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TANYA'S NEWSLETTER

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JUST LISA: Origins

Dear Friends, I am very excited to announce that I recently completed my first novel *Just Lisa!* After two years and five drafts, I am now submitting query letters to agents in the hope that one of them will be interested in helping me hook a top publisher. Which also means, I finally have time to write this first quarterly newsletter to fill you in on my journey these past two years. Be sure to check out my website which has been updated with lots of new photos and blogs:

www.tanyaswriting.com.

I know many of you were expecting a sprawling historical novel based on my mother's life from WW2 Germany through the US women's movement in the 1970's. In 2023, I visited my German relatives to gather research. I conducted over a dozen interviews, toured sites, and took loads of photographs. The resulting novel outline looked impressive, but after months of writing, I couldn't find my mother's voice. Then Lisa popped into my head.

It was January of 2024. I felt burned out and wrote a short piece based on an old friend of mine which eventually became the second chapter of *Just Lisa*. As the voice of the main character grew stronger, I applied the problems that several members of my writing group were having as they reluctantly placed their parents in nursing homes or assisted living facilities. In the research for my historical novel, I had spent a lot of time with elderly individuals, and one of my main characters was a close friend of my mother who had recently moved to a retired living facility in Wisconsin. There were problems: questions about finances, Medicaid, and the level of caregiving provided. These became the external conflict for my new novel.

Just Lisa (83,000 words) is an upmarket comedy-drama. Imagine *A Man Called Ove* meets *Bridget Jones*. As a twenty-four-year-old certified nursing assistant, Lisa prefers to play charades with residents rather than take their blood pressure, but when the Lindstrom for-profit conglomerate takes over the assisted living facility where she works in rural Wisconsin, Lisa must step up her game to protect her beloved "fossils."

Lisa is stuck renting her adoptive parents' over-priced garage, but she's finally found her niche as

the offbeat troubleshooter at Happy Daffodils. Since her last boyfriend dumped her, she spends her free time holding extra-curriculars for residents. But now Courtney Lindstrom is changing everything—from emptying the lounge where Lisa holds classes to shorting staff. And Lisa's handsome new coworker, Chuck, is only complicating matters with his strange pursuit of the afterlife. Between Mr. Wigham's growing fascination with fire, Munchkin Mary being haunted by Geraldine's shoes, and Mrs. Thornton holding a seance to impress Chuck, Lisa can barely keep up with the new twelve-hour shifts, let alone detour Mr. Lewinski, the Jewish baker, from breaking down the laundry room door every time he thinks he's forgotten to deliver the bagels. Fortunately, Lisa has her own personal Yoda from New Jersey, her Tai Chi teacher, Marge, who inspires her to stand up to her adoptive parents, confront Wicked Witch Lindstrom, and deal with deeper issues surrounding death, all amidst the shenanigans conjured by Happy Daffy's wily residents.

It was incredibly fun to write, especially with my cheerleaders! Thanks to my TLT writer's group and my good friends *Margaret Savoy* in *California* and *Monica Mageland* in *Wisconsin*, all of whom helped me with research (including their personal stories) and critiqued my early drafts. I wouldn't have made it this far without you!

My next step is OUTREACH: I need a solid social media platform to attract a top agent. You can help! Please ask your reader friends to subscribe to my quarterly newsletter on www.tanyaswriting.com. I would love to hear about your connections to local book clubs, libraries, and podcasts. Also, please "Like" my blogs and follow me on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)! I hope you enjoy your spring and the rest of this newsletter!

Big hug, Tanya

TASTE LIFE TWICE WRITERS:

Mary Clements Fisher, Cupertino, California
Suzanne Cottrell, Oxford, North Carolina
Wendy A. Miller, Oregon
Akira Odani, St. Augustine, Florida
Annette L. Brown, Atwater, California
Cris Aboobaker, Forest Hills, New York



AGING GRACEFULLY: The Four Dangers

Maybe you don't *want* to live to be more than one hundred years old, but wouldn't it be nice to feel healthy and comfortable until the day you die?

Why do people die? Usually, we die from a deadly accident or a chronic disease. Some seniors are quite healthy, then they get an intense case of influenza and they die. Or, they fall and break a hip or an arm from which they should recover, but they die shortly afterwards. Why?

Traditional Chinese Medicine has an explanation for this. When you are born, you have reserves of energy (see my blog under [AGING GRACEFULLY Blog 1: Jing, Qi, and Shen](#)) that will

keep you alive for days even without water or food. We all know that, as an adult, you can go for many days without food and a couple days without water because your body will consume itself; it will erode fat, muscles, and bones to furnish the energy needed to survive. One's internal substance provides fuel. Seniors often have less of these reserves, and an illness or injury can consume the last of their energy.

Imagine you are born with an internal candle. As soon as you leave your mother's body at birth, that candle is lit. If you work hard and expend lots of energy, then the flame burns the candle down quickly. If you party at night, smoke, drink alcohol, have too much sex, don't get enough sleep, then we have the saying "you are burning the candle at both ends."

However, if you eat healthy food, get enough rest, drink clean water, breathe clean air, this burns the candle more slowly. Maybe it even adds a little bit of wax, but not enough to keep the candle the same size. You will age more slowly, but you still will age. In order to replace most of the energy you expend in one day, you need energy exercises. Mind-body harmony that plugs into the universal life force and allows you to recharge better than just eating well and getting a good night's sleep. Qigong and Yoga are examples of mind-body exercises that can grow your internal candle. You can watch my free [Medical Qigong video here](#).

Besides rejuvenating exercises, there are ways we can slow the aging process to optimize our internal candle.

What does it mean to age physically?

According to Chinese Medicine, these are the six factors that cause aging: Qi Deficiency, Blood Deficiency, Yang Deficiency, Yin Deficiency, Stagnation of Qi, and Stagnation of Blood.

Each of these problems is related to specific organs in our body, and certain lifestyle habits that damage those organs. Our bodies are much more than machines with parts. But imagine what a car would be like if you drove it eight to twelve hours a day, seven days a week, for over sixty-five years. Fortunately, our bodies have ways of repairing some problems. But our internal organs, as well as our bones, muscles, and ligaments, still suffer from use and abuse. In my upcoming quarterly newsletters, I will address each of these six factors that contribute to aging and provide tips for slowing the aging process.



In this article, I want to begin with another famous grouping:

The Four Dangers:

- Too much lying down damages the Qi. (stagnates the Qi)
- Too much standing damages the bones. (consumes Jing)
- Too much walking damages the ligaments. (consumes Yin and Blood)
- Too much staring damages the blood. (stagnates the blood)

Health is all about the proper balance. Let's begin with the first danger:

Too much lying down damages the Qi.

Normally, we lie down when we feel tired. A good night's sleep revives us. But what if we lie down for too long? Remember that feeling you have after an international flight during which you could hardly move? Movement is life. Without it, body processes stagnate at the cellular level. (I think this was the problem during the Covid crisis when people were put into a false coma.)

A student once told me she slept ten hours a night, but awoke feeling even more tired. That was because she was sleeping *too* long. Top athletes like Roger Federer can require ten hours of sleep, but the average person needs eight hours. Sleeping from 10pm to 6am is the best (more is blood produced during pre-midnight sleep, see the upcoming newsletter about Blood Deficiency). You **MUST** get a minimum of eight hours of sleep to age gracefully.

But, if you lie flat for too long, you **LOSE** energy, like a lake that stagnates into a swamp. If I lie down to watch TV for two to three hours before going to sleep, I must walk or do some Qigong afterwards to get my blood circulating before I crawl into bed.

Cheng Man Ch'ing, a famous Tai Chi instructor, suggested that one practice the Tai Chi form every morning as soon as one's feet hit the floor when getting out of bed, and again just before one's feet left the floor when climbing into bed in the evening.

Too much lying down stagnates the Qi. As a person with Chronic Lyme disease I often feel very tired. But if I go for a walk, I feel better. I need to rest, then move, then rest, then move.

Tip for slower aging: *Get eight hours of sleep a night. Go to bed early: 9:30 or 10pm is best. But don't sleep too long, or remain sitting or lying down for hours during the day. Regular movement enhances energy.*

I go for a short walk and practice Tai Chi as soon as I get up in the morning. During the day, I alternate rest and exercise. It is important to keep your blood flowing, but don't waste your energy. If you are sweating, you are losing energy! More about that when we discuss Yin Deficiency in a future newsletter.

The second danger: Too much walking damages the bones.

To **BUILD** bone, you need weight-bearing exercises such as walking or Qigong. Although swimming is a good cardio-vascular exercise that is easy on your joints, it doesn't build bone. Bone density improves the more you walk. Walking is low impact.

But people who spend *too much time* on their feet often suffer from deteriorated discs and other joint problems. If their job involves standing at a cash register or working over a sink, this can damage their bones. The bones are one of the ways we store our Jing Essence, or vitality. So, try not to stand for hours. If you must, take lots of breaks. Even though it involves some movement, don't spend hours on your feet when shopping.

Tip for slower aging: *Be sure you are getting enough weight bearing exercise as well as Calcium, Vitamin D, Vitamin K, and Boron, which are all needed for good teeth and bones and can help prevent osteoporosis. Glucosamine sulfate and chondroitin sulfate supplements are also good for maintaining spinal discs. But don't stand for more than ten minutes. Instead, shift your weight, walk, and stretch your spine.*

The third danger: Too much walking damages the ligaments.

A daily fifteen-minute walk, preferably uphill to raise the heart rate, is ideal. A Netflix series discovered “blue spots” where most of the inhabitants reached the age of 100 or more. These locations were all found on slopes, like where I live in Semione, Switzerland. People living in such areas walk up and downhill daily. Such exercise keeps one’s circulatory system fit.

But walking too far, too often, consumes too much blood. Like oil in an engine. If you walk too far you dry out your tendons and ligaments and they become less flexible. Flexibility is necessary to prevent falls. In India, there is a saying that you are only as young as your spine is flexible. This flexibility is not only healthy for the spine, but also prevents injuries. If you fall, or perform an unexpected movement, your body will react better if your ligaments are supple. This is the main reason that I practice yoga daily.

I recommend taking a LONG walk (one to two hours) once a week. Remember how the old folks would take long Sunday walks? Here in Switzerland, they walked from village to village after they went to church.

Tip for slower aging: *Walk uphill for 15 minutes daily. Go easy on your joints when walking back down. Once a week, take a longer stroll (1-2 hours, not uphill). But do not take long, strenuous walks every day. After age forty, one should do thirty minutes of yoga or stretching every day.*

The fourth danger: Too much staring damages the blood.

Aging often involves a reduction in one’s vision. Why? Problems such as senile cataract, macular degeneration, and glaucoma occur when the eye does not get enough yin and blood. The liver filters the blood and, according to Chinese Medicine, is connected to eye function.

So, first off, good eyesight requires enough yin (fluid) and blood. Besides needing adequate supplies, there should be no blockages. *A blockage can be triggered by too much staring.* Often, we overwork our eyes.

Your eye muscles relax when your gaze rests at around six meters distance. Focusing on anything closer is like carrying heavy suitcases. After 45 minutes of reading or staring at a computer, you should get up and move around. Set an alarm! When it rings, wash your arms with cold water from the elbow to your hands to rebalance your energy field after contact with a computer, then cup your hands over your eyes to rest them in darkness for at least two full minutes. Best is a walk outside in the fresh air for ten minutes while looking in the distance. This will relax your eye muscles so that blockages can be avoided.

But first you must have enough fluids (yin) and blood to fill your eyes. If you don’t have enough fluids and blood, it is like a river that doesn’t have enough water. The river doesn’t flow, but stagnates here and there.



What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

How to know if you have enough fluids? If your eyes water too easily when it is windy, that is a sign of liver yin deficiency. What to do? Drink more water. Avoid coffee and alcohol. Reduce stress. Dry skin, dry hair, and brittle nails can indicate a blood deficiency. Eat green vegetables and go to bed early to nourish your blood.

Tired eyes are when you have consumed your Kidney Essence (Jing) for the day. You need to rest! Vision problems along with dizziness and headache means not enough Liver Blood to cool the eyes, like when a strong wind whips leaves around (dizziness) and air pressure changes with the weather (headache).

Tip for slower aging: *Don't overstrain the eyes by reading or watching TV longer than 45 minutes. Do daily neck massage and neck exercises to improve the blood flow to the head and sensory organs such as the eyes and ears. Massage the eyebrows and around the eyes daily, and perform daily eye exercises. For details, see my free YouTube video [Medical Qigong](#).*

So those are the four legendary dangers in Chinese Medicine. More on aging gracefully in upcoming newsletters!



Kay's Corner A Dog's Life



Forget Joe Cool...Border Collies Rule!

Hi, I'm Kay, the coolest dog ever. I tried to convince Boss-Lady (aka Mommy) that this newsletter should be all about me, but she only agreed to let me have a few lines along with a picture or two. What can I say, it's a dog's life. I may be eleven years old this month, but (as you can see) I haven't lost it. If you want to view my amazing display of dexterity along with ingenious tricks, keep an eye out for my reels on [Instagram](#).

DAILY ACTIVIST: Save a Tree

Have you always dreamed of being an Eco-Warrior? Sailing the oceans to save the whales or chaining yourself to a tree in an old-growth forest? Truth is, you can make a difference every day without leaving your own yard. And if all of us become “home activists” we have a real chance at saving this amazing planet.

Today I want to talk about paper. When I began writing *Just Lisa*, I promised myself I would strive to make it worth the pulp it would be printed on. I’m aware that thousands of trees will give their lives to provide the materials for my book (one tree for every 20 to 30 books!). And yet, I am



one of those traditionalists who much prefers holding an actual hardcover in my hand, turning pages instead of scrolling on a screen. I plan to compensate by spending a portion of my earnings on planting trees. (See my blog under [DAILY ACTIVIST: Plant a Tree & Avoid Hoaxes.](#))

I love books, and I will continue to buy them. But I often opt to purchase USED books. Not only are they cheaper, but they help save a tree. If you are close to a library, all the better!

Save a tree: BUY USED BOOKS OR BORROW THEM

At home, I’m always thinking about ways to reduce my use of paper. Growing up in the seventies, we wasted so much! Our household went through a roll of paper towels once a week! That killed a tree every two years. With eight billion people on the planet, where would that leave us if every family did that? And, for what? To wipe up something that could be cleaned with a moist rag? I still use paper towels, but I buy the recycled kind. Here in Europe, they are perforated in half-sheets, not the big sheets I remember from the US. I use one of those half-sheets to wipe the oil from my frying pan before washing it. That way, I save on soap...which will be my next article. That’s the only thing for which I use paper towels. My dishwasher rag handles anything on countertops, and I have a separate rag for the floor. Easy-peasy. I use old handkerchiefs as cloth napkins during my daily meals. If I’m not too messy, one lasts me several days. That way, I use only ONE roll of paper towels per year.



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

Save a tree: USE FEWER PAPER TOWELS

Speaking of handkerchiefs, why on Earth do we need Kleenex? My father insisted on having a box of Kleenex in every room. My mother bought the decorative kind with those irresistible pretty designs. Not only does one ton of tissue kill seventeen trees, but its production requires 20,000 gallons of water. Just to blow your nose? Come on.

In the old days, men carried a handkerchief in their back pocket, and women carried one up their sleeve just inside the wrist. Six months of the year, I wear a light jacket or sweater around the house, and I always have a handkerchief stuffed in the pocket. When I do the wash once a week, I exchange them out for fresh ones as needed. In the summer, I have a handkerchief waiting in every room, stuck in a quiet corner within easy reach. I have one single box of Kleenex handy for my guests. I've lived here over two years now, and it is still full.

Save a tree: USE A HANDKERCHIEF

Toilet paper...uhum...is a rather private matter. Let's just say, it may take a lot less than you think to achieve satisfying results. Just be conscious of your consumption. Old habits die hard, but once you make an effort, you can easily reduce your use of TP. And be sure to buy the recycled kind. I'm sure your butt won't mind.



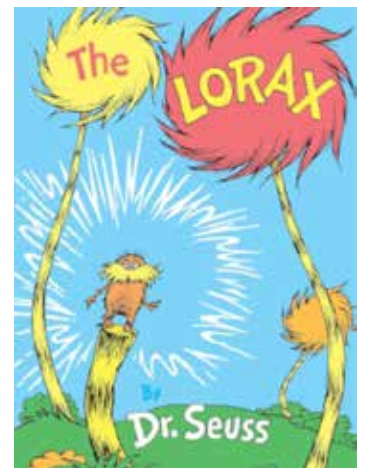
It's easy nowadays to recycle paper and cardboard. I have a drawer in my kitchen with a bin for paper, so I just throw every single scrap in there. Recycling goes without saying. You can buy recycled envelopes, recycled paper. But more importantly, I try not to USE so much paper. I really think about whether or not I need to print something out. If I do, I reuse whatever I can, employing the backside for notes, lists, my daily agenda. I stopped buying those silly Post-it notes long ago. I save any envelopes I receive in the mail and toss them in a drawer to use as notepaper. I also try to do more on my computer.

Save a tree: REUSE, RECYCLE EVERYTHING POSSIBLE, AND BUY RECYCLED

I'm so happy to see that most cars contain reusable grocery bags these days. Imagine if the grocery store did not provide ANY bags! I remember when plastic bags came out, and we chose plastic in order to save a tree. Now we're swimming in plastic, strangling dolphins and tortoises, polluting beaches all over the world. How hard is it to bring our own reusable bags? In the past six years since I moved from my permaculture farm, I have purchased ONE paper bag. I still use it, along with cloth bags I've gathered over the years. And I don't use any of those little plastic bags for veggies or fruit. I just put the broccoli, carrots, and apples directly in my big grocery bag and wash the food when I get home.

Save a tree: BRING YOUR OWN BAGS

Remember the Lorax who spoke for the trees in that Dr. Seuss book back in the seventies? Old-growth forests are dwindling rapidly due to logging, climate-induced fires, and agriculture. We've lost over a third of them in the past 100 years! These forests take thousands of years to form and are essential for storing massive amounts of carbon. Their loss contributes significantly to climate change. If I use less toilet paper, it may not directly save those old growth forests. But I believe there is a universal consciousness that listens to our smaller actions. As my mother use to say: The macrocosm is based on the microcosm. I believe we can each make a difference every day. The trees, and the diverse array of species dependent on them, thank you.

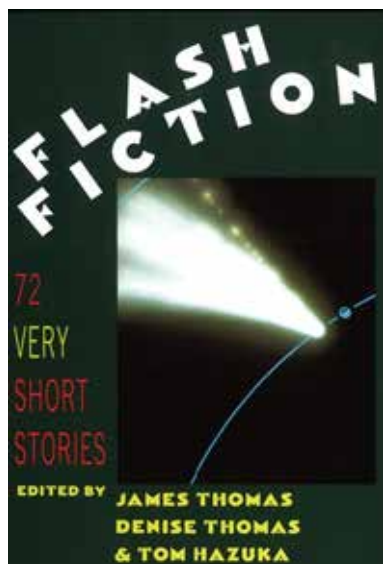


WRITING TIPS: Flash Fiction

Are you a fiction writer? Or maybe dreaming of becoming one? Check out my website for [blogs written for aspiring fiction writers](#):

- Am I a Writer?
- What to Read
- How to Read like a Writer...and more coming soon.

Writing takes a lot of practice, and one of the best ways to exercise your creative muscles is by writing Flash Fiction or poetry. With short pieces, you can more easily maintain an overview, and they require less time. That makes it less painful to throw your words into the Trash file, and teaches you not to cling to something that just isn't working.



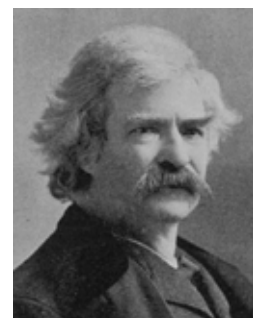
Consider it exercising, like going to the gym or taking a walk. Free-writing is very important to becoming a successful writer. I do it often. Most of it ends up in the bin on the lower right corner of my computer screen. Some of it—a quirky metaphor or interesting theme—I toss into my “Lint” file for future reference. (Personal secret: I never get around to looking at my lint file! But it is a security blanket that helps me let go of Mom’s hand. Meanwhile, those lost phrases are snuggling down in my subconscious, working magic.)

A “flash” is between 500 to 1500 words (depending on what the literary journal is looking for). Like ancient parables, they are brief stories from everyday life that are meant to convey a universal truth. That big insight usually comes near the end of the piece, hitting the reader like a flash of lightning.

Poets often do this. For example, Robert Frost’s *Reluctance* takes us on a brief journey through setting, with nice rhythm and rhyme, then hits us with that last stanza. Sure, the first three stanzas are loaded with lovely description that sets

a specific tone, and his rhyming is beautiful, even if it has gone out of fashion. But when you read those final six words, the whole poem opens up into greater meaning. We think back to what we’ve read and see it in a different light. Therein lies that “flash” of human connection we are going for as writers. *Ozymandias* by Shelley is another prime example.

Mark Twain’s *Two Ways of Seeing a River* is an excerpt from a larger piece that is often presented alone. We understand what he means in the first two sections, but it is the end of the final paragraph, when he pities the doctor, that his commentary lifts the reader to a higher vantage point. Those sentences are the “flash.” Twain’s excerpt is an example of how longer pieces can offer several scattered nuggets of truth that raise a short story or novel’s value. Writing flash fiction is an investment in your future as a writer.



Justin Torres wrote a fantastic op-ed, *In Praise of Latin Night at the Queer Club*, that works like flash NON-fiction. He wrote it after a bombing, but his commentary raises the reader above the politics, especially at the end. I tried to imitate Torres in my creative non-fiction flash *An Invitation to the Apple Harvest*. Although not as powerful as Justin’s op-ed, my intention was to transport the reader. My slice of life piece *Feline Education*, although it may be interesting, unfortunately lacks that final stroke of insight. Ah well, can’t win ‘em all.

If you need a little guidance or the support of a group, attend a Flash Fiction Workshop offered through [Authors Publish](#). They cost around 400 dollars and span several weeks. I took a class with Ella Peary back in 2020, and it helped me to focus my writing. Since then, I've hired Ella to professionally edit several of my short stories. She is compassionate and highly skilled.



Really short fiction is often called “micro” fiction (250 to 500 words). And some journals have word limits as short as twenty-five or fifty words. Hemingway’s legendary six-word story holds a flash in the last two words: *For sale: baby shoes, never worn*. However short your piece is, try to connect to the reader’s heart. Whether you make them laugh, cry, or think, it is that FLASH moment that makes your words more than a lyrical or informative description.

My favorite flashes include Grace Paley’s [Wants](#) and Margaret Atwood’s [Our Cat Goes to Heaven](#). You can find more free examples of flash fiction here:

- [Smokelong](#) tends towards moody, dark flash fiction. Very literary: 1000 words.
- [Flash Fiction Magazine](#) wants 300 to 1000 w of commercial / literary fiction.
- [Flash Fiction Online](#) asks for 500 to 1000 words of speculative literary fiction.

Also, check out [Wigleaf](#) and [Fractured Lit](#), but for all of the flash journals mentioned here, the competition is fierce. You will be up against seasoned pros. So don’t be disappointed if your first fifty pieces are rejected. Daunting, I know. But worth the \$150 in submission fees. You are growing your craft. See my blogs for more on submitting to journals.



GOING VEGAN: Wild Garlic Pesto

Every spring, when the ground begins to warm in March, I keep my eye out for the first shoots of wild garlic. After those winter months void of my own garden veggies, I long for fresh greens. As soon as bishop’s weed and nettles appear in my backyard, I go to the local outdoor hotspots known for wild garlic to see how the pointy leaves are progressing.

It’s best to pick wild garlic before it flowers. Young leaves are the most flavorful, while older leaves grow tough and bitter, especially after the plant has bloomed. I harvest only small amounts from each patch, using a scissors so as not to destroy the roots and to ensure a good harvest the following year. Always test the leaves—when crushed, they should smell like onions or garlic—to avoid toxic look-alikes such as Lily of the Valley.



As the right level of growth draws near, I wait for a good rain. That way the leaves I pick—far from trodden paths—are freshly washed and require no further rinsing. I prefer not to use a blender, but cut stacks of leaves very finely by hand. I sterilize glass jars with boiling water, let them air dry, then fill them with a layer of chopped leaves followed by a sprinkle of salt, then cover those with organic olive oil. Then I add a second layer, just the same, and a third. I leave some space at the top of the jar for a little air. Also, I use a sterile fork to poke down into the glass, releasing any air bubbles. The pesto tastes best after three to six weeks, and makes a great gift for friends.

Simply cook up your whole grain noodles of choice, add the pesto according to taste, and stir. I top off my plate with a handful of locally grown organic walnuts to get enough protein. Mmmm...a great vegan dish! I know it will be April already when you read this, so probably too late in the season. But keep this in mind for next year!

LIVING WITH LYME: What is P.O.T.S?

I long considered whether or not to include this section in my newsletter. I'm afraid the announcement that I have Chronic Lyme disease may detract from my image as a competent writer while I look for an agent and publisher. Let me say this: people who face any chronic disease head-on and find ways to optimize their health and their potential, those people are fighters. They are required by fate to be optimists. To become a successful writer in today's competitive world requires discipline, organization, and dedication—all things my Lyme disease has reinforced. I live an active, rewarding life, and I am very motivated to continue to do so while I build a career as a writer. So here goes: I have Chronic Lyme Disease. I hope to someday overcome it.

Let's back up a minute. *What is Chronic Lyme disease?*

Chronic Lyme disease is a non-medical term used to describe persistent symptoms—such as fatigue, pain, and cognitive issues—lasting months or years, attributed to an ongoing *Borrelia burgdorferi* infection, usually due to a (lengthy) tick bite. Mainstream medicine prefers the term Post-Treatment Lyme Disease Syndrome (PTLDS), but my symptoms occurred months after a tick bite and before I was tested or treated for Lyme.



In the summer of 2015, while living on my permaculture farm near Bern, Switzerland, I was bitten on the waist by a tick. We had deer (known for ticks) in the thick forest surrounding our home, and the area was full of insects. By the time I noticed it, the tick was fully swollen (which means a blood exchange with its host had occurred). I didn't know that in the wilderness area where we lived, over 50% of the ticks carried the *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacteria. Still, being a Doctor of Oriental Medicine, I watched for an acute reaction, but when there was no red circle around the area and I felt no flu-like symptoms, I discarded my worries about contracting Lyme. About four months later, I was hit with what I now know as POTS: Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome—a series of symptoms (listed

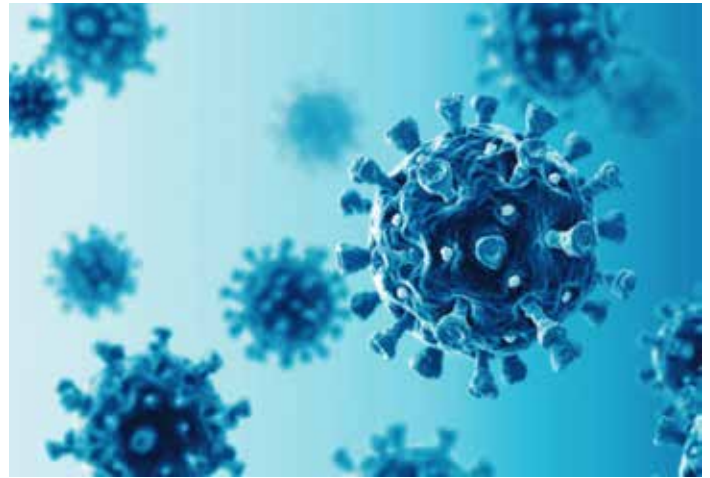
in the diagram below) often found in post-infection, chronic diseases. Even though I don't recall having a serious infection following the tick bite.

POTS is the reason I am writing this article. I only heard about it last year. Suddenly, my strange combination of symptoms due to Lyme made sense. I'm hoping that learning about POTS may help someone else with Chronic Lyme understand what they are experiencing, because it can be a little scary.

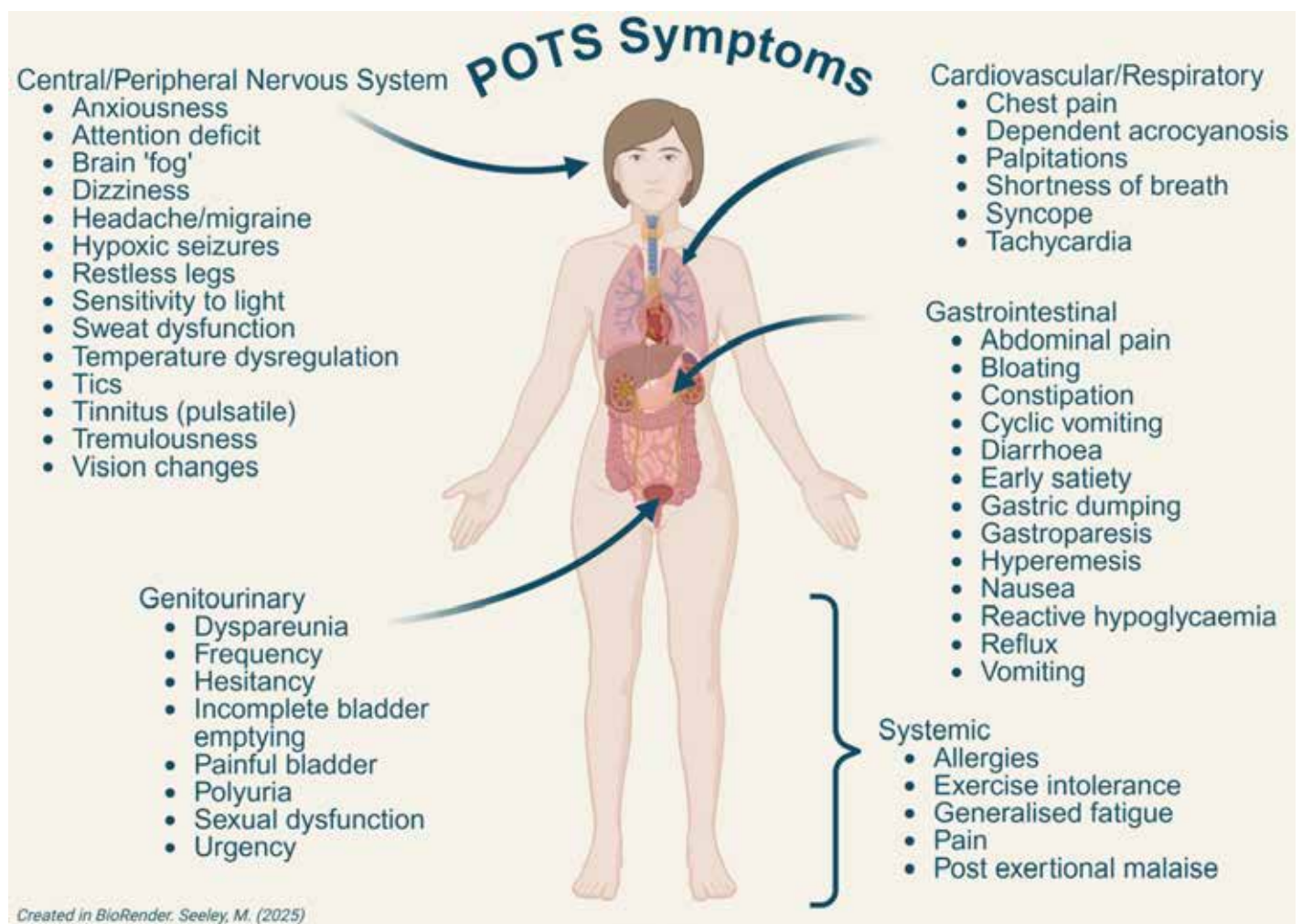
In the fall of 2015, from almost one day to the next, I frequently collapsed. I would feel fine, usually when sitting or lying down, and when I stood, my heart would race and my body would feel too heavy to support. I felt dizzy, and my vision blurred, similar to when you are going to pass out. Over the following days, it worsened to the point that I would fall to the ground and be unable to open my eyes or speak. In that moment, I felt extreme exhaustion, like a robot whose battery had been removed. It was as though the mitochondria in my cells had shorted out. With rest, water, and patience, I was able to move again after minutes or hours.

I live a healthy lifestyle, and I am not the kind of person to get sick. At the time, I had no clue as to what I was experiencing. Neither did my doctor. I was the one to suggest testing for Lyme, and all five tests my doctor performed came back positive for high quantities of antibodies for *Borrelia burgdorferi*. He prescribed doxycycline for two weeks, but nothing changed. I read everything I could find on Chronic Lyme—one of those mystery diseases—and found that long-term medical treatment with antibiotics had not been successful. There was nothing to be done. (More on that in my next newsletter.)

Although POTS, a chronic disorder of the autonomic nervous system, has been recognized since 1993, awareness and specific diagnostic coding have grown significantly only in the last two decades, especially with post-COVID POTS cases. We still don't understand why some people with acute infections remain ill while others fully recover (see my blog under [LIVING WITH LYME: The Emotional Component of Infectious Disease](#)). Possible explanations include that the infection still persists or that there may be an overactive immune response causing the problems. While some health conditions have biomarkers—measurable indicators of biological states—there are no biomarkers for long COVID, persistent Lyme disease, or other diseases such as ME/CFS (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis / Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) which makes it difficult to treat. Biomarkers reveal normal bodily functions, pathogenic processes, or responses to treatments, playing a critical role in diagnosing diseases, assessing risk, and personalizing medical care.



The symptoms in the POTS diagram pretty much encompass my problems from Chronic Lyme. Socrates said, “Understanding the question is half the answer.” Over the past ten years, I have inched towards that answer, and I look forward to sharing with you my experiences of living with Lyme in future newsletters.



FROM TANYA'S COLLECTION OF ZEN STORIES: The Fisherman

One day a fisherman was rowing his boat upstream to the market after a successful catch. He had gone out early to cast his nets and his tiny boat was filled to the brim with beautiful fish. With his back to the current, he rowed with all his strength in order reach the market as quickly as possible so that he could make a good profit. He was careful not to rock the boat because he didn't want any of the valuable fish to fall over the side.



He was feeling very happy, grateful for his good luck when suddenly, WHAM! Something rammed the bow of his boat! He quickly turned to see that an old man in a similar fishing boat had hit him on the way downstream. The elderly fisherman had fallen asleep on his pile of empty nets as he let his boat follow the current out to the fishing harbor.

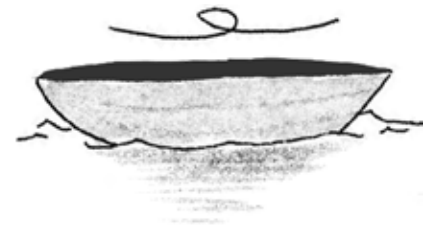
This infuriated the young fisherman. "Watch where you are going, you idiot!" He leapt to his feet and yelled at the old man who was yawning and rubbing his eyes, quite unaware of what had happened. As the young man jumped up, his boat rocked back and forth and several of his lovely fish were lost over the side. "Now look what has happened!"

The elderly fisherman apologized profusely as his boat continued downstream. The young fisherman sat down and began rowing furiously against the current, cursing the old fool, for now his boat had drifted downstream again and he had lost time on his way to the market.

As he rowed, his anger swelled in his chest and, instead of counting how much money he would make that morning, he began to calculate how much he had lost on account of the old fool. He was still shaking his head and muttering curses when, WHAM! Once again something struck his boat. He felt his rage rise to his face and he turned, ready to damn whomever was responsible.

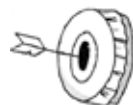
But the boat that struck him was empty, an old fishing boat that had come loose from its moorings and floated downstream. The moment he saw that the boat was empty, the fisherman's anger vanished. The empty boat slipped past on its way downstream and the fisherman simply continued rowing. His heart felt no anger, he had not lost any fish, and he had lost almost no time at all.

As he continued upstream to the market, the fisherman sighed with his realization. What if he treated every boat that struck him as if it were an empty boat?



I once heard the Dalai Lama say, "Accept a person's anger like a gift and set it aside." And what of our own anger? Can we treat the "cause" of it like an empty boat...like it is nobody's fault? We cannot control the actions of others, but we can try to control our response to them. Though external events may trigger anger, it is ultimately our choice how we react.

My Sensei, or teacher, in Zen Archery often reminded us that the target was not the bale of straw we were aiming at. It was our own mind. "If you let go of here," he said, pointing to his head, "then you will find here," he then pointed to his heart, "and the arrow will find the target."





Thank you for reading my first newsletter!

Do you know of anyone else who might be interested in reading this newsletter? Feel free to forward it to them, and encourage them to sign up for their own free quarterly copy under <https://www.tanyaswriting.com/contact/>

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And stay tuned for the next edition, due out on
July 10th, 2026:

- *JUST LISA: The Elderly Healthcare Crisis in the US*
- *AGING GRACEFULLY: How to Prevent Qi Deficiency*
- *KAY'S CORNER: Kay Visits Mars*
- *DAILY ACTIVIST: Save on Soap*
- *WRITING TIP: Take an Online Writing Course*
- *GOING VEGAN: Sweet Curried Rice with Lentils*
- *LIVING WITH LYME: Ways to Optimize your Energy*
- *ZEN STORY: The Farmer's Horse*

Happy Spring!

