

Valentine's Day Raviolis

*"I am the daughter, the first-born, the beautiful baby,
the little princess.
I'm writing a book someday. It's going to be about
my family and me."*

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To

Christina who taught me how to be a Mom

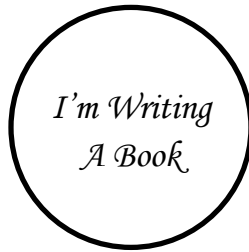
*Mary Katherine who inspired me to start and to finish and
encouraged me in between*

Anna who always patiently listened to the paragraphs I wrote

*And to Michael, for his love and patience and always making me
feel like his queen.*

Valentine's Day Raviolis

Prelude



I'm writing a book. The cover of my book will look like one of the following:

Rollercoasters' intertwined in each other
Or
All kinds of rings intertwined in each other:
Wedding ring
Engagement ring
Mother's ring
Man's Black Onyx ring
Plastic gumball machine ring
Antique ring
Brass ring

Hi, it's me, Mary. I will start my story at the beginning. However, which one should I start with? The day I was born; or the day I met my husband or the day of any of my individual beautiful daughters' births. On the other hand, possibly I should begin when my parents discovered they were pregnant for me. Perhaps it should start the day my grandmother held me, her first grandchild, in her arms. Each of these would be too mundane to begin this epilog.

Most likely, I should start when I found out that life did not evolve solely around me. *That is one concept I have yet to comprehend totally.* You see, to me, life is an ever-ending circle and you ride it like a rollercoaster. As a child, I assumed the circle of all life revolved around me. Then, without notice, one

Valentine's Day Raviolis

day it occurred to me that perhaps, I, myself, was merely one of the spheres, not the primary circle in this menagerie of life. Upon further observation, the problem internally escalated when I confronted myself with the question of where did my circle begin and where did it end? I pondered the question: How were all those other circles intertwined into my own? There seemed to be hundreds enveloping and interconnecting with each other including mine. Although I struggled with them, I could not split them apart from my own, not metaphorically, physically, mentally or emotionally.

Perhaps, my circle, like life, really has no beginning or end. If you are lucky, it lives forever in the smiles of your children or the mannerisms of your grandchild.

Yet, try as you might, you can ignore the circles, but like your family, you cannot ever seem to shake them loose from your own. I have come to realize over time that for the most part, you would never want to.

That is enough, of my metaphor on life. I guess, I will start right now, right there at 5:00 o'clock on the circle of my life. I have decided to write a book. Most Italians do not put anything down in writing. That could be too incriminating.

Can you feel the rollercoaster starting up the hill?

Introduction



I am the daughter, the first-born, the beautiful baby, the little princess. I am writing a book someday. It is going to be about my family and me.

The people I tell about my book sit a little taller in their chairs and boisterously voice an opinion on what subject matter the book should contain. Each has a special story they would like to see in it. This is their idea of being helpful and subliminally getting themselves into the book.

Almost instantly, their chests deflate and their bodies slump as I hurriedly explain: "this is the story of my life, with my family experiences, as seen through my eyes; not everyone else's; but thanks anyway."

Each one solicits a question pertaining to their individual interests, "Why did I write a book? What was your motivation to tackle such a project and complete it? Am I in the book? What is the point of writing the book?"

The point is very simple. I want my family to remember the stories as I have remembered them and learn from them. The record of my life should be as factual as I recollect it. My only wish is to state the facts in writing as I always saw them. I am documenting my children's history and my grandchildren's heritage.

I can tell stories of our family and me to my children and grandchildren and they will only half-listen. Each one will remember bits and pieces of the adventures and misadventures of my life as a child, a wife, a mother and someday, a grandmother.

Perhaps they will call me the 'rambling one' of the family. Or, perhaps, like my grandmother, I hope to also someday be remembered as "a woman of fortitude and strength of character with a loving and generous heart."

No doubt, each descendent will embellish the stories to suit their own fantasies of what life was like to have grown up with the "infamous" Mary. They will listen to stories from other family members. They will hear them told with a slightly different skew that changes the focal point of the story that I wish them to remember. Holding a book in their hands, a very tangible object, that they can read, word for word, will enable each one to embrace a piece of my history which is in part, their own family history.

A great deal of family information will go into this book.

I always saw my family heritage and traditions as unique in comparison to the friends and schoolmates I knew throughout my childhood. Verbalizing the memories of those unique traditions and stories sometimes made my family feel a little uneasy. This book would be a new experience for my family.

Potentially, this book could become a family scandal. Its creation was making everyone think twice about his or her own lives. An internal family debate ensued. Would this book be a good thing or a bad thing? Everyone wondered.

"What is in the book? Who is in this book? What time in your life did you write about in the book? How did you portray me in the book?"

Reading, is the only way to know the true story of what this little girl, everyone knew growing up had chosen to write about.

Dad asks, "Did you write about everyone? Did you write good stuff about me?"

Mom quietly reiterates, "Remember, you don't want to say anything about the family that could be a problem later."

My husband, Michael refuses to comment or read a word of this novel until it is in print and a copy of the book is in his hands. "If I have never seen it or commented on it, I cannot be held responsible for anything in it."

Valentine's Day Raviolis

I have discovered through my interactions with writers and readers alike, that being aware that something is officially down in writing that may pertain to you specifically initially causes the potential reader to sit back and contemplate for a moment. Each one intently reflects upon how he or she has interacted throughout their relationship with that writer. I observe closely their faces and can picture their minds running quickly through all the different scenarios of their association together with me. They mentally query the subject matter. Outwardly, they try to appear nonchalant about the subject at hand. Nevertheless, I can discern from their facial expressions exactly what question they are contemplating. How does their relationship with the author reflect in the story that unfolds in the book?

I guess many people touch our lives every minute of every day. Some moments are considered an insignificant passing, and some induce life-changing events. Any person can embrace the touch of these meetings or avert them.

The choice is theirs. I, of my own free will, embrace the touch and hold on for dear life. My family is the biggest part of my life and I know I would not want it any other way. I have chosen to pass these memories on to my children so they too may perpetually live in the circle, I call, life.

I have learned, in some way, to appreciate the significance of everyone who has crossed my path.

Trips with my parents and visits with my grandparents are memories I will cherish forever. *Note, my present plan is to inflict as many visits and family trips upon my own children and future grandchildren as I can cope with. I do not want them to miss any of the enjoyment.*

When contemplating what I would write about, I can clearly see certain memories of days gone by. They flash through my mind like an old movie reel. Sometimes, I can feel the flush in my face as I recall an embarrassing moment in junior high school, the smell of my grandma's freshly ironed pillowcase against my cheek or the touch of my little girl's hand clasped in my own.

I am the product of my Sicilian family environment. I have always felt special being the first born of the family, the number one baby of the new generation of Italian Americans (the ones

who did not understand or speak the Italian language from birth). Yet, on the negative side, I am also the first one to take the giant step and adventure into adulthood breaking away from these many family traditions.

When did I stop being my parents' daughter and become the mother of my own daughters?

An overview of my credentials to narrate this story...

I recall I was a somewhat spoiled little girl. However, I was constantly given chores or "jobs" as we called them in our house. I guess it was to keep my ego in perspective.

Sometimes I was sure I was the only one in the house doing any of the work. *Funny, I can clearly remember my grandmother using those same words to describe her life before she met my grandfather.*

Nevertheless, as long as I was within the confines of my home I felt carefree and happy.

Now, I am a wife, with a generous husband, beautiful children and responsibilities. I am expected to do all the work. Nonetheless, from the perspective of others, some still insist, I have grown up and still live like a little princess.

Do I ever graduate to queen? Do I really want to?

Years of little league softball, school volleyball, basketball, softball, soccer and lacrosse; I sat through them all. Practices, concerts, plays, science fairs and class exhibits; I have seen them all. PTA meetings, room mother duties, coaches meetings, car pool schedules, open houses; attended them all. Sound familiar?

Has a parent ever been spared these joys of parenthood? I think, not a good one. Sharing all these experiences with your children makes you a part of their lives that they will always remember, and learn to cherish, as they grow older and go away to college, and beyond.

When I was not looking, long before my girls' college years, I found my life centralized around my husband and the accomplishments and failures of my young children. Mike, my husband, and I became chauffeurs, short order cooks, confidants, cheerleaders, nurses, homework partners, and assorted encyclopedias of information for our daughters.