

My Painted Elephant

Brenda struggles to satisfy her need to accomplish something out of the ordinary. After leaving her family in Australia she travels to Paris to write a story where time has become tangled and she is obsessed with the Spiral of Theodorus. Living homeless on the streets of Paris, she pushes herself to her physical and mental limits. She becomes delusional and begins to think time is running backwards. She begins trying to make the chapter lengths proportional to the spiral and subsequently finds the quest to write a novella daunting.

Word Count: 17,755

Homeless in Paris

*In my dream I know
who I want to be
when will it come true?
will you be there too?*

*I feel so far away
from where I want to be
will I end up homeless in Paris
or will I find a way
to be happy to be me.*

Preface : Letter to author

- 1 1.00 The beginning: the longest part (1968/1959)
- 2 1.41 Max : the information trader in 2021 (1644/1599)
- 3 1.73 Brenda's first night (1450/1303)
- 4 2.00 Struggling to get it right (1320/1322)
- 5 2.24 It's a shabobble (1220/1202)
- 6 2.45 Max's friends (1145/1059)
- 7 2.65 The adventures of Kesbooks Skytower (1083/1080)
- 8 2.82 Charlotte's full house (1033/1044)
- 9 3.00 Max's party (991/939)
- 10 3.16 Who is Claude? (954/856)
- 11 3.32 What is in this world for Brenda? (921/737)
- 12 3.46 Kembla the blacksmith (893/676)
- 13 3.60 Theodorus has something to say (868/677)
- 14 3.74 Phone a friend (845/687)
- 15 3.87 It's all gone (825/454)
- 16 4.00 Time to go home (806/454)
- 17 4.12 The end: the shortest part (789/490)

The Final word: Another letter to the author

Preface : Letter to the author

Saturday 4th Feb 2012

To myself,

This is you, writing some stuff down about your life, dreams and thoughts that have lingered enough to be written down. I hope this may help if you have lost your mind, or have suffered any brain damage from the wear and tear of living. You may be wondering how you came to have all these thoughts and ideas in your head. Well, it is a bit like a dream, dreams can be so marvellous and it has to be wondered: does the brain think of these ideas instantaneously or has some part of the brain being working on stories, philosophies, answers, discoveries to show you when it is ready? Perhaps there is a dream stored away ready for you, or maybe there are years' worth, all catalogued in the brain/s own way, ready to be presented to you? Somehow all this is now ready to be written down. You want to enter the Paris Literary Prize this year and this is your effort. Well done.

You haven't written all of what is to follow in one day it is just that today is the day you woke up and decided to add a beginning, middle and end to the story. You had already been writing about the Theodorus Spiral, Max, Charlotte, Kesbook Skytower and other imaginations. This is all a fiction from your mind. The beginning, I think now-, should be about your earlier life, I think you could make this into an interesting story. You have just finished reading Emile Zola's 'The Drinking Den' and have quite a feeling of connection to Gervaise in the story. While I know you think you would like to be living in Paris, you are very happy and content in Adelaide, Australia and now you think that maybe the pull to Paris is because at some point maybe one of your ancestors' lived there and some remnant of memory is still embedded in your brain.

Two days ago, you woke up to a severe fit of spinning and nausea - this has led you to again worry you will end up like your mother in some semi-catatonic state that will render you useless in your later years and has sparked an energy to get something done about a book you want to write. You want your mother to take a drug to help alleviate her abulia which is a condition that affects the ability to communicate and her will to do anything at all. She has been in an old folk's home for fifteen years and you believe, - from personal research, that there is a drug that has worked in cases of abulia but she won't take it, not being motivated to change her current endless scenario. Not even the doctors who also have come to the same conclusion that the drug may help, can persuade her to take it. She says she is happy the way she is. You want to leave it but you feel you should be doing something to help. It is hard to just let it be and not be angry or hurt that she won't respond to you.

Anyway just letting you know that you finally wrote a book:- perhaps you always knew that you would do it. Perhaps we all have inklings about what is going to happen to us. I am actually not sure if this is me writing from the past, the future or in the present. It might sound strange, but time may not be running as chronologically as we think. Sometimes I am so sure I know what is going to happen yet other times I get it so wrong. At this point you really don't know if you will win the prize or not. I don't think that is the motivation here anyway. Getting the work complete and being happy that you have produced something worth reading is much more important.

Love from you

A painted elephant is an unexpected, incongruous, amazing feat that is well outside what is expected

‘push the envelope’ = ‘to paint the elephant’

1 (1.00) The beginning : the longest part (1968)

Brenda’s thought as she wrote her first sentence. ‘one sentence at a time’ - Ernest Hemmingway had said this when he was writing:- she thought it fitting she think the same way. Brenda had read a book about the history of mathematics and came across the Theodorus Spiral, first put together by Theodorus of Cyrene back in about 330BC. She was now very interested in the spiral made up of triangles where the longest side of each triangle is the square root of a number plus one starting at one. The hypotenuse (longest side) spoke is always longer than the one before but the difference in the change of length is getting smaller and smaller. The angle between the spokes is getting smaller and smaller while the angle between the opposite and adjacent side is always a right angle. Here we go together to discover the Theodorus Spiral - it reaches out to the far corners of the universe but also doubles over itself as it goes inwards. The internal structure of the spiral creates wondrous patterns that Brenda believed she could portray in her writing and she hoped to win the Paris Literature Prize run by the Shakespeare and Company bookshop.

At the beginning of the spiral, the spoke is small; this resembles an idea, a notion. As time goes by the notion grows but is not necessarily moving forward. It can go round on itself while it is growing. What if you don't feel connected? Perhaps you can't think clearly because you are upset or anxious. What can you do? You need to find a small dangling thread of an

idea. Grab hold of it - and do not let go. Imagine yourself where you want to be. Try to block out negative influences. You can't always get away from the negative, but you can choose to ignore it. Imagine you have run away to Paris and there you are writing your story. This is what Brenda did; she left her beautiful family, to live in poverty and a state of constant anxiety to write a novella for a competition. Was she mad or passionate? She actually abandoned them! Her husband and two children! Who does that? Nobody does that except Brenda did it only yesterday. She bought a plane ticket with the last of the money she had made on the sale of a property from before her marriage. Her savings had slowly dwindled away over the years paying for this and that. Some share investments had not done well and the money was nearly gone. She felt that once the money was gone there would be no going to Paris. So it was now or never.

The wind blew into her face, this meant the tears did not run down her cheeks but blew off into the air rushing by. She had run away from home, she was lost and lonely and didn't think she could go back. Everything seemed the same shade of grey, blanket of gloom, her mind was numb. She sat down on a lonely park bench and took out her old battered laptop from her worn back pack and began to type. She had to get her story down and quickly before she was mugged, frozen to death or starved.

As she started typing she felt herself becoming immersed in the story as it appeared on the page. She could feel the cold less and less and the burden of little money and lack of accommodation. She needed to write to take her mind off her comfortable life and leaving her family and the only way to do that was to keep working. Brenda began to write about the past and the future at the same time, not really sure if she wanted to change it. First she was going way back.

"I want you to become the pink engineer, make the steel and concrete any colour you want. Brighten up this world, make a difference. Don't be one of many, be the one that

changes the world. Change everything”, this is what Hypatia's mother told her as a little girl. She lived in the world of Greek philosophers Socrates and Aristotle. Her main influence was Theodorus who had lived about eight hundred years before and taught her about irrational numbers and a spiral that held many secrets. Hypatia didn't know what steel or concrete was, they had not been invented. Her mother, Kembla, had come from the past where she was a blacksmith who would change the course of half the world by changing the path of Buddha. But she had also come from the future that knew about steel and concrete. Kembla used to say: “Things moved slowly in this world. It is hard to see new truths”. It was difficult for a woman of academia at this time in history.

Brenda pondered how Kembla had come from the past and knew the future at the same time. Rain had started to fall, so Brenda needed to move into the alcove of an empty boutique. Soon she was back at the keyboard. It was all going to be because an algorithm invented 6000 years after Hypatia lived. A clever computer programmer in the Year 3000 AD would use the algorithms of holograms that were by then the normal way of conveying information. Everyone sent their hologram to meetings to do their work. It became a great way to multitask. It had become a whole new way of communicating in about 2500AD. When Brenda reread what she had written she smiled to herself in astonishment because she had always thought of grey skies as miserable and realised she had used the expression “shade of grey” in her writing. In recent times this term acquired completely new connotations. ‘That is funny’, Brenda said out loud and then got back to work. She also wondered whether she needed to put a reference to the expression “Things move slowly in this world. It is hard to see new truths”, this was actually said by Nicola Tesla the Serbian inventor/engineer. She hurried on, admonishing herself: ‘it’s a work of fiction, do what you want, Brenda’. She was having trouble not being able to use the internet for any research she needed.

Brenda felt the world had become technologically crazy, an “app” for this and another “app” for that. There was no end in Brenda’s world though she had left all that behind while in Paris. She had wanted to be free of the communication trap; she felt she needed to get rid of the distraction of the modern smart phone in order to complete the novella. Back at home in her contemporary 1950’s home in Adelaide suburbia with the big back yard and gum trees, she had been feeling the pressure to be successful. She felt she could not bear the mundane any longer. Perhaps she was successful in her own way but she could not see it. The pressure had become a burning desire to find a way of expressing herself, to be rid of the ordinary and enter the realm of the extraordinary. She often wondered who else around her felt this way. How could her colleagues at work or the other soccer mums face the daily grind? Many people she knew seemed to get along well with humour, laughing at themselves and others to get by but Brenda’s gut instinct insisted she had to do something more. Gossip seemed to be a pathological past time for some. It drove Brenda silently mad. She wanted to get down in writing all these thoughts and see if anything could come of it. Her story would definitely be about mental health issues caused by pressure to succeed, gender inequality and time entanglement.

Brenda had been increasing feeling that she could see into the future because people from the future were coming back from her future to tell what was happening further down the time line. She was making a conscious decision to write a story rather than go to the doctor to seek help. She was also finding more and more messages from books written in the past that she felt the author was telling her something; giving her clues. She had started to write the story while in Australia but had become so dedicated to the tale that she had travelled to Paris to be homeless and to push herself to her limits. The 2012 London Olympic Games was held the previous year and she had been in awe of the athletes’ ability to push themselves and seemingly also to have fun. She had also seen hours of footage of people in

the crowds and around London enjoying themselves. But she felt she needed to be ruthlessly joyless to achieve her goals.

She wanted the story to be a life changing experience for the reader – maybe even to become a new religion. She began writing to the reader. The new religion would be Theodorism. What does this mean? Understanding maths and knowing that by continuing a certain way will lead to success. A span of 6000 thousand years, what does the year 3000 AD look like? We need to plan for this now. We can make the future we want but who is going to do it? Brenda felt that uneasy feeling come over her; was she insane or was this clarity of mind onto something? She sat and pondered whether history's Great Thinkers had felt the same way. The wind whipped around her and she adjusted her collar around her neck; it does nothing to combat the cold. Where would she sleep tonight? She had spotted a ledge on a building. It would require her to climb the stone work but might make her feel better than sleeping on the ground. She shut this worry out of her mind and continued to write to her imaginary readers.

The words appeared on the screen – you feel so frustrated and useless now, how can you think about what 900 years from now will look like? I know what you mean but you must expand your mind enough to take it all in. Some of the messes we find ourselves in now could take that long to sort out. I know that some people can't think about tomorrow today, so that is why we need to spread this word about trying to see what the far future can look like. Will we still focus on food, health and wealth? Well, it stands to reason that if that is what was important 5000 years ago then in only 900 years it will be the same. What else should we focus on? Technology and creativity perhaps! Even the new communication technology frustrated her at times. But some part of her knew that in order to get to the point where holograms could be used successfully all the in-between inventions had to come first.

The characters in Brenda's story were coming alive in her mind. Max was getting closer to her and it feels as if Charlotte feels like she is sitting next her. She could begin their story and leave her own. What a relief! They have troubles, but theirs are fictional and in spite of her own discomfort she began to worry about them. Will the characters develop or will they remain flat and lifeless? Brenda needed this to work or felt she would surely die of the stress of being homeless in Paris.

She had known she might be cold living on the streets but had not really fully imagined the intensity of the cold and misery once she had gotten wet. She put her head down and gritted her teeth and set about typing.

2 (1.41) Max : the information trader in 2021 (1644)

His client reached across the table and kissed him. They were both momentarily stunned but she recovered first and smiled. After she left he could still feel the pressure of her touch on his lips and it felt good for the rest of the day.

That had been Monday and Max had handed over to the client an envelope that contained answers to her problems. That was his job. Max had been spending a lot of time at the local public library. In fact, he realized he was doing a great deal of business there. It was a convenient local hang out. He wondered if anyone noticed what he did and whether they were concerned he was dealing in something more sinister than information. Of course Angela knew; she worked with Max at times. She was good at her job, too. They were a fantastic team, and if he let himself go he would have to say he was in love with her, But she was a very classy lady and he did not have the courage to make a move.

After closing off the deal with the surprise kiss on Monday he travelled over to The Port Bar. Here he was comfortable with his drinking acquaintances. Stella and Kate worked behind the bar so well. Stan, the owner, must have thanked his lucky stars the day those two walked through the door. Stella was a “nutter” albeit a nice one. She was a very interesting person and Max enjoyed her company immensely. She has a weird presence though, and Max had grown to know that the ghost of a rock star haunts her.

Brenda decided to wait to tell her readers about this later, as she was keen to introduce Kate, who has an equally bizarre lifestyle because she suffers from an unbelievable condition where she has forgotten that she is married to one the state’s most famous football players. This, of course, has increased the crowd of drinkers in the bar as they watch this drama unfold before them. Each coming in after work or a day’s shopping, to see if any development had taken place. Just like watching a soap opera - only a lot more profitable for Stan and a darn sight more real.

Brenda wanted to have Kate in the story to represent her mother who was suffering from a strange disorder that no one seemed to know what to do about. Brenda’s mother had spent six months in a psychiatric ward where she was given thirty-two shock treatments but the doctors still did not know whether she had suffered a stroke or was just depressed. Her mother hardly spoke and had no motivation to do anything; she had been in this state for fifteen years now, just sitting all day long. All the doctors had given up and she lived in a retirement home, being cared for, but Brenda felt she should be able to find a cure or help her in some way. So far: nothing. It was so frustrating to watch someone waste their life. Brenda and her father had spent hours discussing what they should have done and what they should do now. When Brenda was at home she thought of things to say to her mum to try to help but

always when she was near her mother she could not say anything. Her mother had some kind of barrier around her blocking out everyone. Brenda was not even sure if her mother realised she was behaving differently. Brenda's family felt it best not to upset their mother and wife: just let her be the way she was. More tears and a small groaning sound came from her mouth, "Get back to the story", Brenda told herself. She pushed on.

"Good day Max, pint?" Stan was behind the bar tonight because the crowd had grown. Apparently Dale (the famous footballer star) had been in, again pleading with his gorgeous wife to come home and take care of their little girl. Kate on the other hand was working the bar in her renowned fancy style that everyone loved so much. She seemed to float around; she had fantastic memory for names and customer's drinks. Stan had told me she had been in a car accident and bumped her head and now she's a barmaid when before she had been a housewife. Dale was crazy for his wife and had been in the bar whenever she worked. This it had been going on for six months and he needed to go to practice and care for their little one. The doctors said time would tell, so we all waited and watched.

Frank sat down next to Max, and together they watched Kate pour him a beer. She smiled at both of them and Max could see in her eyes had just a touch of vagueness. He did hope things would work out for her and Dale but could not help feeling he would miss them if their lives were to return to as they had been. Frank was a drinking mate and Max knew only that he worked in construction. He was a hard-headed, steel-cap boots bloke. Frank's hands were rough clearly highlighting the difference in their working lives. They talked a lot about sport and politics and the stuff that life was about. Over the years they had talked through a stock market crash, a recession, the housing boom, the latest revival developments, the global financial crisis and right now getting their heads around carbon credits. Max

thought it was all marvellous stuff, though he knew others seemed to struggle through the changes. Frank was a no-regrets man, who had decided very early on that things were black and white and no shades in-between. Max tried to add some dimensions to their conversations although half the time he was just padding out the time. When they said goodnight Max knew, as Frank strode confidently away, that Frank believed he was right. Max often wished he could be so sure.

Max's shares had been lost, he'd paid seventeen per cent interest rate in hard times then divorced just as the housing boom started and spent his lousy share of the house on a big TV and sports motorbike when he should have been paying a low interest mortgage and riding the boom time. However Max had learned through this of his incredible resilience to depression, which he had witnessed, others crumble to. What agony many were suffering while he was totally unscratched, carrying on and rising to the new information age like a visionary warrior! Okay well he'd had a few pints by now and was feeling rather full of himself. But in truth his business was doing very well and he allowed himself a congratulatory one for the road.

Having moved on from the old days of driving home drunk like so many of his peers he staggered down to the wharf and caught the ferry home. Jack the ferry operator turned the other way as Max heaved over the side feeding the mulloway in the Port River. Max was the only passenger at this time of night so he was excused this time. Max felt a twinge of sadness as the kiss from the afternoon became tarnished with his regurgitation. The fresh air had cleared his head and he worked well into the night on contracts for clients, trolling the net, and sending emails to researchers regarding their assignments. He went to bed a happy man.

A knock at the door awoke him and he found himself squinting at a young, well-dressed man. The man held out a card that through Max's bleary mind became a copy of his

“I need to know?” card. The man said he was sorry to come without an appointment but he was in the area and thought he would just knock. As Max had no expectations for his customers he let the chap in and made them both a coffee and piece of toast and jam. They sat in Max’s home office at the front of his 1910 cottage on the edge of the new Port development and spoke about a problem the man had.

The man wanted to buy a house in the area. However had heard that the local cement factory emitted a lot of dust and he’d found it incredibly hard to find out how bad the problem was and if it would affect his son’s asthma. Max felt a wave of apprehension cross his body. The cement factory was an ongoing hot issue for the community. The flat rate for information was \$50 for an answer within half an hour’s research. Max knew he would be able to get dust emission figures and he had several anecdotal evidence documents for and against the notion that the lad’s asthma would be affected. His gut feeling was to say if you are going to worry about it don’t buy but he knew the area still held out for a capital gain. The shopping and café scene in the area was set to improve and he made the assumption that the man had a wife who would appreciate this. They shook hands on a deal that Max would spend the 30 minutes on the job and would contact him later in the day with an update. As it was a local job he would do this himself. Max decided to go to factory and ask to speak Tony the man put in charge of cleaning the factory up.

3 (1.73) Brenda’s first night (1450)

Brenda had moved to the spot on the ledge where she pushed herself well back so anyone walking by would not notice her. She jumped back down to check whether the light of the

laptop could be seen from the street but it could not. The voices of her children rang through her head. Were they alright? How mad would her husband be? She had given him no warning and merely left a note telling him she was going to Paris to write her story. He probably thought she was in a hotel. She hadn't looked to see if he had sent messages. She courageously pushed all these thoughts out of her head. She scrambled back to her position and started tapping very softly on the keys.

Happy people are hard to find. Life is difficult for most. Not many seem to find their way without struggle. Wouldn't it be great to glide through life on a whirl of glamour and success? To feel triumph every day and not fight emotions that cause stress. Brenda was unsure if she was writing about herself or Max until she slipped back into Max's world. Max thought he sometimes did suffer from negative emotions especially after a boozy night.

Badly in need of a drink, he wondered over to The Port Bar again. Stella was sitting at an outside table having a cigarette and coke. "Hi there, Stel" Max paused at the edge of her table and whispered. "Is Mike here?" She nodded to the seat opposite her so he took the one adjacent to it. Once seated, he took a long gulp of his cold beer and looked at Stella and the empty space where "Mike" was seated. Max smiled inside, he would never cross the line and laugh at her. She was too dear to him for that. Sometimes she nearly, just nearly, made him feel that Michael Hutchinson was actually sitting there. Stella never missed a beat so Max knew for her it was real. Max wouldn't dream of mentioning medication. Besides, she seemed very happy with her relationship with the dead star and Max guessed she would not want to end it. She once confided to him that they had fantastic sex, He tried not to let himself think about that.

He briefly talked to Stella about the cement factory and like everybody before her she went into a spiel about the dust covering her car and ruining the paintwork on her auntie's garden ornaments. Max told her that there should be an improvement soon. Tony had told him about the new filters so the fallout dust would be lessened. Countering this good news, though, he had also heard some disturbing news about how the feed going into the plant was going to be recycled waste that could contain anything including plastics and he privately thought he should buy one of his sister's devices to measure emissions.

Brenda was getting distracted and tired; she turned the laptop off and drifted into sleep, incredibly unaware of her surroundings. Hours later a shout and scuffling sounds woke her and she froze in terror as she was asleep on a large window ledge of a building in Paris, not in her bed with her husband beside her and her children asleep in their rooms. Her throat was raw and when she wiped her face it was wet, she had been crying in her sleep. She shrank into her coat as small as she could be and listened carefully to any sign anyone would approach her.

Finally the sun was bringing some light with it and Brenda felt relief spread though her, she had survived her first night. She was so sore she felt that she might not be able to walk but she very gingerly eased her way down to the ground and gathered her belongings and began to walk back to the park bench. In the corners of her eyes she spied other night dwellers appearing. She refused to make eye contact, determined to stick with her plan to get back to her story. For a moment she eased a small smile and imagined herself telling Jeremy about the night then cringed at the thought he might never want to speak to her again.

Once settled on the bench she took one quick look at the view of the city and then turned on the laptop. The battery was getting low and she knew that later she would need to

find somewhere to recharge it and fix herself up however she didn't get to finish those thoughts because her mind was instantly back into the story.

Brenda felt she was ignoring her other characters. She really wanted to get on and bring Max's sister Charlotte into the story. Charlotte is a freak anyway because she lives with three other selves. Time was beginning to fail to follow any order because scientists in the year 3000 were sending a hologram back to the year 2021 and this had numerous consequences. Brenda was thrilled with this story line, she sat daydreaming about the crazy happenings that were possible with time having no order, just free to loop around and around on itself. Her heart pounded and her stomach twisted. She was alive. She was excited about her story, she could think fast enough to get it collated into a manageable order to type. She found herself typing about Max again.

Max was still sitting with Stella outside the hotel. Max was thinking about his finances. He had made \$1000 dollars in the last couple of days and several other contracts had been completed so he was up a good \$800 bucks for the day. Running your own business can be a little scary when it is impossible to know how much money would be made in a week.

Max bought Stella a drink and they went inside and had a meal together. Once she needed to talk to Mike so she went outside to do so. While she was outside a painter named George showed up. George had been working on a technique that uses dots of paint of different colours that mixed on the canvas. He lived in one of the boarding houses overlooking the Main Road. He often caught the tram to town to visit the State Art Gallery. Max knew George was going to be famous before he was. There was something about him.

George often sipped whiskey at the Port Bar and he became involved in the Kate affair when she took a fancy to him and Dale had to explain the situation to him down the side street. George, Frank and Max often spoke about current events at the end of the day. George called in just after dusk each evening. He walked the streets at dusk to experience the light for his paintings.

Everyone suggested to George that he should discourage Kate from chasing him if he liked the shape of his nose. George was proud that Kate liked him and she became a sort of muse to him. Max reasoned that George might have moved away sooner if Kate was not in the Port as there really was not much happening there. In fact the billboard saying The Port Is Happening had faded so badly it was the community joke. Having said that, some people were more than happy with the slow progress as they were not keen to have it too populated with all the traffic and crowd problems that would come with it. The Port had an old world charm with its run down derelict buildings. In many ways it was an artist's paradise as it brought out emotion in people and the daily grind was etched on the faces of the people who worked and lived there.

4 (2.00) Struggling to get it right (1320)

Brenda was baffled as to where this story line was going; it really was just her getting down on paper her view on local government and town planning. She thought she might come back and take the segment out later. She highlighted it in red and carried on. She knew that George was going to be George Seurat from the past and she wanted George to be the first sign that something was happening with the timeline. A famous artist comes from the past into the

future and later when one of the characters goes to the Chicago Art Institute they find that people they know are painted into a 1900's painting set in Paris on the banks of the Seine. Brenda was a little annoyed that ideas that she had had many years before were now published in other peoples books; like *The Time Travellers Wife*. She felt she should have been first to write this stuff. So should she now leave it out and have a different story line? "No, leave it all in and come back later and weed out anything that seems to be duplicating other peoples work", she told herself. A passer-by gave her a queer look. "*Oh, I am talking to myself in public*", - she thought and covered her face in shame. She needed a wash, her fingers ached from typing, her neck muscles felt like they were on fire. Brenda staggered down the footpath in the direction of the public library where she intended to try to clean up.

Later that morning she went to a hotel and once she lay on the bed she fell asleep and slept for twelve hours.

When Brenda awoke she felt surprisingly excited, she was in Paris; she was doing what she wanted to do despite all the social norms and upbringing that would have conditioned her not to follow her dreams but remain straddled to her lifestyle. The other thing was that she had a great dream in her sleep, she couldn't wait to start writing:- so much was pouring out of her mind that she simply must to get onto the page. There was so much more to write about Charlotte and the Theodorus Spiral Factory. Charlotte is Max's sister and Brenda paused and spent some time thinking about the developments in Charlotte's life, how the Theodorus Spiral factory she had dreamed of years ago was now up and running, how successful it was and she imagined herself in the factory, what it would look like and how it had been to set up, all the infinite details.

Suddenly Brenda remembered that late last night she had rearranged the chapters to fit a certain length so that if the number of words in each chapter were plotted it would draw a

reverse Theodorus Spiral representing the change in the hypotenuse for each spoke. She named it the Theodorus second derivative spiral. She needed to put in the connection between Theodorus in 400 BC and Charlotte as a child and as an adult here so the reader would know what she was on about.

Again she delved into the distant past. She felt empowered, her mind able to swing from the past to the future quickly in her mind. It was a similar feeling to when she swung from thinking about the inside of an atom to the whole universe and when she thought of herself as an individual and then switched to the notion of being connected with all beings, past, present and in the future.

Back in 480 BC Theodorus woke up from an uncomfortable night under the stars. He had fallen asleep while thinking about the spiral. What happened if he kept going around and around? He had a vision during the night and it was so clear to him that he found it hard to believe it was a dream. He wanted to know what had happened, but he could not fathom it out. He had seen a young girl in a group of other young people. The world was completely different. Everything seemed smooth. The colours were bright and the writing on the child's page looked familiar; numbers square root symbols, triangles.

The children were colouring their pictures. He reached down next to the child and lifted the flat white sheet with the picture on it. The child reacted and looked up into his face. Her face showed a look of amazement. He returned that look. He was in the future. She was looking back at the past. They connected; she knew he was interested in the picture of the spiral, that he had first thought about this a long time ago. She knew he wanted to know more about it. She knew she did not know but would grow up to find out. She felt a sense of purpose flush over her. The man faded away.

Theodorus had been to the future to 1980 to a primary school classroom in Australia. He had met a little girl who was going to find out what happened to the spiral as it got bigger and bigger. His calculations had only gone round 17 times. He didn't know how to store the information and no one was interested. His friends liked to discuss about going further and further out into space and the spiral from a philosophical point of view but he was interested in the numbers: the change in the lengths and angles as the spiral wound around and around. He shook his head and got ready for the day. He had to help in the forge and then go to military training, but later on he was giving a talk about the spiral. This would cheer him up.

Years later, when Charlotte was grown up, she was sitting on the balcony of her beach side home reading a book, *The Zen of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert Persig. At the time she didn't realise it was going to be a very good book with plenty of ideas and concepts to contemplate. The sea was calm and the wind was blowing warmly into her face. She knew was lucky to sit on her balcony looking out to sea with plenty of food in the fridge and nice home furnishings. She had just started a degree in engineering so the mechanical descriptions in the book were of interest to her. She did know that people do not have to have mechanical/scientific knowledge to lead a successful life.

Her first career had been as a librarian. While she still worked a few hours in the library she now was really interested in metallurgy. This had come about slowly. Charlotte had learnt blacksmithing from a college course. This had piqued her curiosity in the chemistry of blacksmithing, metal surface protection, clean coal and carbon sequestration. This, in turn, had led to her starting the engineering degree. She was now involved in some research and this was getting very interesting with the start of her company: The Theodorus Spiral Company. The thought of the factory and subsidiary businesses that could be created made

her mind flip. Her plan was to set up a factory creating iron shields designed from the ancient Theodorus Spiral, and then market this with a mythical/magical lure. There could be a shop with T-shirts and other mementos for sale and a cafe attached to the business. She had already found the location, opposite the cement factory, and another side business would be to monitor the emissions coming from the factory and sell personal emissions analysers for the public. It was exciting to have a plan and to imagine the future and what it might look like however in reality she knew that none of it had actually happened yet and may not. She tried to think of what barriers would get in the way; like her fear of failure or worse her fear of success.

5 (2.24) It's a shabobble (1220)

Brenda was wandering the streets, contemplating her novel. She was back to work on how successful the Spiral Factory had been for Charlotte. Earlier Charlotte was daydreaming about her new ideas about a factory, in Brenda's dream she had seen the factory in full swing with Charlotte occupying a mezzanine floor looking down at her creation. She was comfortable with shag pile rugs and red fluffy throws over lounges and she was some sort of queen of the factory. As a bonus, a visitor, looked like a Viking had come to see her about an order for shields.

The story was unfolding: Brenda could see that. The Viking would be a warrior from the past that Charlotte was selling the shields to for battle with; time in her story would be flexible; the past could easily come to the future.

With no food for 30 hours Brenda was delirious, she was rambling now. *This is not going to win a fiction writing competition.* Her heart sank. She really wanted to win but her book was a shabobble. The thought of the word shabobble made her weep again. Shabobble was a word she had invented for her children, it just meant a stuff-up or cluster of mistakes.

While she was waiting for something to happen – something happened. Claude stepped into her view. She couldn't be sure how long he had been there. Brenda thought she would have known but there he was. Her initial reaction was to look down; she did not want to appear to be waiting for him. When she looked up he was smiling at her. By the time he was a step away Brenda felt an incredible rush travel through her body. She already knew he was friend. How could that be? Is that instinct or something else? Hey, what's your take on it dear reader? Do you know? At first she felt like she recognised him, he was almost how she pictured Max, who was from a photo of her uncle at her mother's wedding. Claude was very well spoken. He introduced himself and asked if he could sit beside her. He was the first person, other than the hotel and airport staff she had spoken to in Paris. She stiffened up, she was nervous but the loneliness was taking its toll.

“How is the book coming along?”

“Why do you think I am writing a book?”

“Everybody comes to Paris and tries to write a book. What, did you think you're the first? You've run away to Paris to write a best seller, to make your fortune,” He started laughing heartedly. It was cruel. Not only was the story failing with all hope seeping out of Brenda, but now a man was sitting next to her laughing until tears rolled out of his eyes.

He reached into his pocket, pulled out an apple and handed it to her. Though she imagined she hesitated she devoured it in seconds. Spit and apple fragments sprayed out over

the keyboard and down her chin. Claude said he would buy her something to eat at a café down the street. She weakly followed him.

When they were seated and the food had been ordered, he had even leaned across and wiped the apple juice and skin off her face. Slowly she began to tell him about herself. She knew he thought she was a fool. She thought she was a fool, why wouldn't he. She began to feel more comfortable. She was making a friend, it seemed. He wanted to know about the story she was writing so she began to tell him. She had not told anyone else she was even writing a story let alone what it was about. She felt foolish, it sounded weak or was she weak from the stress of her rapid departure from Australia and her family. She knew it must be taking its toll. She told him about the spiral and the factory, the characters, Max, Charlotte and Kesbooks. He nodded, asked some questions and appeared to be thinking about what she was saying. When she had finished he paused and said, "I don't know, Brenda, it sounds thin, there has to be something in the story. You're not getting much action happening, it is all before and after with short random scenes roughly joined together. I don't think the judges will go for this". Well at least he didn't sugar coat his response by telling her it was fantastic when secretly thinking it was no good.

They had more coffee and eventually it came to the point where they really couldn't stay any longer. Claude suggested they go to museum in Montmartre. Brenda was delighted. This was one of her must dos while here and now she was going with her new friend. She didn't hesitate. Once at the museum she peered at every exhibit, looking for something, a clue or guides for her story. Claude noticed and soon guessed what she was doing and told her to stop trying so hard. Time is travelling in the right order, he said. There are no clues here from the past or the future. Just relax. This niggled on Brenda's nerves because she was really dedicated to finishing her book and she did believe helpful hints were given to her from the past through art, literature and music. These artists were telling future beings something or

were they not. Brenda could only see that they were. Anything and everything could be a clue for her. Her senses were on high alert after days of meagre food consumption and stress of the journey and living on the street. She felt she was hearing every footstep and cough as they moved out of the museum. The colours in the sky were marvellous. She felt exhilarated but also extremely anxious at the same time.

Claude had reached out for her hand and she let it happen. They were wondering through the streets together and entered into a residence. Brenda did not know where she was. Claude was handing her a wine and all she could do was accept. She was in a stranger's house. It was one of the scenarios she had told herself not to get into. It was dangerous. The panic rose in her. Claude had gone into another room so she took the opportunity to bolt for the door. She could hear him calling her but she ran and ran, carrying her backpack, straining every muscle. Her heart was beating hard but she carried on. Montmartre is a hill so she just travelled on the downward slope weaving across and down. She reached the main road and the street was very crowded. It was a long way back to the river but she dragged her feet along. She kept her eyes down and she soon wished she had stayed in the warm house but she knew she should not have gone with a stranger to their house. She ducked into the first hotel that she thought she might be able to afford and settled into a room for the night. Again she slept for hours and hours while the Parisian life carried on around her.

6 (2.45) Max's friends (1145)

When Brenda awoke she felt very foolish. *Not very cool* she tortured to herself with embarrassment. Check-out was not for hours so she changed tack, put on her runners and

headed out for a jog. She ran and ran, just letting all the stored nervous energy go. It was a strategy she had often used when she was stressed or angry she would run to let it go. Running through the streets of Paris was another dream come true. It was very early on a Sunday morning so she had a lot of the back streets to herself. Now she was happy, she even took a moment to smile to herself, something that she had not done for a long time.

While running her mind whirled with new ideas for the book. Back at the hotel she reread her work so far. It was a mess, the characters were not doing anything, and who were Max's friends? Why were they in the story. What about Kesbooks, the hologram? How was she going to fit in? Slowly, though, Brenda felt that Max was not comfortable with the time disparities. She would make it that he would work hard to try to straighten the time out and in the end have to make a sacrifice and stand up for what he believed in. That sacrifice might even be his death. She began to type, trying to build up Max's character and introduce his friends.

Max was back at the Port Bar enjoying another beer. Did he have a drinking problem? No he didn't think so. It was just that he liked being at the Port Bar and he would only have a couple while he waited to see who came in. He was thinking about his friends and about the idea of having a party soon. Max's favourite couple friends were Brian and Sandy. Brian had managed to feel his way through life without trouble for many years until he met Sandy who taught him how to push for more. However this was not good for others around him. As time went on things came to a head and something inside Brian turned and he went on to invent the most amazing media device to relive sections of your life. The program made millions of dollars and people all over the world were grateful for the experience.

Later, Brian and Sandy, had a baby girl who brought out the best of every one and time stood still while they were embellished in her charm and youth. Her name was Melanie. She went on the University and everyone was very proud of her achievements. She married a wonderful man and they loved other very much. They lived in a wealthy suburb and tended to eat out at nice restaurants and go to the trendiest nightclubs.

Parts of Melanie's life required intense work and faith that she could find her way through dramas or fear of melancholy. Some inspiration comes from imaginary beings. These "people" helped to drive her on. She has an old boyfriend who visits her and she can contact herself as a child. These spiritual happenings meant that she was never alone and found comfort with their appearances. Craig, who was a fantastic guy and strong and courageous, he was not affected by the ghosts and apparitions.

Melanie and Craig had two wonderful children, Paul and Tracey. Children make life full and interesting. They fill up the creases in life. Their smiley faces lighten the times of hardship. Melanie's greatest hours were with the children and the feeling of the completeness that surrounded her when they were all together. Even after a day at the office she was rushed with a new lease of life in the presence of her children.

Brenda was astonished at her outpouring about the children making life full. She had walked away from hers, now she no longer felt complete and all she could do was write some more. She had barely looked in the shop windows. She thought about her girlfriends back home and how they would be appalled at the idea of coming to Paris and not going shopping. Brenda found herself a place to sit down and kept on typing, she just couldn't stop now.

Melanie and Craig were share traders. They started their own business together before they were married. The business helped charities invest money on the stock market to increase the fundraising for their causes; however that had not been going that well in recent times.

Max made a mental note to catch up with all of these people and have everyone to his house for a barbeque. A party is good for cheering everybody up and Brenda stupidly felt that writing about a party would be similar to being at one. She was becoming delirious. It will be a good opportunity to nut through all the conflicting thoughts about what people would actually think and feel if time was flexible. I mean, would you want to go forward, back or stay the same? If going into the future meant you were not here in the present then there is the dilemma of missing out on something that is going on here. It would be like going on a holiday and your absence would be noticed. Then there is all the higgledy piggledy business of changing the past and affecting the present and the future. Would you be brave enough to risk changing something crucially important in your life by altering the past or future?

While waiting, Anna another fascinating Portonian entered the bar. Anna runs the local submarine ride across the gulf. Scores of people each week enjoy an awesome journey under the water witnessing marine life all because Anna took a risk in converting an old war sub into a tourist attraction with amazing windows all along the sides.

Behind her came in another famous Portonian, he was an old master blacksmith. The word was he had a great job working for a huge mining company up north. Flies up four days a month to remote location to make a forged piece that can't be fabricated any other way, earns a small fortune each time. These people were intense with their contribution to the wellness of the area and engaged Max be hopefully looking toward the future.

7 (2.65) The adventures of Kesbooks Skytower (1083)

The next day Max went to visit Angela at the library. She told him she'd had wonderful morning helping customers with their enquiries and had convinced two residents to take up action regarding a local park. She was turning into an environmentalist. Always going on about the way we should work to be more sustainable for the future.

“Can you find out anything positive about fallout from a cement factory” I asked her. She gave me a wonderful smile. “I love the way you work, Max.” Information is a powerful commodity. I should be getting paid more for working here. “Look at all these people, Max; I think I am the only person working today.”

I looked around and had to think about what she was saying. There had to be at least fifty people browsing in the library. She had a point.

“Come back tomorrow Max, I will see what I can find for you. If we just spent the time and money scanning content and indexes we could retrieve a lot more information like the type you are asking for.”

Brenda decided to leave Max and bring Kesbooks Skytower into the story. Max thought he was helping Kesbooks get used to life outside of the computer. I will let you read and excerpt from the diary she is writing for the researchers back in the year 3000.

1st April 2021

I am getting used to my new life. I came out of the computer program about a month ago and though it was scary at first I am now starting to have some fun. I know you can see through my camera eyes but I do have feelings about this process too. I suppose the whole world is watching and I hope I do a good job.

It has all been a shock really, while we practised this in 3000, to come to 2021 is really quite an experience. People had been interesting to meet. When I first come out I was at the Semaphore public library. People had not realized I was a hologram so there was no need to make me look like an avatar out of the Second Life. I even made some friends there among the borrowers and staff.

A very nice man named Max had been especially nice and helpful. Max is an Information Trader who uses the library as his office. Max has given me some money buy to spend here but I really don't need anything. Though sometimes I pretend to have lunch or drink a coffee with my new friends. He also thinks he has applied the programming of Second Life to the logic and physics of real life and that is why I am now able to teleport using GPS coordinates. I just don't have the heart (funny really that I have picked up so quickly the human friends etiquette) to tell him I don't need his help because I am being operated from the future. I have been able to use my own intelligence to interpret and adjust my programming myself. I know you were worried that the large difference in time might weaken the signals for me to have that much power but I feel fine. Everything is going well.

I have a Facebook and Twitter accounts and apparently there are a lot of other avatars from Second Life living in the "real world". I have many friends and followers and most people are really nice because I am learning everything from scratch it has been hard not to

make a mess of some stuff. I have very few emotions so I am not plagued with embarrassment.

One of my new friends Charlotte has been telling me about growing up and going to school. This has upset me because I have been created as I am today. I really wish to experience life and I have thought about how I will grow older naturally when I am an avatar. If there was such a thing as ageing in Second Life I could get back and change my appearance every six months or so. I guess I have what a lot of the people seem to want and that is an ageless appearance. I know I have had training in human psychology but actually being here so far from my own time is not always easy.

Charlotte asked me a whole bunch of questions about if I could tell the future by going back to Second Life and coming back after going forward in time or something crazy like that so she could get rich quick. I don't think so. I do have some advantages as I do not need to sleep. I can't feel tired and therefore can party all night. I don't eat or drink so I am a cheap date. I was in Second Life for about a year before coming out so I do know quite a bit of stuff. While I am not that naïve, I have said some really stupid things because I need to learn quite a bit of history and politics and this and that to function properly. I get better every day though because I can operate for twenty four hours a day and with the internet it is really easy to catch up on information.

I have fixed my co-ordinates so that I have a solid three dimensional structure and can wear clothes and apply makeup etc. Most people walking down the street or at the shops don't notice anything different about me. I don't really feel anything when touched so that is a real disappointment as I have seen the pleasure others get from touching each other.

When Brenda reread what she had written she felt pretty good. It made sense to her. The hologram experiment of sending a hologram from the future to a computer program that was current in the desired year seemed a reasonable method. Especially if holograms were common place in the year 3000 and like the Curiosity Mars project it would have a camera and send vision and messages to the operators.

Perhaps Kesbooks sounded a little too human-like but if holograms were well established and everybody used them Brenda thought they would be very human like in their speech. She thought about the smart phones that talk, they are produced to try to sound human. Kesbooks would have a will of her own because she was a great hologram on an expedition.

8 (2.82) Charlotte's full house (1033)

Brenda looked up and an hour had passed but when she reread what she had written she was not impressed, it was going nowhere. On the spur of the moment she used the hotel internet to check her emails. She had been dreading opening her inbox because she thought there would be an email from her husband expressing his anger. Instead, there was nothing, just the usual junk, a couple of her usual society and club requests. Her son's football club was having a fundraising event. She would not be attending. What would everyone would think of her, abandoning her children, running away? Her heart sank - nothing from her husband; he had not pleaded with her or told her he hated her - nothing that was worse.

Brenda did not cry this time but skipped breakfast and pushed on with her endeavour. Encouraged by the success of the previous chapter Brenda pushed on to Charlotte's problem

of finding herself living with herself at three different ages.

Kezza, her seventeen-year-old self is a worry because she has been trying to kill herself by starving to death. She thought this was going to be a good method as it would give her time to change her mind, she would slim down and people would notice and reach out to her. She felt free from the anxiety she had felt before, how wonderful it felt to her each time she thought it is all okay, I won't be here much longer, 'I can bear a bit more'.

Tarni, her ten-year-old self, is distressed to see Kezza losing weight. Charlotte and Lottie, her sixty-year-old self, are unperturbed having the benefit of knowing it is only a difficult stage in her life.

Tarni talks to Lottie and they have a conversation about Tarni's school friend. Lottie informs Tarni that she will not be friends with her much longer because they will drift apart and Tarni will meet a new friend who becomes a friend for life. She is unhappy to know she will lose her best friend. Charlotte scolds Lottie for telling Tarni what is going to happen to her.

Charlotte calls out that dinner is ready and they enter the dining room. Trevor, her ex-husband is there. He looks painfully at Sutti but she smiles - she is not unhappy, it is alright.

Charlotte stabs Trevor with a vicious expression: - *how dare you leave me? How dare I fall in love with you? You are old and boring.* She looks around the room and thinks of all the things she would do differently if she had this space to herself.

We tend to believe a lot of unsafe ideas for the rest of our lives. When their lives are over they are complete with their journey and feel spiritually enlightened.

Brenda was back out on the streets. After rereading her work she felt let down. What she was writing was not getting to her true thread. She felt that she had adequately made the point that time in the story was overlapping. She really felt she needed to put something more into it. Max thought the time entanglement was caused by Charlotte's secret hobby: blacksmithing. She had been working on their grandfather's forge when all the problems with extra selves started. Charlotte thought that it had occurred when she had gone out to ancient aboriginal lands. She had been on a hunt with an old boyfriend to find a front end loader that had been stolen and there had been a tip off that the loader was out bush. While she was looking for the loader she came across a buried sculpture, it was made of iron, plastic and pink concrete. This was not an artefact from the past it was from the future.

Brenda realised she was closer now, that feeling that you already know what is going to happen or you have seen something before when you have never been there before; could that be because it has already happened? What we believe to be going into the future is really going backwards. It is similar to the notion that fate has already been decided. Where has this idea come from? Have we always known that the future has already happened? Perhaps we are just having trouble articulating it.

Brenda changed her writing style at this point and began writing her story as if Max was the narrator. If you were surprised about Stella (though there are many TV shows now where the dead people play parts) you had better be sitting down while I tell you about Charlotte and Kesbooks. I guess their connection to Max is the library. Charlotte, my sister, used to work there and Kesbooks first came into this world there. I'll start with Charlotte: she lives with herself and herself at three different ages. I know I told you to be careful I don't want your brains to blow because I haven't told you about Kesbooks yet; she came out of Second Life. I found her in the PC room at the library said she was bored in Second Life and

needed to get out. Bloody hell, talk about weird but amazing. After the initial shock of something totally impossible being true it does not take long to adjust.

Anyway, at Charlotte's house there is Tarni aged ten, Kezza seventeen and Lottie sixty-five as well as Charlotte. You could say she is full of herself (my joke I chuckle to myself when I have had a couple of beers). This apparently came about when Charlotte began dabbling in blacksmithing on our great grandfathers forge and she somehow managed to twist time around itself and ended up with a full house. You could say she is full of herself (ha ha ha). Charlotte told me about this one day because for some reason she thought I might be able to help with a problem with Kezza (17 year old Charlotte) . I do actually remember her at that age and she definitely was a pain in the arse.

Brenda had no idea about whether Charlotte's predicament said anything at all. What will the reader think about this? Is it too much? She ploughed on wanting to get to Max's party.

9 (3.00) Max's party (991)

The party was starting in a couple of hours and Max had cleaned up his house in anticipation of the guest's arrival earlier in the week. He decided he couldn't wait any longer to have a drink so he went out to the shed where he had prepared a bar with quite an assortment of beverages. He was taken by surprise when he found John, an old friend, was sitting in the

corner of his shed. Max was not scared as he looked very much like he had always looked: a bit sullen and angry with the world but happy to see me in a childlike way. Max was sure pleased to see him. He still had short red hair with a very long plait down his back and a very cheeky grin.

Max was over the initial shock and now warmed up to the idea of spending an evening with him. Max put a beer next to him and he laughed. Max told him about his plans and about his new girlfriend. It was difficult to communicate with him but he tried. Max thought about what he must look like talking to himself. He wanted to continue our relationship now he had come to find me but the next day he was gone again. Just like when he was alive.

First to arrive were the Charlottes, then Melanie and her family. Frank bought his wife who Max had never met in all the years they had drunk together. Anne, George, Stella had got the night of work, everyone. Several brought friends and family along with them. Kesbooks was there too, recording everything for the people of the year three thousand.

Everyone was talking at once. There was such a buzz about what was going on. Everyone wanted to do something different, go back in time and change events, go forward to find out the lottery numbers; it was pandemonium. The church had come out and said it was unnatural to change the order of time, some people said they were too scared to try it. Others thought they would give it a go. It was all so new. What a change for the whole world to deal with. Christian and Sandy were planning a trip back to try to see Jesus. What would you do? Are you happy with only knowing the past? If it could be changed would you be brave enough to go ahead go into the future to see how you fair or do you really already know what is going to happen to you.

Brenda was back out on the street, she began thinking she would have to try to get a job and somewhere to stay. This was a step back toward her old life. Perhaps she was not a writer but just an ordinary person with no particular talents. She found herself talking to herself again. Brenda she said to herself, perhaps this is just the story of your life. Perhaps this adventure is something you will look back on and laugh about or at least have to yourself. Maybe it is back to work and family for you. You could go home, even if Jeremy want let you back into the house you could stay with a friend until you get resettled. The children might even admire you for trying. Perhaps it is all part of your path to the person you are going to be. She was yielding to defeat, they was not going to be any glory of being a famous writer. A moment of horror came over her. She was not who she wanted to be, only who she was. She felt sick, it was not enough. She thought about walking in front of a train but dismissed this quickly. She wouldn't do that. There was nothing else to do but write a bit more to see if there was going to be an end to the story.

The funning part about the party Max was reflecting was that Kesbooks and John got along so well. I mean a ghost and a computer avatar, what a match. Max was shaking his head; life had really got mixed up now. It was pretty well untenable, he wanted out of it. The only good that was coming out of it was the economy was doing well. With people travelling back and forth in time there was so much more trade happening. Travel agents were creating fabulous tours of past events. Everyone wanted to go back to see the Middle Ages, see the pyramids being built or hang out with their favourite historical figure. There was a lot of research and paper work to take care of. Max had been in the uptake of the new world so he had made quite a fortune.

Another great thing that happened at the party was that Max met a nice lady name Julie. He was very pleased with himself. He really liked Julie and he really was thought her lovely because given all the opportunities the time entanglement gave everyone, she wanted to go back to a really great night she had back in her teen years. Max thought this was pretty sincere. All was going well for him.

Rereading the last bit, Brenda remembered that she had said that Brian invents a program that simulated going back in the past to favourite moments perhaps in the end this is the only time travel that will be allowed because it does not interfere with the time line. You can only go back be an observer of the past and not interfere with it.

10 (3.16) Who is Claude? (954)

Brenda was getting frustrated that the “Struggling to get it right” chapter was now too long and she would need to rearrange the story again or maybe she thought she could add two hundred words to every chapter to make the second derivative spiral right. She had already times the change in hypotenuse by ten thousand and then divided it by two. It was becoming difficult to manage. She pondered the idea of investigating the word lengths if she calculated the change in the change of the hypotenuse of each triangle. It would then become a story with chapter lengths determined by the third derivative of the Theodorus Spiral. She was madly cutting and pasting a bit from here and into there. She was frantic because she realised she was chopping and changing the only copy. She should have made a new copy and started

altering that. She only had a mini laptop with no mouse, just a worn out touch pad to work with. This was insane.

Brenda was so absorbed in her babbling story she failed to notice Claude approaching. He was frowning at her. She was hunched up with pain etched across her face. Earlier she had caught sight of herself in the window. It was amazing the rapid decline in her appearance from just a few days on the street. Her nails were broken and her hair had massive tangles in it. Claude whispered perhaps you need a break. Let me buy you a meal. You are going to make yourself sick. I am sick Claude. I am talking to myself in the park, believing I am a famous writer, hoping that my delusions are real. I am begging that my characters would come to life before my eyes so I can touch them and talk to them. I want to become part of my world where time can fold back on its self and I can teleport from here and see my children. Claude let her spill all her troubles out over him, he was very patient and kind. Perhaps she had over reacted the other night by running away from him.

Brenda was about to apologise to Claude for her silly behaviour when he told her he had phoned her husband and he was on his way to Paris to get her. He held her hand and told her that she was the story. She could relax now because it was over. She would be going home.

Claude was saying he felt she should see a doctor and eat a proper meal or at least get to a hotel to rest in comfort for a while. He showed genuine concern for her. Yet she felt betrayed by the stranger. How could he have rung Jeremy? She was up and running away again. Why were people always interfering, trying to help? She was exasperated now and had bought a bottle of port at the shop. She found her way back to the ledge where she had spent her first evening. She took a swig from the bottle and then another. She was furious at Claude for ringing Jeremy, why can't people mind their own business and let her get on with hers.

She felt the annoyance that had arisen so many times in her life when others think they know it all and try to tell her how to do things. She knew what she was doing; she was a strong, independent woman, living out her life the way she wanted to. She was not going to bend to societal norms just because she felt she needed to. She also was not thinking that the universe was taking care of her. How many times had she heard her girlfriends, some of whom were successful women, say the universe is taking care of me? Brenda shook her head. She was taking care of Brenda.

She began thinking about the story. She had wanted a dramatic ending with Max in a dying scene and his girlfriend. Sandy was holding my hand saying goodbye. I said “I am not going anywhere, please don’t force me away. I want to stay”. I knew I was dying but I was not ready to leave. Brenda was drunk now, her thoughts muddled and incomprehensible. Max is killed. Max believed it was Charlotte who had released an ancient magical power that allows humans to see into their future because it has already happened. Kesbooks doesn’t know she is responsible for the upheaval. She is just a computer program while back in the year 3000 calm has been restored because humanity has decided that there will be no further playing with time. All that happened years ago. We are just living the life that has already been set for us.

When Brenda wrote back in the year 3000 she really meant in the future but she was now convinced time was running backwards. The future is already set. It has been done. She was not going to win a writing competition, she knew it. It had all been in vain so there were more tears and feelings of despair.

11 (3.32) What is in this world for Brenda? (921)

Should she press on, could she fix up this work, did it have any credibility? Was it a stumbling block, a humiliation or a triumph? Was she working toward a solution with commitment but with stumbling blocks or embarrassing herself and family?

“Please send me a message”, she was saying to herself. “Who are you talking to”, she didn’t know, she just wanted something like a message from the past or the future, She wanted some answers to questions about what was she doing here? What was in this world for her? She was nothing like who she had wanted to be. She missed Jeremy, she wondered what would become of her. Would she get back to Australia? All her grandiose thoughts were gone. She felt none of the confidence she had felt when she set off for Paris only a week ago. That burning desire to write a creative work and to forge a place for herself in history was no longer there. She felt like just a shell of herself. She did know the future and it was not going to be good. Perhaps she would perish here.

She panicked. Perhaps she really should see a doctor in the morning. Claude was right she was making herself ill. She missed her family and her old life. She had made a big mistake. She knew Jeremy loved her so maybe he would forgive her and let her come home. The thought of his warm hands wrapped around hers made her feel better. He was a good father and husband, he really did deserve better. She should be at home cooking his dinner, making sure the school uniforms were ready for the morning. What was she doing? She had been incredibly selfish. She felt sick with grief for her old life, poor Jeremy would be having to work and look after the kids and take care of the house and pets. Would he forgive her?

Suddenly she really believed Kesbooks Skytower was whispering to her. She was saying "Brenda I went back in time, I spoke to Theodorus He was overwhelmed of course but he listened to what I told him".

"What did you tell him?"

"I gave him a brief history of how we have developed. I explained about all the cultures slowing getting closer together I explained about the computer and communication making it possible to connect to each other across the world and now how people in the year 3000 have changed everything by sending me back in time".

"I want to tell you something else, Brenda" I want you to realise how far you have come. I know you knew that but I have seen the past, it was very strange to see and hear the people talk. I had only known the twenty-first century but now I have been 300 BC you have come a long way. I don't know why it has not worked out better for the people. You should all be happy, what happened?"

Brenda explained societies can't agree on how to live: religion, ethics, money get in the way. Even within a family there is discontentment so how can a whole city, country or global community see a harmonious way. She told Theodorus about an online discussion on animal cruelty she had read in the library when she was there. Cruelty slaughtering animals for food. He said there were similar issues in his community. Mainly the people don't think about it and the issue is ignored until it is open to discussion but everything runs its course and old thoughts become popular.

Brenda was in a trance. Could it be real? Was she really hearing voices? Perhaps Claude had been right and she would see a doctor. It was early evening now and felt she should find somewhere to sleep the night and then in the morning sort herself out. She sat for

a while on the park bench letting all the Parisian life go by her. Several people stared at her, for she was looking like a tramp now still sipping on her port. She was surprised no one came to move her on. She thought to herself, 'I guess I am just lucky, what a laugh'.

But to her surprise despite her resolution to give up on the book, she again found herself with words and scenes on her head. She reached into her backpack pulled out that laptop. Just a little bit more she told herself.

12 (3.46) Kembla the blacksmith (893)

Kembla was an artistic blacksmith with many years of experience forging metal to create beautiful works of art. Most were imperfect in many ways but they told a story of the metal they were created from. Some sculptures were like twisted plants with branches tangling around each other.; they were very striking.. Kembla was a woman and in the past she hid her gender because the forge was a man's domain. She had been harassed and attacked on more than one occasion. One particular time a man had tried to take over her forge and she had to defend herself and protect her property. In the struggle she had stabbed him in the stomach with a white hot, sizzling piece of iron. The infection from his wound had killed him. She felt great sorrow for her actions but bravely carried on.

Over the years she had learnt her skill on her own. Experimenting with different ideas, creating works that she didn't really plan on making but that seemed to create themselves when she heated the metal and started hammering. She loved the heat coming from the fire; she became immersed in her work each time. It forced her to push herself to her creative and physical limits. It was a great comfort to her that she had these skills that she developed on

her own without instruction. She worked tirelessly every day, the hammer ringing on the anvil. She sometimes had to travel great distances to get the coke for her fires and on these journeys she would meet other travellers.

On one journey she met Theodorus who told her about his spiral so while she pulled her cart of coke back home she thought about a new design to make in the forge. She would cut the iron into different lengths the measurement that Theodorus had told her and she would hammer scrolls on the ends and attach all the spokes to a shield. She might be able to sell them at the market.

Why she was a chosen one she did not know but she found herself drifting in time. For a while she was Hypatia's mother trying to help her daughter survive. She was so frustrated with the murder of her daughter despite all her efforts to change the sequence of events. In the end she saw a way to change the attitude of men toward women. She had heard about a man named Buddha so decided to travel to meet with him on his travels and convince him to try to change the way the men in the community viewed women. They could be brave intelligent warriors with good industrial skills. They didn't need to try to be men they just needed to realise they could be woman but strong and capable at the same time as being feminine. The attitude of society needed to be changed.

When Kembla catches up with Buddha she looks him in the eyes and states, "I am the blacksmith". He immediately sees the error of his way. He has seen the woman in the wrong light; he has misunderstood her purpose in the world. She is not to be taken lightly but taken seriously, as an equal. She knows as much as he does. Despite being deprived of education, treated like a slave and misused. She can be the pink engineer. He has missed this. It was a mistake all these years ago. He must make amends now.

"What shall we do?" "We can gather all the greatest minds, those who can contribute

to make the vision. We can get them from the past. We can get their opinion and ideas from their holograms that they send to this meeting. We have been to the future we know it can be done. The past is not a hindrance now, we have conquered time: the last frontier. It can be done."

Unfortunately a great tragedy occurred at dinner that night. Despite Buddha realising his mistakes and vow to spread the word, Kembla accidentally killed Buddha with poisonous mushrooms: diverting her chance to change the course of history.

Brenda really liked this part of the story; this is the keynote. This strong, self-instructed, independent thinking woman was who she wanted to be like. Brenda knew her story was filled with lots of different concepts but that was the idea, the connection with the spiral that continually changes the angles between the hypotenuse and the origin.

13 (3.60) Theodorus has something to say (868)

As much as Brenda wanted history to be different: it was not. She was not the one to change it. She wanted to be able to be connected to all the great scientists and mathematicians. They could discuss with new knowledge what they could and could not have done in the past. The future would not be about money but achievements.

Not having the internet felt to Brenda like an arm had been cut off. She knew her history of maths and science but couldn't remember the dates to know who was living at the same time as whom. She should have bought a book. She had bought one book; it seemed a funny choice now, *1800 Mechanical Movements, Devices and Appliances*, first written in

1899. Brenda was always amazed at how much the world knew all those years ago. She felt the education system was failing in some way because they took so long to teach children maths and science information that has known for hundreds of years. Surely we have evolved so we can teach younger children mechanic and physics in primary school. We really do underestimate younger people, no wonder they get bored at school with all the colouring in they have to do.

Brenda was again immersed in her thoughts when Theordous whispered to her; she heard it like he was a man sitting next to her. She was not scared. The voice was strong and deep.

“Do you see that really you are back where you started though you have more understanding of who you are now? You thought it all through thoroughly; really you can relax and just enjoy life. You’ve come full circle but with more depth now to your character”. Brenda said. “Yes, I can see, it has been a worthwhile experience. It doesn’t matter if I have failure at least I tried. I am a better person for trying.”

“Young lady, you have not failed, you have written about the spiral, people will read this and then they will know about me and what I created all those years ago. I know that while you know the hypotenuse is continually getting longer but with each triangle by a lesser amount you think it should eventually it will be a circle. I know that you have written a maths program where the spiral continues on round and round and that you have left that program running for days to see what happens. It appears to go on for infinity and you don’t understand why. Perhaps because the third derivative (the change in the change of the hypotenuse) is getting smaller therefore the difference in the change of the length is getting smaller and so it begins to look like circles with the same difference in size.” Brenda felt relieved that she actually understood this now, finally. She smiled. “Thanks.”

Theodorus continued. "You have also tried to tell people your thoughts about women needing to take more of control of their environment by studying maths, science and engineering especially now there are no constraints about them going to university or working, that is courageous. You are so desperate to find a cure for your mother that you have written a book you want published in the hope someone will read it and help her."

"Stop being so hard on yourself," he paused for a moment and then said. "I will tell you one more thing; you were right when you wrote about people believing unsafe ideas. You have highlighted this when you say, Max thinks Charlotte set the time entanglement in motion, Charlotte thinks it was the strange artefact from the future, and you think it was the scientists and programmers in Year 3000 but I am going to tell you it was the fate of the universe that caused it. Physicists will discover time entanglement and all the social and policy issues you have mentioned will have to be discussed and controlled to prevent chaos. It was always going to happen and you cannot stop it. The future has already happened"

14 (3.74) Phone a friend (845)

Brenda was beside herself. No longer able to sleep, her mind was darting about from one thought to another. Everything that had happened to her was regurgitating in her brain. Each new thought interrupting the current thought. It was nightmarish but she still for some reason pursued her writing because she had believed all the horrific emotions were part of the process of writing a great piece.

Theodorus' voice was gone now and she was amazed at how calm she felt. She knew he had not really spoken to her from the past, didn't she? Brenda then really surprised herself

and said, 'I don't even think he's right, I am pretty sure the time entanglement did occur because of the advances in science and the ability to send a hologram into the past' at this she laughed and laughed. She laughed so hard at herself, like she had never done before. She was arguing with her own delusion. She was hysterical.

What's in your head? Can you see the future? Sometimes I dream things and later, sometime days, months or even years later I find myself looking at the scene I had dreamed. Does that happen to you? Yes I think we can create our own future. We can think and concentrated and imagine a way of life. We can think it enough and it will happen; it can happen. Brenda had put herself in a position where she could not give it up. She just battled on by pouring her thoughts onto the page. It was all she could do now. Where was this story going? Recap: Theodorous first created the spiral, went to the future and saw a young Charlotte learning about the spiral, Charlotte grows up and finds a sculpture from the future, sent back from the year three thousand AD by a group of scientists and computer programmers who created Kesbooks Skytower. Charlotte sets up a factory making Theodorous Spiral Shields and the Sculptures and sells them to past, present and future buyers. Max who is Charlotte's brother is set into the story just when the time entanglement is starting because he is not comfortable with the new time regime he wants things to be normal. He wants to put time back in its place but that does not make sense anymore because time does not have a place. The premise of the story is a feminist one, Kembla the blacksmith wants to go back and make a fundamental change to history and inspire women and change the minds of men about women's abilities to be engineers and play a more active role in shaping the future. Brenda sighs in defeat, this is not working, she weeps for her old life, and she has been a fool.

She stumbled along to the backpacker hostel she had noticed before, found a telephone and rang her friend Krystal back in far north Australia. When Krystal answered a

wave of relief swept through Brenda for she had been completely shut off from her old life for a week now and so much had happened that she was feeling completely alone. Now she was talking to her old friend Krystal who she had discussed many life changing events and thousands of not so important ones too. She poured her predicament out. Krystal patiently listened. When Brenda was finished she had wise words to say about writing, explaining that the pouring out of words was called stream of consciousness. She told Brenda to draw a circle and get the all the characters sorted out on the page with their connections. She told Brenda it was all alright, she could always come and stay at her house if she needed to.

All of a sudden all the weirdness was gone, all the thinking that the time was running backwards was gone. She was just a traveller ringing home to have a chat with a friend. When she got off the phone she went to the bar and bought another drink and had some fun talking to other travellers, sharing their stories. Eventually she staggered back exhausted but happy to her favourite spot in Paris.

15 (3.87) It's all gone (825)

When Brenda woke she was stiff as a board, she didn't think she could move. She was so cold, her lips must be blue. She managed to reach out for her laptop to write about the dreams she had had. She realised that what she needed to do was forget about the time entanglement story because that was just about trying to change what she was not happy with. The world she lived in was all she was going to get. There was no magical power to make it all better for her. She wasn't even delusional enough to write a good story about it. She was just down and out Brenda. She should write about herself, her adventure. That might be a story.

Perhaps she could get her old job back at the public library. She had always enjoyed being amongst the books. The idea that the books might vanish alarmed her. She couldn't understand this need to make everything electronic. Surely that was using up more energy than growing trees for paper. Brenda understood the laws of entropy, once energy from whatever source it was used it could not be used again. It pained her to see so much wastage. We were supposed to be using less energy not more.

Brenda was shocked to find her laptop was gone. All that work and nothing to show for it. She jumped up searching amongst her belongings but it was not there. She was surprisingly calm about it. She thought that maybe it was for the best. She did wonder if anyone would read the document. They wouldn't know the numbers next the chapter headings were her calculations on intended and actual word counts of the chapters to make the second derivative spiral.

The work was not good anyway. It was not going to win a fiction prize. It was the ramblings of a menopausal housewife who for a moment felt she could not bear to be ordinary. She felt better already. Perhaps it had all been a really bad episode. Maybe a prelude before she ended up like her mother in a home. Brenda actually found comfort in the fact that maybe she would end up in a home where everything would be done for her and she would not need to venture out into the big bad world again. She laid back down again, waiting for help. Her lips were very dry and she had a very bad headache from the hangover. After several hours she had a wave of panic that maybe she might die here. She remembered she had not eaten since the meal with Claude, which might have been three days ago. She was so weak. She lost consciousness.

16 (4.00) Time to go home (806)

Someone was talking to her; a familiar voice was gently pushing her. “Wake up, Brenda.” It is Jeremy. Her husband was there. It was amazing. She struggled to open her eyes. Claude was there too. They were trying to get water into her mouth. She weakly allowed them to pick her up. When she woke again she was in a hotel room. The room was empty. She called out and Jeremy came into the room. He did not smile at her but he was here. He had travelled all the way across the world to rescue her. For that she would be forever grateful.

While she had been sleeping Claude and Jeremy had been talking. Claude’s mother had suffered from abulia the same as Brenda’s mother and had been given a drug that had bought her back from the state she had been in. Jeremy had sent that information home to Australia for Brenda’s father, to get her mother onto the drug. Apparently it had had immediate benefits.

An email had arrived from home. Brenda’s mother had got up a few days after starting taking the drug, packed her bags, called a taxi and arrived home surprising her dad who had taken her into his arms in a flood of tears. Wow what a miracle. Brenda’s mum thanks her for not giving up on her and to please come home now. No one is mad at her.

Brenda arrived home on a Monday while her children were at school. She and Jeremy caught a taxi home from the airport. When she entered the home everything was just as she left it including some of the washing she had left on the line. She had only been gone thirteen days. It seemed like so much longer to Brenda. Her and Jeremy had spent a couple of days sorting through their emotions and rekindled their relationship. Jeremy even expressed admiration to her of her efforts. Once he was satisfied that the reason for her departure was not another man he was prepared to forget and forgive her. Brenda didn’t reflect much on the

experience she just wanted to be able to get back to her old life.

Brenda was extremely apprehensive about the children's reaction but she needn't have been. They arrived home bursting to tell what they had been up to. Her daughter was already over the fact she hadn't been able to do what she wanted on Saturday night because her brother needed to be somewhere else. Jeremy had taken care of the family in her absence. Within a few minutes of arriving home the children were watching TV and on their computers just as they always did. Brenda started to cook the tea.

17 (4.12) The end: the shortest part (789)

A few months later Brenda's story won the Shakespeare and Company writing competition and her family travelled with her this time to Paris to receive her prize. They had a wonderful happy family holiday and Krystal came along as well. They visited all the great tourist spots and for some reason Brenda did not show Jeremy where she had slept those lonely nights and he did not ask. She did wish he wanted to know more about what she had done while she was here but he didn't and she couldn't change that.

Brenda had lost the laptop and hadn't managed to finish the chapters so that she could get the word count of each chapter right. She did not know how she even entered the competition but she decided not to let a little rationality get in the way of a good story. What a life!

There was one strange thing that did happen that Brenda did not really stop and think about until quite a bit later. Brenda and Jeremy were sitting out the back of their house, enjoying a social gathering and telling friends how her mother had recovered from the strange illness. Jeremy was recalling how the doctor's had found out from research that a drug had

been tried on other patients similar to Brenda's mother and had administered the drug to her while Brenda was away. When Brenda mentioned Claude's mother having the same condition Jeremy was confused and asked her who Claude was. She realised instantly that Jeremy had not met Claude and she then was left wondering if he had been a vision. Perhaps she had had a delusion after all. She went as far as to think perhaps some the characters from her story had come alive in her mind and appeared as real before her. She had always explained the hearing of Theodorus's voice by the whole bottle of port she had drunk that night. Claude though was a different matter. Gosh she wouldn't be the first author to have a vision in Paris would she? She thought while laughing at herself.

She decided not try to write anything else, which is fair enough considering the ordeal it was. She did occasionally wonder what happened to Kembla but always dismissed any notion of further thought on the matter. She returned to her ordinary, happy ways of living, with its ups and down but really pretty lucky life. That whole Paris period of her life was referred to as that weird time and in time was forgotten until one day many, many years later she was thinking of studying French and had printed off a copy of Emile Zola's *The belly of Paris*. While flicking through it the word abulia popped out of the page. Who is one of the characters, no other than Claude, the artist? Had she known about this before she read it? Did she somehow already know about Claude before she read about him? These incidents happen to people all the time; we called it a coincidence, when perhaps it is small fragments of time jumping about.

Final word: Another letter to the author

10th September 2012

Readers may think that Brenda is you but none of this true. You did not leave your family for Paris, though it has crossed your mind to do so. You have imagined what it would be like to do so, how you would feel, what you would do and where you would go. Your mother has not recovered; she continues to remain in the same state refusing to try the drug. There is unlikely to be any change in the future, you have to accept this. You have not given up on her.

You are amazed that you have actually written a whole novella. Who would have thought, I mean loads of people say they are going to write a book but you actually did it. You did it even though there was no real motivation to do so. How did you get enough energy to do it? Some days you are so lethargic that just doing the daily tasks are a struggle so then from nowhere there is enough energy to write 18000 words. And there is more.

This work is really part of an art installation piece with sculpture, music and literature. The sculpture that Charlotte finds in this story is the one you are currently constructing and you have written a piece of music to go with it which you regularly play on the piano. Now you have the literature complete. Entering the novella in the Paris Literacy Prize is a way seeing how it is received. Does it get a response; is it creative and innovative enough? Only time will tell. Does the reader like it or loathe it. In some ways a response of any kind will be a success.

from the author