



Wm. Delia Books

Write Now

the monthly e-newsletter from Wm. Delia Books

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Issue 8

January 2022

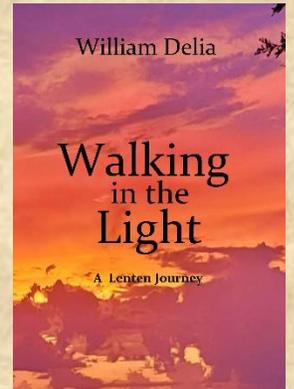
The calendar has turned a page, and a new year is upon us. So far, I'm sorry to say, this new year feels a lot like the old year. COVID-19 still hovers over us. Vaccines, masks and social distancing still shape our everyday activities. Variant after variant appears to be the new normal.

Reading and writing provide a welcome relief from the troubles of the day. A good book can ease the strain of the present while reminding us of the past or offering a glimpse of the future. Writing, too, can be a respite from the challenges of life. If you have ever thought you may have a story to tell—and who doesn't have a story to tell— what better time to start writing than right now? This “down” time might actually be an opportunity.

Update

I'm pleased to announce the release of my new Lenten Study, *Walking in the Light*. The response to my Advent Study, *Waiting for the Light*, prompted this follow-up study for the season of Lent. The study includes scripture, reflection, prayer and discussion questions for Ash Wednesday, each week of Lent, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. I hope it will be a blessing for the season.

I'm continuing to write and rewrite several projects, including my newest novel, *Relative Proof*. Like my other books, this one continues to take me places I don't expect. I hope to finish the first draft by Spring.



Current Titles – Available on Amazon.com or from the author

<p><u>Novels</u></p> <p>Healing River Home to the Mountains I Once Was Lost Truth, Lies & Consequences One Day More Shelter from the Storm Remember Who You Are</p>	<p><u>Books of Faith</u></p> <p>Jesus Told Them Many Things – Devotional Standing on the Promises – Devotional Waiting for the Light – Advent Study Walking in the Light – Lenten Study—New!</p>
<p><u>Children's Book</u></p> <p>Bucky the Manatee</p>	<p><u>Poetry Collection</u></p> <p>On the Edge of Forever</p>

Recent Selection

My short story, *The Last Dance*, was published in the Florida Writers Association 2021 anthology, *Footprints*. I was honored to have my story selected by the judges, and I am pleased to share it with you this month.

The Last Dance

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"Thanks for coming, Marco," Anna says.

"You should have called me sooner."

"He didn't want you to come. You know your brother. This has to be done his way."

"How bad is he?"

"Weeks, maybe days. Each time I see him, he's more frail."

"Why is he at the beach house? Shouldn't he be here where you, or someone, can care for him?"

"I tried, but he doesn't want to be a burden, especially to his ex-wife. He's forty-five years old, and he's acting like a petulant child! This is why he divorced me, you know?"

"I thought you both—"

"No. I didn't understand, at the time, but the whole thing was a sham to set me free. He got the diagnosis and filed for divorce two weeks later. He never told me, Marco, I swear. I would have stayed."

"Did you tell him I was coming?"

She looks down, "No. I was afraid he'd try to stop you."

Marco shakes his head, "He doesn't want to need you or me or anyone else. He's been like that since our Dad left. Artie was only fifteen, but he stepped up for Mom and me. He was nine years older, and he taught me all I know about life. He always told me to remember that whatever we do, wherever we go, we leave traces behind like footprints that prove we were there. So, we should do right.

"I grew up trying to follow the footprints he left behind. In school, I took the same classes, played the same sports. I became a musician to be like him. I only married Stephanie because he married you.

"I did it all to earn his love, but I realized it wasn't fair to Stephanie. When I came out, I told him first, even before I told my wife. If I had known how he'd react, I would have—hell, I don't know what I would have done."

Anna rests her hand on his arm, "Don't blame yourself. He never should have cut you out of his life. Gay or straight, you're still his little brother."

Marco smiles, "I wish he could see it that way. It's late. I'll go out there first thing in the morning. Thanks, Anna, you're the best. Most ex-wives wouldn't put up with all this."

"Ironic, isn't it? It took a divorce and a death sentence to make me realize how much I still love him. I'd give anything to be with him for these last days."

Bonita Cove is one of a thousand inlets carved out of the California coastline by the relentless Pacific. At low tide, a thin stretch of sand emerges at the base of the rocks, only to disappear hours later when the sea returns.

Marco takes a long look at the ocean, then enters the beach house. A young man in blue scrubs meets him at the door.

"You must be Marco. I'm your brother's aide, Terry. Anna told me to expect you."

"How is he today?"

"He's resting now, poor dear. He had a tough night. I didn't tell him you were coming, but I cleaned him up for you, like Anna said. I'll be right here if you need me."

Marco walks toward the bedroom, but the sight of his emaciated brother stops him in the doorway.

Artie scoffs, "Judging by your expression, I must look even worse than I think!"

"Hey, Artie. No, you—"

"Don't bother lying. I know what I look like. What are you doing here? Did she call you? I told her—"

"Of course, she called me! It's what family does. They call on each other when things get tough."

"I don't need you here. I can deal with this on my own."

"C'mon, Artie. For God's sake, this isn't the time."

"Why—because I'm dying? So what? We're supposed to pretend we get along just because the end is near? What's the point?"

"Maybe there is no point for you, but what about Anna? What about me? We're the only ones left to mourn for you and, like it or not, we love you. You don't have to love us back, but you don't have to be such an ass, either."

Artie is slow to respond, "Is that any way to talk to a dying man?"

Marco pulls a chair next to the bed.

"Before you sit, open the curtains, will you? That view never gets old."

Marco pulls back the drapes, "It is spectacular."

"It's more than that—it's eternal. The ocean goes on forever."

"I can understand why you want to be here."

"How is Anna?"

"She's a trooper, Artie, but she's hurting. She wants to be here with you. Let me call her, please."

Artie opens his mouth but chokes on his words, coughing and gagging as his body convulses. Terry appears by the bed, turns him on his side and elevates his head. In moments, the coughing subsides.

Artie locks his eyes on his brother and whispers, "Call her."

Marco sits with him all day and they talk about old times. Anna brings supper. They set Artie's wheelchair on the porch, overlooking the cove and balance plates of Anna's pasta de pepe. Artie only picks at his meal, but the others pretend not to notice.

When the sun has set, Terry points to the cove, "What is that?"

Blue-green light glows in each breaking wave like liquid bands of neon.

"Noctiluca!" Marco says. "Bioluminescent algae. It's been years since I've seen it."

Artie smiles, "Remember that night—after Mom's funeral? We sat right here, drinking wine and telling stories."

"I remember. When the noctiluca appeared, we went down to the beach. Each step we took kicked up sparks in the sand. It was like walking on stars! You danced around like Zorba the Greek."

"You did too!"

“No—I just stepped in your footprints. That’s the story of my life, Artie—stepping where you step, going where you go. I always wanted to be you.”

Artie’s eyes glisten, “I should’ve—when you told me—I should’ve,” he sighs. “I’m sorry, Marco. You deserve better.”

“So do you, brother. So do you.”

A moment later, Marco says, “Let’s go! One last dance on the stars.”

“I can’t.”

“Sure, you can—we’ll help.”

Marco, Anna and Terry muscle Artie’s wheelchair down the path to the beach. The waves glow and the sand sparkles with each step.

Marco tries spinning Artie’s chair around, but the wheels sink in the sand.

“C’mon, brother. All those years you carried me, now it’s my turn to carry you.”

Marco lifts Artie, piggy-back style, surprised by how little he weighs. Slowly he dances a circle around Anna, the sand like sparklers flashing at his feet.

Artie cries, “YES! YES!”

They walk along the water’s edge, leaving a trail of footprints in the wet sand, until Artie rasps, “Enough, little brother. You’ve carried me far enough.”

Marco turns around and sees the incoming tide washing away their footprints. As the last one disappears, he feels Artie’s breathing slow and his arms go limp around his shoulders.

Marco knows without looking. The last dance is over.

You have been selected to receive these brief updates because you have shown interest in my writing. If you would prefer not to receive future issues, simply reply to this email with “NOT INTERESTED” in the subject line and I will remove you from the list.