremity retracting something simultaneously. It was as if her womb had been opened. Suddenly, her baby was back inside her!

While still unable to place this fear for Christine, Loretta could the difference between the infant that Christine had now become once more and the twelve-year-old girl: cancelled independence and freedom. That difference drew a stark contrast to the benefits of the prayers. Being that their clarity had provided a slow, facile release, Loretta was now not only independent, she was free.

That freedom was so intoxicating that Loretta had accepted death. Shortly thereafter, she felt the change in Christine. But she also realized then that her acceptance of death was irrevocable, so she had no choice now but to fight for every minute, every breath, to remain with her baby girl—to pinpoint what had caused the change and how it had come about. Loretta had just entered a race against her own dying body. The race made her fierce. Loretta placed her strongest stake yet to put her finger on exactly what was wrong with Christine.

“Come to me,” she said.

During and by Christine’s brief walk from the foot of the bed to her side, Loretta now *saw* the change.

Christine had a noticeable curve in her right side, so when she walked, she had a slight lean in that direction. Loretta thought that it might be as precise as the attitude of flight, a term which Christine had defined when she told Loretta that she wanted to fly,

work on airplanes. Loretta wondered if this airplane-axis lean was an affectation. She knew that death was diminishing her ability to hold on while it was also sharpening her senses. She wondered what more—how much more she might see through her new razor-sharp ability if she held on a little while longer. She tried to negotiate for more time. Loretta put up both a mother's love and a mother's prayer to purchase with, but she had quickly realized that neither would buy her the time. She groaned. Weak body, sharp mind.

Married to her mother-love, that sharpness afforded Loretta May observation. She had groaned with dignity that in such a state she was granted a sharp mind. She had seen, and she now knew, what seemed to defy words if not the intellect.

Death, Loretta May figured, in its eminence and its imminence, had its advantages.



Christine stood at the foot of her mother's hospital bed. She measured her mother's every breath with a precision matched by the machines to which her mother was still attached. They beeped ominously, yet they blinked coloured lights as if to confirm that her life had not been snuffed out—yet. Christine was impatient for her mother's life to be over and everything else done with. She hoped that these outcomes would be the case. In fact, Christine would *pray* for this expediency.

As the way that she had seen her parents still fed her shame, so the doctors' prognosis fed her guilt. She believed that having seen them in that way was the reason why the disease had begun to rapidly eat away at her mother's body. In the same way, Reid's eyes and now even more of him were still eating away at her every waking, dreaming hour.

But no one was going to hear from her lips what had happened later that same day that she saw her parents. It looked as if Reid had not told anyone a thing, either. It would be hard, she imagined, for anyone to know what their child's seeing them in that way could have caused. It might be something as bad as this.

She kept her shame and her guilt under the tentative shield of

silence while she prayed for her mother to go. Ovarian cancer, it had finally been discovered, was eating away at her. Auntie Brown had told Christine that the doctors told Reid the diagnosis. Christine had been relieved since then, for she believed that it concealed her own culpability: if cancer was the result of her having demanded her mother's attention that morning, then she herself might as well accept that she was the cancer, her mother's silent killer.

While it was clear that the doctors and the medications were both failing her mother, Christine was not certain if her mother's palliative state had already altered the ability to discern or perceive. She hoped that her mother would soon lose the ability to think. Instead, let her herself do all the knowing and the thinking.

Christine could tell that the prayers by the church members had been only an exercise in finality. They seemed to mark the conclusion of, rather than to suggest saving, her mother's life. So she accepted and revered those prayers. They seemed a necessary course of action and a remedy, but there clearly was no lifesaving course or remedy.

Especially ardent ones were said for her, the soon-to-be bereaved child. The ones for the soon-to-be bereaved husband, who had embedded himself in the hand-chain, did sound like pontification to her. She remembered then that he had said that the doctors said that there wasn't much time left. On the heels of that pronouncement, he delivered from her mother the message that everybody should come. As they had held hands, Pastor Robby declared, Let us pray.

Christine had been numb to the invitation from her mother, but she was not unaffected by its delivery or the messenger. As if he were God Himself, she thought of Reid while Pastor Robby prayed. Being the messenger didn't make him so! Nor did he exist—not to her. She was relieved when the praying was over, and now at her mother's request, everyone had finally left the room.

Now she said something, the words a whisper, although her voice did not have any of the hoarseness that it had shrunken into over the last couple of days. Christine might have heard it

somewhere before: "A mother always knows."

She stared at her mother's sunken cheeks. Her once robust body was now the size of Christine's. That transition had taken exactly two weeks.

"Come to me," her mother, half-raising her head from the pillow, said.

The hoarseness was back, Christine thought as she went and stood beside her.

"Why do you walk like that?"

Christine's heart jumped. Did she walk funny? If so, wouldn't that mean that something about her body had changed? Now she was afraid that her mother *was* still lucid, thinking that the prayers could have given her sharp eyes that put to shame *A mother always knows*, the object of which Christine convinced herself could have been only a supposition.

Her mother gazed up at her. "I can barely make out your face. You're so far away."

Christine lowered herself so that her chin was at the level of the bedrail and placed her hand on her mother's chest, which rose and fell with shallow breaths. It would seem that the next one was going to be her last.

But then she said a name and asked a question.

"Uh-huh," Christine said without a single thought about either. She only hoped that *it* would be made fast. Just hurry up and let her go! she prayed in her mind.

"Your new walk made me think of it," her mother said. "Now it's your new name. It's like a parting gift to me. A fashion model on a Paris runway. I see you and me. Together. In Paris. I dream . . . of you and me together in Paris. How about that, huh?"

Then she laughed and there was a rattling sound at the back of her throat. It was awful and it chilled Christine. She grafted her cheek onto her mother's, which was warm. She grazed their cheeks against each other, loving the silken feel. She stayed that way for a while and tried to not think about her new name at all. Instead, she focused on the silence that now filled the room, for the space was now devoid of pomposity or zeal. Then the silence had given way to

its companion: Christine's new name. She accepted it for a cover-up. She accepted the name for a trade-off between having not told her mother and having not, she hoped, to tell anyone else the truth.



Together her daughter's new beginning and her approaching end, both of which were marked by the emergence of an altered physique, stoked Loretta May's mind. They also filled it with fancies, fantasies and fairy tales. Collectively they took turns taming yet taunting her in her sorrowfulness. But she preferred such mind games to her race against death, which, cocksure, beckoned her over.

While the dark cloud of death had already rolled in, she could sense, it did not prevent her from knowing what she, a mother, already knew: a sinister thing had been done to her child. She had perceived that much, and in the nick of time. That lean was no affectation. Christine had acquired it!

All Loretta May's bad thoughts concerning Christine's new gait now dissolved. Better there was no judgment—of right or wrong—when your roll was called up yonder. Wasn't hers? She could feel that it had been. She smiled and surrendered to the charm of Christine's new posture and gait, telling herself that there was nothing sinister about that.

Loretta felt her limbs go as light as feathers. But oh—her infant, her baby daughter—oh how she glowed. How pretty she looked with plumes of incandescent light dancing atop her sweet head. *You are mine. I will always love you. I'll call your name. You are my child. But I still want you to tell me. I still want you to tell me why you walk like that. Tell me.*

Her baby-daughter's face was now hard to see, and Loretta said so. Then she felt a tiny little hand on her breast. The touch reminded her of her overgrown baby's walk. Her daughter's new posture—such a lovely walk—made for a lovely new name.

"*Lean-a,*" Loretta May said with a smile. "Can I call you by that name?"

The baby cooed its answer, which pleased and made the mother

very happy.

After a while, Loretta May closed her eyes, for she had felt herself go free from her own weight in the bed. But there was still that tiny hand. It pressed the side of her face against the infant cheek as if it would mould their faces into one.

Loretta May was now unable to see her daughter for the grown child she was. But as she touched that same child for the last time, she could smell her brand-new scent again. She had not forgotten it since she gave birth. Now here she was, and as an innocent child again, too, Loretta May thought. The moment of reminiscing about baby scent, and replacing letting go with holding on by way of touching her reborn child, an idea which Nicodemus had questioned, was vital. And Loretta May knew that that edible, soft cheek belonged to Christine, not to Leana.



“Must be something I ate,” Loretta May said, looking up at Christine from the sofa, on which she lay. “I’ll be all right. You know that.”

Christine did not. She just did not know anything anymore, except that the Canadian winter was in full swing and except that today was the final day of school. She had spent the entire day thinking, no, plotting rather than feeling exhilarated along with her classmates about the Christmas break. Then while the day dragged on, it got cold and grey until the early evening became nothing but freezing and dark. And while the hours had hollowed the day out, Christine’s thoughts filled that space right back up. She had expected an end to her worries and her fears, but now she realized that it was not the end at all. Not with her sick mother.

Now that Christine had learned that the close of the day did not mean the end of the day, she accepted that she was not a good plotter and that good ideas not only preceded well-laid plans but also indelibly tied themselves to such plans. If any one of her ideas had been feasible—or at the very least supportive of her objective to never ever return home—she would have followed through with it.

Throughout the school day, Christine pined for a plan to escape the feeling that she had made the biggest mistake of her life. The embarrassment caused by her unintentional intrusion upon her parents that morning exploited her fears by a million perceived consequences still flitting in and out of her mind. She knew that hiding away at a friend's would rouse suspicions, which that friend's parents might put to rest with a simple phone call, while the last-ditch plan to sleep in the janitor's closet or a classroom would only isolate her temporarily. It would also be scary and foolish (what about food? she thought), but so were all her other manufactured solutions, which reminded her of what might become of vulnerable girls. She finally accepted that running away was entirely out of the question.

There was not a single feasible plan she could think up except for returning home. When she did, she discovered that her mother had not prepared dinner. Nor was she there. If this was her mother's idea for her punishment, the situation could be far worse than what Christine had perceived.



It was only two hours since she had gotten home from school, but Christine felt as if forever and a day had passed during that time. Her hiding beneath her bedcovers was meant to cut off the entire world, but she now heard her mother moaning in the adjacent bedroom. She was finally home now, Christine thought. She furled deeper under the mass of fabric and covered her ears, but then there were also her own screams in her head. Finally, she unfurled herself and came out of hiding. She was sure to knock.

Her mother opened the door. She held on to the doorframe and with her other hand held a dampened hand towel to her mouth. She suddenly heeled over, but Christine shored her up. They each locked an arm by the crook of their elbows and made their way together into the living room, Christine's panic building all the while. Her mother fell onto the sofa and straightened her body out. She writhed in apparent pain as her eyes rolled back under their lids like a snail recoiling. The whites were so stark that they frightened Christine.

She knelt down on the floor and took her mother's free hand, which was icy cold. She pressed the back of it to the side of her face. The heat from the rest of her body was both magnetic and repellent at the same time.

Christine did not know whether her mother would be all right, or so she wanted to respond to the annoying assumption that she herself knew she would be. She now offered what might help.

"No, hon, I don't want any tea. Just your warm face on my hands."

She took her mother's other hand and now began to vigorously stroke, in turns, the backs and the palms of them both.

"Where's your father?" Her mother's eyes were marble-like. They gazed up at her as if from a dent in her shiny face.

Christine ignored the question. All she knew, he had disappeared right afterwards. Tears stung her eyes again, but still stoic, she refused to let them come.

Her mother propped herself up by her elbows, sweat sprinkling her forehead but rolling down her temples. "I'll be fine. Now would you please stop crying?"

"Please, Mother, lie back down." Christine patted her face with the towel. "You want me to call an ambulance? You don't look good."

"I told you it's just something I ate when I went out with Mother Laird. Wish I never went! I didn't even cook dinner, and look now: I'm sick." She reached out her trembling hand and touched Christine's face.

"I don't care about that!" Christine refused to let go of her mother's other hand. "I don't want to eat anyway."

She insisted on getting rid of the reptilian coldness of the hands.

Just when Christine felt the warmth returning to them, her mother said, "Water. Will you please get me some—water." There was a clicking sound when she swallowed. "I need it cold."

Suddenly Christine got struck. She had neither thought of water nor offered her mother, clearly feverish and parched, any. Her guilt was a sequela of that oversight.

She stood up, but a sharp pain shot into the cavity of her right

side, so she had to kneel back down, the quick-thinking attempt having prevented her from collapsing. She clenched her teeth, which was useless to dull the pain (she thought that biting her lips would be too obvious). Tried as best she could—squeezing, tensing and muscling through it—she found that she could not deny it. Her attempts to endure the pain and subdue and disguise it had all been checked. She doubled over.

She had already joined her mother in pain before startling her into asking what was wrong.

“It’s my period, Mother.”



Loretta May’s death had done an imperfect job of removing and burying things because it did not remove anything from Christine’s mind. Like a river after a storm, death piled up the destruction in the corners of her mind. It also ensured her mother’s ignorance when it keenly slashed, but did not end, the bonds of parent and child. But it had left something unspoken behind out in the open. Death now made those botched bonds merciful in comparison to what was the unspoken.

Christine took comfort in that *unspoken* meant permanently *put away*. As her mother’s body was buried in the cold darkness of the earth, so the truth was buried as well. She hoped, though she did not completely trust that it would remain there, in the dark. She could not afford a resurrection of any kind, whether ghosts or memories. So she was grateful for death. How it bridled her with her own secret.

Finally, Christine became *Leana*, which eventually morphed into *Lena*. In that name was the picture and the keeper of Christine’s grief. By the time her father gave her away and went back to Jamaica, she had already formed the fist-tight seal with herself:

Tell no one.



PART TWO

Finding the Language

You have built yourself over the down-fallen words
that people had to say about you.

—MAXINE MCINTOSH-MCCALLA

Chapter 2

Cooking and Confessions

EVENTS SELDOM RANG CELEBRATION.

They were usually remarkable for perhaps being as dangerous as takeoff or landing, neither of which was comparable with deadheading. This was the truth of Lena's life.

She inhaled. She exhaled. The flight of all flights, her farewell flight. Something kept her from driving out of the airport parking garage just yet; from returning home to the life she had grown used to. As she remembered the encounter with Traci, it occurred to her that there was not going to be any real transition without truth. That realization now brought into focus a near-silent yet pivotal exchange with her husband, Vincent, who was nine years older than she, in their kitchen exactly two weeks ago.

They had both chosen to address with mutual silence what had turned out since then to be an upheaval. She knew all too well that such a response was far more dangerous than landing. Silence could be insulting; she had been renamed by default of it. She gave that default a name: the abuse and obscenity of silence. Since then, she had known that silence was a requirement of keeping secrets. Having taken on her name wholly but not completely obliviously as a girl, and with a good measure of ignorance, she began to understand only recently what she had traded in return for keeping quiet.

Before the end of this past winter, Vincent and she together had made the decision, which was not difficult for them to have made, that it was time to start a family. They had agreed that the kind of parents they wanted to be would not fit in with her constant travelling, so she would now be grounded as a crew trainer.

But Lena was not sure if she should have stopped flying or whether to stop her marriage.

A half hour ago, she had probably gone a little (or much) deeper than she intended to with these words she had written in the notepad for a letter to her mother:

I go up, I come back down. All in a day and a day's work. I suppose that when I do heal (the hope of that is why I'm writing this to you) I'll be back on the ground again. I've been so afraid, but now I'm dying to touch the ground. Not afraid to heal but to go to that place. I'm going to have to sooner or later. Traci reminds me that I must heal, so I must go there. I won't be flying anymore, so we'll see how healing makes its way into my life (hopefully, the way will be roadless like airplanes in flight). Maybe visiting you will be my new way of flying. I've had to settle for too long now for regular visits. But it's time for something different. A different way to go about all this business of me. And him. The scar will always be there.

They left Lena wanting something—something much more than what she had practised and she was now used to over the last decade. This dissatisfaction ebbed her into her memory of her mother's illness and death. That memory was now in sharp focus, for it drew a straight line that connected to the name Lena, which had struck. Silence, the compromise that she now knew that the name required to stick, had hijacked her because she could imagine saying no to it. So she uh-huhed it fast to help her mother go quickly. She hoped that the name would allow her a measure of freedom. But instead, it seemed that the compromise immediately lassoed her. Now here she was feeling hijacked again.

On the day Vincent's and her silence had begun, she was

cooking curried chicken. It was his favourite dish. She had traded in her long-haul flight for a short one so that she would be home in time to prepare the meal before he got home from work. They would do their own cooking right here in the kitchen or the upstairs.

She had heard him arriving, but nothing further. Then turning around, she was taken aback by his stealth. He was leaning by his shoulder against the frame of the doorless entranceway with his two long arms dangling at his sides. His workbag lay on the floor at his crossed ankles. But how long he was standing there for, silently watching her it seemed, was not Lena's contention.

"You don't want to be in this marriage anymore."

She spoke these words with confidence in dichotomy: she feared their implication yet she believed in their accuracy. Then she studied Vincent's face. Talk of Pastor Rockwell suddenly made sense.

She was relieved that she had now figured out what he had been driving at during and since that talk. This relief reminded her of the time when she had been lightened: she realized then that her father had not said a word to anyone about what happened. So she was now confident in her decision to have spoken for Vincent. That was best, as it would now make things easier, simpler. Not again, she had thought right before the words flew out of her mouth. No no no she wasn't going to just stand here in silence or as a hostage of it.

She had already been silenced and held hostage by her name. The result, the effect, of that old but still relevant decision to be silent was an onslaught now. But at least it was a familiar assault:

She felt him all over again pressed up on her. He loomed over her but he was faceless. His grunting and the rattling countertop in the hollowness of the washroom were happening all over again. There are no screams to muffle or to repress, because she feels no pain; she swallows any that tries to defy her strict ban of and control over them. She bites down on her jaws while she squeezes her eyes tight shut.

He had been faceless since then.

But it had been the sounds, really. They almost drove her insane. She thought then that only when something was your fault punishment was meted out. So it did not mean that Daddy didn't love her. The punishment seemed, sometimes, to mean quite the contrary. That conflation, punishment and love, somehow remedied a little girl's pain, for it evened out the violation against her while she had grown into a woman. She now wondered how she was going to even this one out in the here and now. She wondered what her mistake was as that woman. She wondered whether it was serving up the punishment again while standing in front of her right now. It seemed that he still wanted to tell her something. So what was it he didn't want to do? Be with her? Make love with her? What didn't you want to do with her anymore, Vincent? She dared not ask. She dared not hear the answer, either, from his own mouth. She dared not go there.

The best thing that Lena could do was to stop. Stop everything! She turned the stove off, leaned her behind against the kitchen counter and stared dead at Vincent. She still felt confident that she was right, for he still neither validated nor invalidated her statement, which she had made on his behalf.

"Is that so, Vincent?" She was begging without wanting to, which made her even angrier now.

He did not reply, and she felt how the pot of meat looked: halfway done.



Lena admitted that telling herself that she did not want to know the truth was the same as saying that her pot of curried chicken was begging her to finish cooking it. While the pot or the contents could not have cared less, the same was not true for her. She cared a whole lot. Yet if she posed any additional questions, that would be to purely fill space, purchase time or fake deference. She did not want answers right now. She anticipated that those would be too embarrassing, perhaps brutal.

She looked at Vincent, who still stood there looking back at her. He was probably lost in a stupor or was catatonic. She wasn't about

to feel sorry for him, though. He'd chosen to attempt to confess something when instead he could have chosen to enjoy fellatio in between her cooking and his eating her curry chicken. His sudden reticence, which she blamed on his tendency for diplomacy, seemed a sudden recoil rather than the choice to be silent, given that he had something seemingly pivotal—urgent, possibly?—to tell her? But his silence was appropriate for the time being. It was a perfect bookend to the cancellation of his telling, confession or whatever the hell he had meant it to be.

She relaxed a little, let the tension in her body collapse. That helped keep a tight seal on a volcano bubbling inside her. She tried to steady her mind and not think about the next day and the day after that and infinity, but the outcome was tentative at best: she felt like an airplane struggling to climb hot air.

She shot him a deadly look—at least she intended it to be. She supposed that if he stopped fixating on her wedding rings she could overcome this obsessive urge to search his eyes insolently to try to figure out what was *really* going on. But then she would rather not know. Not now.

She tried her hardest to ignore or to look past them, those eyes of his. But she ended up with an imprint in her mind of his tired, good-for-nothing face. It was as if she had never seen him before; his face was practically unrecognizable. She settled for looking at it anyway.

Looking at his face was more tolerable than looking into his eyes.



Vincent left the doorway—untethered from her in this crazy manoeuvre they were still entangled in and finally let her be. Lena held her hand out and looked at the rings. She turned the outer one clock-, counter-clockwise, her third finger harnessed by the two perfect circles. The gentle brush of metal against her skin took her back to that night in the hotel room when he had slipped the first on in bed. She appreciated the simple, meaningful occasion. There was no fanfare, except for their lovemaking afterwards, the

crowning of their matter-of-fact engagement. She felt certain that Vincent could do no wrong thereafter; the way that they loved provided that surety. They had each other's backs.

And he had loved hers. Literally. Her back, now exposed in the apron, would already have made him lose control. He would follow the curve of her lean; let his fingertips graze from the nape of her neck all the way down; let her feel like a queen, his African queen, which he would call her. But he didn't love her spine anymore, did he? And what about her lean or her being his pride? She wouldn't let these pieces of gold become a shitty cover-up now that she wasn't his pride anymore. She had chosen white instead of yellow for heaven's sake! She had been so darned careful and deliberate too. That well-thought-out choice mocked her now. So did this marriage.

She held her hand out. The rings were searing the flesh of her finger. Just listen. They wanted to burn a hole right down to the bone. To burn or not to burn. She twisted them around and around; faster and faster. Just yank the darn things off!

Suddenly she noticed that her finger had turned a shade lighter than the others, as if the melanin (probably the blood, she thought) had seeped away.

Then she realized that she was so distracted by the searing and her chameleon finger that she had forgotten to slip the pair off and drop them both down the kitchen sink. She just might open the kitchen door and toss them across the way as if they were a nickel and a dime, she thought. She just might the way she had tossed her memories away. Or were those merely suspended in the clouds? she wondered, then thought that the rings were comparable to anything but pocket change. In fact, they were purchased bonds, questionable though the owner, she, might have been. These days, her memories were yielding much more results than the bond of the pair.

The correct shade of Lena's ring finger returned, but then it went numb. She repeatedly opened and closed her hand. She now felt like an astronaut on a spacewalk gone wrong. As if she had been catapulted from the anchor, her tethering unfurled. Farther out and away she slipped. Then the gravity of realizing the absence of

gravity left her feeling even more out of control. In the dead-ringing silence of the outer-space kitchen, she was indeed at the mercy of a very deep void.

Lena finally gave in. Still leaning against the kitchen counter, she cried. But since laughing at the same time was more tolerable than crying alone, she laugh-cried. That sound was cacophonous in her head, but it provided both release and relief. It also prevented and contained the volcano, which she would not allow. Not now, she told herself. While she was firm in that decision, she could not contain or prevent her own bitterness. It masked the irony: she had something of her very own both to tell and confess to Vincent.

The thought of her secret shrank her into the defiled twelve-year-old schoolgirl.



Something else had taken off with Lena since she landed, even though she was still firmly on the ground, in the seat of her car. She sat forward and pulled the sun visor down. Her own eyes reminded her of Traci's. She had been crying until she realized that she still was not ready to leave the airport parking garage. Lena thought that whatever had taken off with her had to be the unravelling of her marriage.

How bereft it was for this little while. She searched her eyes for an explanation. Maybe it was not an unravelling after all. A reversal then? Stuck in reverse? That was how both Vincent and she seemed to be now. She flipped the visor back up and sat back. Today, the neat wrapping of time was becoming undone, for the distance that time had created was being erased by pen and paper. She had touched them together, and dared have said something about the years gone by. Her passenger and the upheaval with Vincent both precipitated this outcome, even the words themselves. Now both her secret and her memories, which she believed she had buried, were unearthed. Her memories had burrowed through her mind like a parasite, and all those years now merged with today.

That she had addressed her mother had to be the catalyst for

her suddenly strong sense of dissatisfaction, for the words she had written so far seemed to have resolved her silence into this sudden narrow distance between the present and the past. She felt an urgency to do something that she had not before about that dissatisfaction, her own unhappiness. She could not leave things at just those words. She needed to describe this sense of urgency; she needed to define it by making an account of the past—exactly what had happened.

Some time ago, she had dismissed diarizing as if it was a common, dubious thing. She had labelled the process—itemizing gratitude or seeking reconciliation of one's own thoughts constructively—trite. She had been unable to isolate or focus on any clear intention that might prove diarizing essential, pertinent.

But now here was this fresh prompting to write and define, make an account, which intrigued her. Though fraught with mysteriousness, it seemed to promise an emotional, dramatic catchall. Might diarizing be that viable solution? Might it make for an unfettered accounting, on her own terms? Was diarizing in exchange for catharsis even possible? She wanted to test these waters, unsure though she was about how to start her telling. She wondered what those first words might be about what had happened and whether they would make for a telling or a confession. But what they would not be she needed to find out. The thought of returning home as the same person that she had left it that day—*now* her final flight began to feel like a farewell—was all but inconceivable.

Lena had given herself over to that ever-increasing prompting, so it now awakened her completely. She melted into surrender.

Desire and attempt, one and the same, concurrently aligned themselves with the nervous beating in her throat. They created the current shoring her up to write everything down. She waited for the first complete thought, a spark of memory, to take shape. Kernelled in a quiet purpose, her clear intention made her uneasy. But she would not be dissuaded. She dismissed her uneasiness, thinking that it was, possibly, muted excitement. She could not forgo the thrill to tell now.

Traversing the lined sheet of paper, her hand made firm strokes as though it was in a race against her own thoughts, which were redolent of her past. Lena felt in command of the pen, which began to lead a trail of ink that flowed like blood.

...

1994. December 16 was my last day of school. Today, August 12, 2016, is my last day too. Starting a new job in two weeks. Things were different that morning. When I woke up, I didn't hear you singing. I still remember "Emmanuel Road," the game song you played as a little girl passing heavy stones around in a circle with the risk of smashing your fingers. That morning everything was different.

Thanks to time. But then there are some things that no matter how far I'm flung I can't forget. You didn't wake up before me or for me as you would to make my breakfast, prepare my lunch and preen me to your approval. Not even to even the Vaseline out. When I over-applied it to my face you removed the shine (my skin has lightened over the years).

That was the luxury of your attention, Mother, touching me when I was getting ready on school days, dressed up on Sundays. I never heard you complain that you were tired. I guess you were so dedicated to me, sewing and housework. Even to him. You were a great time manager, Mother. I didn't complain about my share, because you paid attention to me.

But I just didn't want to leave the house without it. So I demanded it. I liked to feel your eyes on my back whenever I was leaving. But I regretted my demand. Not since have I more regretted anything. People shouldn't have any, I guess, but I do.

He was usually gone when I was getting ready. I remember as if it were only yesterday when I found out that I'd been mistaken about our routine—and I guess his as well. And that feeling I got—so indescribable to me then. Maybe when shock and embarrassment are mixed together they make a brand-new feeling. That was what I felt. Then he turned his head and looked right at me. It was as though the oxygen got sucked out of the room and I was left suffocating.

He pretended I wasn't even standing there, so I figured he liked what he was doing to me. Which gave me that brand-new feeling.

...

Lena felt as if that volcano had finally erupted, as if the hot metal poured out of her rather than flowed from the tip of the pen. Her feelings, which spelled the shame of her taboo, charted that molten course. Facets of her repression and her consciousness; her past, present and future all culminated for a nascent appraisal of her shame, which she still avoided and deferred. But it was now accessible, indelible upon the pages. As if the notepad had been smeared with some communicable disease, she stashed it back into the glove compartment.

Then like a child returning to the cupboard to pilfer a forbidden favourite, she snatched it back out:

I've never told anyone before about how I came to lean on my right side. If I did, maybe that would lighten this weight that's been like the dead body I strapped to my own back. At first, your death eased the weight. This ease was strange comfort. Like the comfort I felt when you took away my ability to tell. That's what you did. Now I don't want Vincent to beat me to my own telling with his own. He has something he wants to tell me. I'm pretty sure what it is, which I've even told him. But I can't allow him to say it before I tell him what I must tell him.

Telling you would've resulted in you not renaming me, come to think of it, wouldn't it? Telling definitely would've taken away the mystery of the lean or how I ended up with it. You were onto something after the prayers. You asked why I walked like that, remember? But you really couldn't imagine it at all, Mother.

Telling might've led to gossip. Church gossip. If Mother Laird knew, maybe that would've changed everything. If she had known, maybe she wouldn't have betrayed me. She called me a backslider and some of the worst names I'd ever heard

before. All because she saw Vincent and me kissing.

I doubt that people would've only gossiped, though. They, especially your church sisters, would've been outraged, ready to strike like a nest of vipers. "That dog mistaken for a man!" "You see that girl, the one walking with the lean? Her own 'pa' caused it, and you wouldn't like to know how." That's exactly what they, those Jamaican ladies, would've said. I didn't care much for them. They were too old-fashioned and gossipy. They probably were all another Mother Laird. But still their condemnation might've made a real difference, despite their self-righteous outrage.

Vincent has a confession of his own. I just know it. I can't help thinking that. Whatever it is, it'll be no different than what Reid has done. Probably. Maybe, if there's any difference, it'll be that I lean to the other side. Vincent has never minded it before. He said that it attracted him to me. That it added something. Maybe he meant my nimbleness in the bedroom.

Nimble or not, love or attraction, there is a threat. It's lurking. I can sense it. I can feel it. It might correct my lean altogether or cause the left to compensate. I'm not even sure which would be worse.



On the following day, Saturday morning before noon, Lena had just returned home from visiting her mother's grave and taken issue with particles that had gotten, or always had, the upper hand.

The moment she had entered the house, she noticed that the dirt trekked in on the doormat was all over the foyer as well. Vincent was still at the gym, she thought, so she might as well do some cleaning until he got home. They needed to talk. Curried chicken, she thought. Maybe she would make that while they talked and while he ate.

Suddenly she remembered Vincent's confession—was it not that?—he still had not told her anything. She had been in the middle of doing that exact same thing—cooking for him. Her brilliance, she thought. Even *to think* of cooking that same thing

for him again (so soon) was a devastating affront (this was all too soon). She gave herself a mental smack and stormed off down the passageway, but the affronting thought made her feel as if she had been stung by a bee.

She had dropped her bag on the table in the kitchen, which was next to the laundry room. From out of there she grabbed the vacuum. As she walked back, she noticed something about the living room. She set the vacuum down and dropped the extension hose as if the queen bee had now attacked her, and came into the room.

Dust was everywhere, it seemed, and on everything. It had invaded crevices and corners! The fireplace mantel was just the worst. Lena hated dust. Dust was incorrigible, but that fact had never stopped her before from being compulsive about getting rid of it.

Lena went into the kitchen and reeled off a wad of paper towels and yanked it from the roll. She crushed the sheets together and lightly dampened them at the sink (she cleaned surfaces with warm water or vinegar, not chemicals). She was going to remove the items from the mantel and properly restore it—because it needed to be for Christ's sake! Shit! Something had come over her. She swiped everything off the shelf with the back of her hand. The picture frame, the vase and the priceless figurine of a mother and a daughter crashed into the walls and onto the floor. Pieces flitted across the room like flying fish.

Spent, she pressed her back against the wall and wished that her rage would recede into it. The harder she pressed, the quieter the noise in her head got. She could think again—what had just happened? why the sudden chill? The morning was warm, and the thermostat had not been set to cool.

Surveying the detritus, and itching to use the bleach-white pieces of paper, Lena felt her anger turning into fury.



She forced herself to not think about the figurine, now in smithereens. She had bought it from a gem of the store to which her

friend and neighbour, Claudette, had taken her. Lena picked up a dangerously angled shard of glass, thinking that it had to be from the picture frame. She broke into wiping.

She began to wonder where so much dust had come from. She wouldn't have allowed any surface, crevice or corner to gather as much. She was fastidious about eliminating formation of the annoying but inevitable occurrence. She now refused to accept that dust was elusive, her pursuit of its elimination now as inapt as her name. Lena turned the wad of paper over to the clean side. A red rose petal had formed, but then the rich colour was tainted with the grime of all the dust.

The screaming nerves of Lena's hand snapped her back into her body. She dropped the bloodied paper towels. An object fell ping-pong off the dark wood floor. She raised her forearm. The leaching blood startled her, so she dropped it back to her side.

She remembered that about the same amount had streaked down her inner thighs. She had bent over and inspected her own pudenda to locate the source: broken skin. That was the case again now. She resisted screaming out. She was afraid she would unmute the wails of the defiled twelve-year-old schoolgirl.



Lena held out and looked at her hand, which was still leaching blood. Her whole arm was quivering even as the pain sensors were screaming. She curled her fingers over the incision and cradled her hand on her chest. Then she returned to the kitchen and took her phone out of her bag.

Her unsteady voice seemed to have been enough for Claudette to forgo the doorbell to rap on the door. Lena came and opened it. With her fist over her heart, and her blouse bloodstained, she looked like a bird that had become confused just before it would be a victim of light pollution.

"I don't feel so good."

Claudette reached her hand out and took Lena's by the wrist. She uncurled the fingers.

"Oh dear," she said. "But it only *looks* bad."

"I'd rather lose my hand than my life."

"No such thing!" Claudette had said before she led the way into the kitchen. She opened the tap and told Lena to set her hand under the cold running water. She took a dish towel hanging on the fridge door.

"Maybe I'd rather lose everything."

With every wink of blood, the water had washed the cut clean, leaving a rose-coloured swirl in its wake. Claudette applied the towel for a compress.

"Ouch!"

"Sorry. Just stanching the bleeding. Now, I think a cold drink of water should do you some good."

"I want something hot."

"Cold it is for you, my dear. You've been pretty well warmed up."

"I feel so terrible."

"Then let's cool you down." Lena sat down at the table, and Claudette filled a glass with water from the sink and handed it to her.

While Claudette switched the kettle on, opened and closed the cupboard, set down an empty cup, she hummed a song, which Lena found was comforting. Then she became transfixed by the steam wafting from the lip of the shiny appliance. The water had come to a boil. Claudette settled onto the chair directly across from her.

As the woman brought the steaming cup to her ever-so pursed lips, she said, "Let me take some of this heat for you."



Lena had only one sip of the tap water, which tasted unpleasant, perhaps tainted. She was still watching steam, but from her neighbour's cup. She thought that Claudette's unfashionable glasses lent her face a severe look now. She waited anxiously for what Claudette would have to say.

"It's unsalvageable."

"Don't remind me. And to think that I just got it."

A finger looped through the handle of her cup, which was on the table, Claudette peered over the frame of her glasses. "You can

always replace that, my dear, but you've sliced into your hand."

Thinking of curried chicken and dust, Lena was now embarrassed. "You *really* want to know how?"

Claudette lowered her head a tad.

"I know I'm not crazy. But I feel that I am."

"I know."

"We've been married for eight years, Claudette! Together ten!"

Lena felt her eyes grow small with that same embarrassment that had made her squeeze them tightly in the washroom. Her anger was now only a shimmer, but she turned away from it before it would turn into something grey. Claudette had just confirmed that she needed to get to the bottom of the reason for what she had just carried on with in the adjacent room.

"Do you think I'm man crazy?"

"Whatever do you mean by that? You're a married woman," Claudette said. "That ought to give you some kind of guarantee against going man crazy, whatever that means to you."

"I married him for one guarantee. Could I ask you something else? What does my marriage look like to you?"

"Oh dear. I'm afraid that's not going to help you. Neither the question nor the answer."

Lena began to fidget with the improvised compress.

"We should put something on that and cover it properly."

"I'm sorry to've frightened you."

"I wasn't."

Lena stopped with the compress and looked up at her.

"Why don't you come over in the morning, hmm? You know that drapery and listening are two things I do best." Claudette got up.

"That sewing room brings back so many memories, Claudette."

"Now, come and let me help you clean up that mess." Claudette had paused in the doorway. She put her hand up on the doorframe. "Remember there's no marriage without being present. Otherwise, you lead separate lives."

After Claudette had left, Lena placed herself upstairs in Vincent's and her bedroom. It was almost four thirty, so she

thought he was working out for a long time. She hoped that that was what he really was doing. As a matter of fact, she would be convinced only if he headed straight for the shower.

She was now looking out of the window. The day had turned dark and gloomy. The weather wasn't going to help either, she thought. Since morning, she had been looking and hoping for any signs or encouragement to help her break their impasse. She lay on the bed and turned onto her side and faced the edge with her good hand, her left, under the side of her face. Her right was heavy, her skin cold and clammy. She hovered somewhere between feeling aimlessness and mindlessness, but not thoughtless.

She did not believe that Vincent's suggestion of counselling was altruistic. Not for one minute did she. Between Reid and Mother Laird, abandonment and betrayal had made her ironclad against anyone easily fooling her now.

The two-week time off that she had taken between jobs seemed inadequate now. It was pointless that she tortured herself with the pressures caused by the scarcity of time and an abundance of guilt. She waited and listened for him.

Together they had planned and agreed to become parents after establishing their careers. Things had worked out for them both, she was sure he would agree. But now she had crucial questions about their future together. There was a thud downstairs. She sat up. Time to find out the answers, get on with life. But she had to wait about another fifteen minutes. He walked in and pulled his shirt off over his head. He seemed to be in a hurry for the shower. Running away or hiding from something, Vincent? she almost said. Then she let him have it.



Vincent stood in the doorway of the laundry room and threw his gym bag on the floor in front of the washing machine. He felt as though he had left the gym with weights strapped to his ankles. Nothing more than anxiety, he thought. He had passed Lena's car in the driveway, and he now got this picture in his mind of her ready and waiting for him in their bedroom to accuse him, perhaps,

of something different today. He had even stretched his workout longer than usual, using the time to strengthen his strategy.

He now came into the kitchen. It was here two weeks ago that she had accused him of not wanting to be in this marriage anymore. He opened the fridge. He had kept silent since, neither denying nor confirming anything. He began slapping together a tuna sandwich. That was a long time for her to go without them making love. He could do without the sex himself because of the situation. He had thought he would love to make love when he got home but not if the act was going to only fill the deep void of their recent silence. He had failed to get her to buy into counselling with Pastor Rockwell. He would not settle for containment any longer through his own silence (of course silence was not the best method, he knew, but it had served its purpose). The time had come, it felt right, to figure out exactly what her angle was, which direction she planned for them to move in.

Before the accusation, he had merely suggested the counselling, and before marrying, they had also met with their minister. Their pre-marriage counselling merely touched on her mother and her father. But Lena's and his limited discussions about either of them did not prevent his window-like view on how they still affected her. He suspected that those visits and her sexual aggression, which was regular but not as persistent as going to the grave, were signs of hurt. He loved her prowess, not the aggression to such a degree.

Having understood that that she had lost her mother at a young age was one of the causes of her hurt, Vincent also thought that it explained why she went to the grave: to carry the hurt there. But his question was, Did she ever leave it there? So he was careful to not touch the subject of loss directly or overtly or to not suggest that she stop the unending visits. And what about her father? Her complete refusal to talk about him—except what amounted to a mere reference of his abandonment of her—had to be another (or *the other*) wound. He honestly did not know where to begin where the man was concerned.

Vincent had sat across from her at the kitchen table in the middle of July. He knew he might seem selfish for broaching the

sensitive topic because she had just come off one of her flights, yet he was also concerned about her becoming paranoid or suspicious. He had to get her to see the need for counselling.

He reminded her of their pre-marriage counselling and said, "I'd like us to do a few sessions again."

She reached for her glass of wine, swigged the red and said, "So you're suggesting that we need couples therapy?"

"I think it'd be good for us."

She let the bottom of the glass clunk the glass table.

There was that paranoia, he thought, and that glimmer of suspicion in her eyes. He was all too familiar with what he thought was one of the side effects of her wounds: her silence—her refusal to talk about something with which he had begun to suspect that her mother could very well have been buried. He wondered if there was also something that might be traceable to him as her husband. Vincent had even suggested that she try to reconnect with her aunt or to find her father, even though he would observe that a brush against or a tap on any of those wounds caused her the same discomfort. He was being indirect and covert and he knew that. Skirting around her wounds was as futile as her silence about what or who *really* had caused them.

"There's got to be more to this than what you're letting on, Vincent."

"Well, things may be a lot for you with all the plans we're making."

"That's right—that *we're* making. *Together.*"

"I know, sweetie, but maybe I am overlooking something. I think it's just a really good idea to meet with him again."

By the end of July, Vincent had been attempting to continue that same conversation when she made that accusation in the kitchen. He now thought that the outcome of that attempt could have been a reaction to their plans to start a family or to end her almost daily flying. Maybe he had started (wasn't that all he'd done? he thought) with the wrong words. Since then, he had remained reserved and observant. He did not want to add to the stress of change, so he now sought the best way to restart and finish that

kitchen-table conversation.

Even as he wolfed that sandwich down, he bought himself more time to think. When he had left the gym, he thought that the weather undermined his efforts because it dampened his optimism. Everywhere and everything looked dull. Then as he pulled into the driveway, it was obvious that she had already returned from her graveside visit. And he had just climbed the stairs with those weighted-down feet. Suddenly, he was not sure if he should be relieved that he found her to be the way he had imagined.

She sat up at the top of the bed, both arms folded together across her chest, fingers drumming her elbows. The wide berth of the door impressed upon him that it was an invitation to a war. He, awkward and uncomfortable, felt as though he had allowed her to entrap him. He walked in anyway but he did an about-face.

“Hey.” He was removing his shirt. “How was your visit?”

The torrent that she unleashed on him felt like the force of the shower for which he yearned, beating him down. Her lash, pointed and deliberate, emboldened him almost instantaneously to revoke his own reversal: Vincent decided to match her passion not only with his determination to end the silence but also with his motivation to get to the real reason for the silence.



“You make me sick!”

The tension of her tightly wound words diminished the power of the words themselves, inasmuch as they could not have physically harmed him. He imagined that they bounced off his shirtless chest. He loosened the string of his joggers. Apparently, she had planned this attack. The fabric slinked down to and around his ankles. He could not step out of the pant legs quickly enough; he was suddenly worried that he had allowed their silence to make the situation worse than what he would have calculated.

“I wish you wouldn’t say that.” He removed his underwear.

“That all you have to say for yourself?” She stared directly at his privates.

The underwear was dangling from his bruised fingers, which he

had worked to the bones today. Vincent now felt like a boy, not a man. He caught on to the reason quickly: for the first time, he was uncomfortable being naked in front of his own wife. His nakedness was laced with this grating self-consciousness. "I've a lot more to say, Lena."

"That's not my name. Please use the real one from now on."

That bothered him more than his unusual reaction to his own nudity. Then again, *her* reaction to his nudity bothered him as well, for it seemed that she would ravage him carnally. He stepped behind the door of the en suite bathroom, unhooked his robe and slipped it on. Only after he had loosely, calmly tied the band around his waist did he allow himself to speak again.

"I've known you for ten years. So I know that Lena isn't your real name."

"You seem to have forgotten a lot of things!"

"Like what? Actually, you know what? I get it. You not wanting to do marriage counselling is hard for me to understand—just like the way that you're looking at me right now is hard—"

"Oh, I see. Just you being Vincent. You should be allowed anything you want."

He sighed, tucked his hands into the pockets of the robe. "It's as if you're . . . that Christine girl and I'm up against that goddamn Phantom of the Opera! Like something's stealing you away from me."

"I think I can do without the artistic reference."

Stepping towards the bed, he said, "Christine, listen—"

"Have I done something to you?" she said. "Do you want to leave? You can spare us the—"

"I *don't* want to leave! How's that?" He looked squarely at her from the foot of the bed. He had started with those exact words in the kitchen. Seemed as though *I don't want to* had turned into the longest four words he had ever spoken.

"Fine. Then what did you try to tell me?"

Vincent removed one of his hands. He needed to be exact.

"*You* want us to go to counselling," she said.

"Because I don't want to . . . see you living like this anymore."

So would you please let us meet with Pastor Rockwell? Because here's the problem. The truth as I see it, Christine. There's something going on with you. I don't know, but maybe that has something to do with your father, not so much your mother."

"How did *he* get into this?"

"Well, he *is* your father. You never want to talk about him. Maybe we could start there?"

"Don't, Vincent! You know I don't go there."

"You see, that's the problem right there, but I get it. What he did was like kryptonite to you. You were only a child for Christ's sake. He left you after your mother died for someone else to parent you!" Vincent removed his other hand and closed both his fists. Then he leaned forward and bore his weight down on them into the mattress. "So I get it—he wasn't any good."

"*Was* not? Please, I'm begging you. I can see where this is going, but I'm *not* going there with you!"

"Which leads to the obvious: he's affecting you, isn't he? even though he isn't around. Now, don't take this the wrong way, sweetie, but you visiting your mother's grave so often lately—well, that doesn't seem all right to me either."

"Why're you bringing all of this up now?"

"Because I think we need to talk to someone." He stood up straight. The depression left by his fists rose like bread in an oven. "Because it's dark around us too, and it's not only the weather outside. But as to what's causing the darkness, well, let's just say that I'm taking a shot in the dark at figuring that out myself. Is there something you're not telling me?"

"Okay, you win." Lena grabbed a pillow and crushed it against her stomach.

"It's not that way, Christine. I need you around, and not just sexually. We're about to have children."

She folded and squeezed the pillow against her chest until it tucked right up under her chin. "So this was what you wanted to tell me. It's been how long now?"

"This isn't just about two weeks ago if that's what you're thinking."

“So now I’ve become a problem. My past is never going to change. So go! That’s just in case you need to hear it from me to ease your conscience.” She tossed the pillow aside.

“There’s nothing like that to do with my conscience, Lena—Christine.” Vincent raised his arms and cradled the back of his head in exasperation, his fingers interlocked. “I need for us to do the right thing, work it through.”

The waistband of his robe had become undone, but he didn’t care. He dropped his arms back to his sides.

“I didn’t see any of this coming.” She choked up.

“All right. Okay. I understand.” He approached her.

She put her hand up as if to stop him. “I just need to get a hold of myself, okay?”

“Something happened to your hand?”

“Maybe what happened was I went temporarily insane! I’m pretty convinced I am right about now.”

She moved away to the opposite side of the bed as if she did not want his getting near her. She was acting like a caged bird in a panic.

“Why’re you pulling away?” he said. “Let me see.” He reached across the bed for her hand with a wound-dressing adhesive strip in the palm. He had caught her wrist, but she yanked the hand through his grip. His thumb snagged the strip and dug into her flesh. Lena screamed. Blood appeared in her hand.

The bleeding did confirm that there was something deeper going on with her. It was deceptive, he thought, and so was the gash. It was small and superficial and yet seemed to be smart enough. She began to tear off and gather up the bedcovers with that same hand, beside herself. He could not have been more confused, and he was also frightened for them both.

When Lena knelt at the edge of the bed, Vincent stood dumbfounded.

“Look at this blood!” she said, clutching her bleeding hand by the wrist.

“What’s happening with you?”

“You and him! Both of you’ve ruined me!”

She looked like a helpless little girl. That made him angry.

“Lena, how? Lena, tell me how.” His robe hung by a single shoulder.

Vincent did not think that he was one, but he certainly felt like a failure.

Forthcoming Publication Excerpt (Fiction): Whalseasons

This piece features the main character, Bushnell, walking the desolate streets of Toronto during the pandemic. There is no mention of the silence, the loneliness or the apocalyptic sense that permeates the streets, everything and everywhere. Instead, the narrator paints the quiet streets and the forlornness via a subjective omniscient narrator.

He saw the red eminences in the angle of each eye these days, as if he were looking at a mere leaf and easily noticing their acuminate and mucronate apices. But these were people, the scantily few that popped out of their doors only by necessity the way the buds were predictably popping out to help mend a world with a heart broken by distance. But the cordate leaves would only make the world itself green with envy.

Bushnell, who was numb, was merely trying to do his mind a favour by walking, but his mind's ear could not stop itself from hearing the endless talk of social distance and the constant breaking news of a world where streets, turn-ins, lanes, quarters, shortcuts and even benign alleyways seemed like deleterious thoroughfares. So even walking for the escape was, sadly, pure velleity. But after all, this was 2020, he remembered. Spring did not seem to matter to anyone. Nor did it seem to even care to promise to make a difference. But the situation seemed the contrary for the birds and the wildlife, for they were being spotted wherever, more than ever and giddier than ever.

A squirrel with baleful eyes hopscotched across the road and sped up a spruce across from Bushnell. He fell into a momentary reverie, thinking of freedom and the animal kingdom. Then a cone

Excerpt: Whaleseasons

conked the dark-coloured slats of the metal bench below the branches into which the creature had disappeared. The hollow sound filled up the space of the distance that he could feel everywhere, including in the insalubrious air. There was nowhere to go, he thought. So he turned back around and went straight into his beer garden, where another squirrel, this one sprier and more bushy-tailed than the previous, greeted him in the parterre like a ghoul sent to taunt him.

Bushnell threw an empty Labatt's Blue at it from a boxed pile right beside him. But he stubbed the point of his shoe into the curb stone of the garden. So he swore, but what he really wanted to do was to chase the damned thing along the wooden fence, catch it and rent its body from that busy tail.

Education: Journalistic Integrity

Introduction

While reading this [news article](#), I discovered several grammatical and linguistic inconsistencies that impacted readability, so I simply felt compelled to highlight them as a reminder that journalistic integrity is still important. I have categorized the issues and provided reference sources for educational purposes.

Conciseness and clarity

Analysis

The comparative adjective *quicker* is complemented by the adverbial prepositional phrase *in those who are vaccinated*. Thus, the [hinge element](#), which should in fact be *than*, not *rather than*, is superfluous.

“But you may clear the virus more rapidly if you have good antibody from the vaccine ... and therefore the antigen test may become negative quicker in those who are vaccinated rather than the unvaccinated,” he added.

[Global News](#)

Summary/Revision

But you may clear the virus more rapidly if you have good antibody from the vaccine . . . and therefore the antigen test may become negative quicker in those who are vaccinated ~~rather than the unvaccinated~~.

Logical fallacy in a faulty statement of condition

Analysis

Here, we have a logical fallacy in that it is implied that infectiousness is a consequence of an antigen test. This fallacy is perpetuated when the writer is not adherent to the fact that conditional statements of cause and effect must have a logical [protasis](#) (the cause) that precedes an equally logical [apodosis](#) (consequence).

“If the antigen test is dependent on the amount of virus in your upper respiratory tract, you will still be infectious . . . in the first few days,” said Dr. Earl Rubin, an infectious disease specialist and a division director of pediatric infectious diseases at the Montreal Children’s Hospital.

[Global News](#)

Summary/Revision

If **Because** the antigen test is dependent on the amount of virus in your upper respiratory tract, you will still **have to** be infectious.

Incorrect use of complementizers, i.e., *how*, *whether*

Analysis

A different complementizer (a word that performs a [grammatical function](#)) is required to communicate certain logic, such as the subordinate conjunction *because* instead of the complementizer *how*.

Rubin explains that how quickly a vaccinated person clears the virus doesn't necessarily mean that rapid antigen tests aren't working.

Global News

Rubin adds there's a debate among health experts on whether antigen tests may not be as sensitive to the newer variants of COVID-19, like Omicron.

[Global News](#)

Summary/Revision

Rubin explains that ~~how quickly~~ **because** a vaccinated person clears the virus **quickly** doesn't necessarily mean that rapid antigen tests aren't working.

Rubin adds there's a debate among health experts ~~on whether~~ **that** antigen tests may not be as sensitive to the newer variants of COVID-19, like Omicron. (Note: *May* indicates medium possibility.)

A reduced single-word adjective that results in a logical, or at least a very questionable, noun phrase

Analysis

The question after reading the following is what is a *pooled sensitivity*?

In February 2022, the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table [published findings](#) from an analysis of preprint studies suggesting that the pooled sensitivity of rapid antigen tests for detecting Omicron infections is about 37 per cent, compared to 81 per cent for the Delta variant.

[Global News](#)

Summary/Revision

The answer has been resolved after placing the **key adjective** in a reduced adverb clause instead of a noun phrase with a predicative adjective. Although the grammatical constituent of the adjective is a very heavy noun phrase, the head of which is *findings*, it is now clear what the adjective was intended to modify.

In February 2022, the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table [published findings](#) from an analysis of preprint studies suggesting that the ~~pooled~~ sensitivity of rapid antigen tests for detecting Omicron infections, **when pooled**, is about 37 per cent, compared to 81 per cent for the Delta variant.

Lack of proper clause-compounding that leads to parsing issues, i.e., “garden path” sentences

Analysis

Some sentences cause a reader to become 'lost' or 'tangled' in an incorrect interpretation of the early part of the sentence, meaning that they later have to 're-parse' the sentence, backtracking through the syntax to find a different way of interpreting and coordinating the words. Sentences like these are known as 'Garden Path' sentences. One particularly tricky example is the following...

"The horse raced past the barn fell"

Every year, when I teach this material to Undergraduates at the University of Oxford, about half of the students encountering this sentence for the first time find it very difficult to recover from the garden path, and some can't discover the correct structural interpretation on their own. Here's why it's so difficult, explained according to what we know about online sentence processing, one word at a time.

Supplement created for Language & Cognition, Part 1
Experimental Psychology, Trinity Term 2012. Dr Suzy Styles.

[The “garden path” sentence description](#)

Sly explains that the amount of immunity a person has built up, how much of the virus a person can spread to others and how serious a person’s disease is, are all dependent on the viral load, which is the amount of virus a person has in their system.

[Global News](#)

Summary/Revision

What tells the reader that the above-highlighted section of text is not an [appositive](#) is the word *are*. Up until then, the reader has been sent down a garden path. Hence, the proposition should be recast:

Sly explains that the amount of immunity a person has built up, **that** how much of the virus a person can spread to others and **that** how serious a person’s disease is are all dependent on the viral load, which is the amount of virus a person has in their system.

Logical fallacy

Analysis

You don't have to look far in today's newspaper or online news or listen too long to the news to hear logical fallacies. Our hope is that news reports will present facts and that commentary, where cases are built for or against interpretations of those facts, will be clearly labeled as commentary. Unfortunately, the line between hard news and commentary has become increasingly blurred. All it takes is comparing the coverage of an event by CNN and by Fox News to see that. Any controversial topic brings out flawed logic. The more controversial the issue, the more flawed the logic is likely to be because when emotions get involved, they can outweigh reason. Bias can change the way a story is covered simply because of what is included and what is left out. To be fair, reporting the facts alone of a case often includes a person's stated reasons for his or her actions, and these reasons often include their own faulty logic.

[Macmillan Teaching Community](#)

The following commentary is an example of logical fallacy used to stoke fear. Even though one of the overriding reasons for vaccination is the fact that one could be asymptomatic, **asymptomatic carriers** of the virus is not the current argument for why **"vaccinated Canadians can have COVID-19 symptoms despite testing negative."**

"You don't actually know who's virus-positive who's walking around. It could be the person sitting next to you on the bus. They may be shedding the virus every time they open their mouths . . . and you don't know it," Sly said.

[Global News](#)

Instead, the article itself suggests that a **high vaccine coverage** (which we already know is a fact in Canada) is the reason why:

"This means people who are carriers of the virus may not be getting tested at all because they don't have any symptoms and don't think they have COVID-19; if they do happen to get tested, it's often negative.

[Global News](#)

So why may carriers, who may not even know they are carriers, not be getting tested?

Summary/Revision

Therefore, a less subjective or less biased argument to replace the author's own would be that our antibodies are keeping infection, or the viral protein, in check.

McIntosh, G. G. (2022, September 25). *Journalistic integrity*. Garie McIntosh. Retrieved November 23, 2022, from <https://gariemcintosh.com/2022/04/journalistic-integrity/>

Reflection: How the “Be” Verb Forges a Connection to Spirituality

The “be” verb is powerful.

[Walking](#) due west, he looked up into the sunset. The golden light suffused the clouds on this cold winter’s day. He tucked his hands deeper into the pocket of his jacket. Traffic whizzed by him, but he was oblivious to the sound, so he walked on. As he did, he gazed up at the great big ball of light suspended behind those clouds, peeling them away in his mind with diligent pursuit. He began to think about the force of nature that holds the sun in its own unclaimed space and time, and the planet from upon which he was viewing it.

[Perspective](#) provides a deeper connection.

The earth itself was the catalyst for his experiencing, in that moment, the majesty of knowing that the same force that keeps this gigantic ball in its orbit was no different than the force that keeps the machine that is his body pumping blood throughout, chamber to chamber, extremity to extremity. This machine kept him breathing, allowing him this opportunity to be walking in the direction of this celestial object, as if to meet up with it and rendezvous with it like two loyal old friends. Because, after all, he and the fireball were one. They were connected by source, him and the sun. And then he realized, in that moment, that he had no question about what keeps the earth turning; what maintains its faithful elliptical orbit around the sun. Because he knew (he *had*) the answer.

[What constitutes a connection](#)

It’s a word. A simple word.

In English, our verbs are conjugated, which means that their endings change to maintain grammatically in respect of **number**, **person** and **tense**. Think subject-verb agreement. For example, we would not say *I are happy*. That verb, like all verbs, has a conjugation. Therefore, we say, *I **am** happy*.

There are some other possible **conjugations** wherein we simply *inflect* the ending of the verb in a predictable way, as opposed to changing it entirely (a fact which renders any such conjugation irregular). But regardless of how we conjugate a verb, the word always **morphs** into (it [becomes](#)) another word altogether to reflect the **number** of its subject; whether the subject is a first, second or third **person**; and whether the **tense** is a form of the present or the past. (Note that the present tense and the past tense are the main tenses in English.) *He **laughs**. They **laugh**. Many **laugh**. Both **laugh**. I **laugh**. Either of the boys **laughs**.* (Yes, informally we use a plural verb after *either*, but formality dictates that inflection upholds this indefinite pronoun as a singular word.)

[Other verbs are at the heart of connection.](#)

We have now established a particular norm or regularity in English, namely the conjugation of verbs. But as any speaker of English has not too long after starting to write or speak it realizes, there are exceptions: the **irregular verbs**. So what about those verbs whose complete form and structure instead of their endings (inflections) change to maintain grammaticality? We are back to those irregular verbs, which means that their conjugations are irregular: *Today I **run** a race. Yesterday I **ran** a race. Today I **drink** wine. Yesterday I **drank** wine.* In these examples, you neither *runned* the race* or *drinked* the wine*. You see the pattern. Which now brings us to the verb *is*.

The “be” verb has several forms to forge a connection.

If someone asked you to define the meaning of *is*, could you? You may be able to or you may not, but I will here for the purposes of illustration and this article. According to Merriam-Webster, *is* means *to be*, which means *to subsist* or *to have existence*. The latter is the infinitive form of the word, otherwise known as the uninflected dictionary definition (preceded by *to*), while the former is the inflected form, conjugated for the first person or the singular personal pronoun, the indefinite pronouns (i.e., *it*, *either*, etc.) and the present tense. When *to be* is conjugated, you get *am/are*, *was/were*, and *be/been*, as in *has/have/had been*.

The “be” verb forges communication.

What I hope that had been established so far is the immutable fact that written, and verbal, language is communication. But English is difficult and complex, what with its idioms, syntax and homonyms. As far as communication is concerned, I hope you will agree that it is not limited to the engagement or two-way flow between you and someone else. Indeed, communication extends to that which we invariably hold with or *within* ourselves.

For example, in fiction writing, which I happen to have an affinity for, this internal communication is called **unspoken discourse**, which is an **internally vocalized** thought. You may have come across such thoughts embedded in narration, although marked off from the surrounding text with *italics*. This is a method that the author may choose to employ to draw a reader’s attention to the fact that a thought so expressed is indeed *internal*. (It could also prevent confusion as to who is responsible for the thought. But most importantly, in such contexts, italics tells the reader that a thought belongs to the focalized or point-of-view character.)

The “be” verb and spirituality

I was that point-of-view character introduced at the beginning of this article, and I took the liberty of writing from the third-person point of view. I was watching that sunset. And that answer I had—for I had realized I had no questions—was the word *is*.

I realized that the sun *was* in its position in the sky. In fact, it *was* in its rightful place in the Milky Way Galaxy. It *was* also in its deferential power as a source of light and energy. But it *was* also just there, and by design. Another fact is that the sun *is*. (I have dispensed with the sequence of tenses rule here because the sun *is* and it has been, now and forever.)

Nothing more, nothing less.

The lyrics of a famous 1998 song expresses the sentiment of the “be” verb:

Everything *is* everything

What *is* meant to *be*, *will be*

After winter, must come spring

Change, it comes eventually

—“*Everything Is Everything*” by Lauryn Hill

Journalistic Integrity

Is. Everything *is* everything. *Be.* Let everything *be* everything. That's storytelling. [Storytelling communication](#).

McIntosh, G. G. (2022, May 18). *The "be" verb forges a connection*. Garie McIntosh. Retrieved November 23, 2022, from <https://gariemcintosh.com/2021/02/the-word-be-forges-a-connection/>

Personal Journey about the Outcome of Learning: Something Magical Is on Offer)

The invitation is an offer to elevate you, your message and your modus operandi.

Creating something out of something magical

I wanted to take English and do something magical with it. The terms were how it is used, spoken and written. Out of that desire I have developed [McIntoshLinguistics](#), an educational and grammatical editing business for manuscripts. Interestingly, I created the business and modelled it to meet a personal need that became apparent to me while I studied writing and narratology. Contemporaneously, I wrote and self-published my first novel, [What's in a Name](#). In fact, immediately after completing that process I wrote my second, the soon-to-be-published ["The Perfumed Shroud"](#).

The need

So what was that personal need? It occurred to me that I really did not know how English works, despite being able to speak it well enough. Following that realization something else became apparent: I did not possess the language on a skill level or scale that would invite or elevate thought beyond what I already knew, such as the false beliefs, the biases, etc. So I sought after the skills that would expand reasoning, provide clarity, reveal [fallacies](#), or push me to demystify this remarkably complex yet exceedingly powerful language. I needed to see to the fulfillment of all the foregoing. In fact, Molly Stern, the editor of Michelle Obama's book, *Becoming*, said it perfectly: ["What I really wanted to do was \[to\] tend to my own obsessions and figure out how to do it independently."](#)

When do you say you know enough?

Now here I am just over six years into the process of attending to my obsession. The beloved [Dr. Maya Angelou](#) once said that one ought not to say that he/she knows enough. You may know a lot, she suggested, but how do you know when you know enough in the context of education, of your participation in life, this present reality?

I agree with Dr. Angelou. I have gathered, studied and meditated on a lot of subjects and ideas afforded me via English, rather, my continued process of demystifying the language. This fact has now led me to the purpose of this piece that you are now reading: a reckoning of the magnitude of English and to what it, in my pursuit to possess language to increase knowledge, has led me.

The realms of English

I have traversed the realms of English that now allow me to understand **verb phenomena, morphology, modality, verb forms, aspect, tense, inflection and conjugation, primary tense, the preterite, the infinitive**. And these cover topics containing verbs alone. Also, I have been keen to focus on various topics that allow me to create trenchant writing. Such topics include **nominal clauses, complement clauses and relative clauses**. I have discovered that studying the linguistic aspect of English increases conciseness and [monosemy](#), which is a linguistic property.

Personal Journey

What is pure knowledge?

What is most interesting about this journey that I embarked on as a function of fulfilling my own desire to find my life's purpose through writing is that I have realized that to write is to demonstrate pure knowledge. (The beloved author [Toni Morrison](#) also once said that writing is pure knowledge.) And the path to that knowledge is education, of course. Although not every writer is required or inclined to study the technicalities and/or the nuances of English, I found that for me to write and maintain an unadulterated level of control over the narrative, the art itself and even the message is to study every aspect of the singular tool available to me: the language itself.

Painting a picture of knowledge

But I have struggled to paint a realistic, accurate picture of the wealth of knowledge that I have gained in just over six years. However, I now realize that I did not need to struggle, because the answer has always been in this concept: learned ignorance. This is the result when "[people make their own ignorance the object \[the thing acted upon\] of their desire for knowledge.](#)"

The struggle or the hurdle

However, I find that it is a struggle, or perhaps it is merely a hurdle, when I speak to others about one of my truths: similar to Michelle Obama's book editor, Molly Stern, [speaking about starting her own publishing firm](#), I too feel that I have "tend[ed] to my own obsessions," which means that I applied myself to learning English academically. But the truth is that I also independently learned to write. People usually react with some level of incredulity; however, being an autodidact is an aptitude that I long discovered I had.

Meritocracy

So I have earned what I pursued, which is the learning and understanding of the English language both grammatically and linguistically. I see this as a form of meritocracy, my demonstrating my own abilities. As a result, I seek to gain success, authority as an expert, and influence based on my demonstrated abilities and merit.

Success

Respected MIT Professor Patrick Winston said that "[Your success in life will be determined largely by your ability to speak, your ability to write, and the quality of your ideas, in that order.](#)" I believe that it is the truth in or of this statement that exploited my own desire for success and also my desire to be great at something.

Systems

That desire then compelled me to create both a professional mindset and a growth mindset. The former is necessary because having a [system to achieve your goals](#) matters. And the latter is concomitant because you have to create a [reward system](#) to prevent burnout. That is an ever-present danger in the pursuit to possess the skill of using a language like English on an ambitious level or scale.

Personal Journey

Sharing and elevating others through what I have learned

I want to take this opportunity to say that I am looking for what I said about English at the beginning of this: something magical. That quality would be for me to be able to share and elevate others through what I have learned, including a [heuristic technique and approach](#) to learning English academically and a [process-method](#) to editing, both of which I have developed to create trenchant writing.

An invitation

I now invite you, whether as an individual, or an entity or organization to allow me to show you the potential that is inherent in elevating you, your message and your modus operandi.

McIntosh, G. G. (2022, October 23). *Something magical is on offer*. Garie McIntosh. Retrieved November 23, 2022, from <https://gariemcintosh.com/2022/06/something-magical-is-on-offer/>