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# Joyce's Journal

A monthly dispatch from Joyce A. Miller, Writer



## IN AUGUST LET'S CELEBRATE BOOK LOVERS DAY!

Have you ever heard of the Green Bank Observatory in Green Bank, WV? It is the home of the world's largest steerable radio telescope. It is protected by two radio "quiet zones" so there is no interference when the telescope is searching for signals from extraterrestrial life in the Universe. It is also the setting for an upcoming graphic novel that I heard about at the Author Expo last month! Jessica Walker was the keynote speaker, and she is working on a project called **Secret Astronomers**. Her graphic novel is handwritten over a textbook called **General Astronomy**. The two main characters of the novel write back and forth to each other in this textbook that they keep in their high school library. The two teenage girls take on pen names, Copernicus and Kepler, so they can remain anonymous if anyone finds their daily diary. The novel will be full of teenage angst as well as a mystery for them to solve, available in October 2025. Listening to this wonderful keynote speaker was just one of the highlights of the Author Expo in Kilmarnock last month.

I have another interesting novel that I want to introduce to you: **The Nickel Loop**, a time travel romance. Written by my friend Nancy Houser-Bluhm, this novel debuted on July 22nd so it's available to purchase now. While traveling by train to meet her sister in Colorado, Emmaline travels back in time from 2022 to 1938. She meets a panic-stricken Nicholas who just arrived from 1898. Together they struggle to live in this new time period while yearning to return to their own places in time. **The Nickel Loop** is available for purchase as a paperback or eBook at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, or you can order it wherever you usually buy your books.

A GLIMPSE OF  
WHAT'S INCLUDED:

## An excerpt from **The Nickel Loop**

August 9th is Book Lovers Day which is an unofficial holiday to celebrate reading and literature. I want to raise a glass to these two authors who work diligently so that the rest of us can have new books to read!

And saving the best for last! I signed a contract with BrandyLane Publishing to publish my next book! We are going to change the title to **Mrs. Gari Melchers** or **The Artist's Wife**. That is the gist of the story, that Corinne was always thought about as his wife, never her own person. I am going to be working with a project manager within the next few weeks on my ideas for the book. They are going to provide an editor and book cover designer. They are also going to produce an eBook and an audio book. I'm very excited to get this work out into the world for you to read!

As the bonus for August's newsletter, I'm attaching an excerpt from a chapter in **The Nickel Loop**. As always, if you read it, please let me know. And leaving a review for my friend Nancy on Amazon or Goodreads always helps!

I live in the Church Hill section of Richmond, VA with my husband and my retired racing greyhound. Before I started writing, I worked for 30 years at a nuclear physics research laboratory.

Do what you came here for!



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*The Nickel Loop* is a Time Travel romance with strong flavors of historical fiction. (Some literary license invoked) by Nancy Houser Bluhm.

Emmeline from current day, steps from a train into 1938. She soon meets Nicholas who is from 1898. Together they navigate blending in, while trying to find a way back to their own times.

Following is an excerpt from *The Nickel Loop*, Chapter 18. Emmeline and Nicholas present themselves as a married couple. They choose a local boarding house. There were numerous boarding houses in Glenwood Springs in 1938. It offered a means for a woman to own her own business.

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Mrs. Miles welcomed them and showed them to their room. She hoped they were alright with the double bed. “When my husband died, I moved the children down to my space. I needed the single beds.” Emmeline chastised herself for being pleased there was just one.

It was a spacious and pleasing room with one small bureau and a floral area rug covering much of the plank floor. Emmeline embraced the room, seeing the long window extended close to the floor. On a sturdy three-legged table, there was a shallow bowl with violets floating in the water. Noticing an old writing desk, Emmeline slipped over and pulled on the fold-down section. A soothing energy arced from her hand up her arm. She held the connection but covered what she felt with words. “Oooh, I love little nooks for treasure items.”

“I am not sure what it is about the desk but it’s a favored piece of furniture for most who stay in this room.”

The window gave a view of the street. Emmeline looked forward to watching passersby and scurrying creatures. It quieted her mind, and it took a break from never-ending plans.

“Thank you so much. This is very homey. You’ve done a wonderful job of decorating.” Giving a satisfied smile, Mrs. Miles closed the door as she left them to settle in.

Nicholas flung Emmeline’s bag onto the bed. “I promise I will continue to be the gentleman.”

“I could take care of myself if there were other ideas.” Emmeline knew it was a feeble attempt to hide her genuine thought, she was increasingly attracted to this man. “Besides we’re still focused on getting out of here.”

Recovering from a fleeting look of disappointment, he said, “Yes, we are. No point taking something somewhere it can’t be fully realized.” Oddly, she resented his quick agreement.

They headed downstairs. As they entered the sitting room, she traced the carved spirals of the dark molding. Heavy, tied back curtains framed each side. Mrs. Miles soon appeared. The

squeaky steps must have alerted her. “Why don’t I show you around, so you know the common areas?”

“Mrs. Miles, let me know how I can help around the house to offset our rent.” Emmeline surprised herself over and over. She wasn’t one to stretch the truth or embellish it.

“Please call me Helen. After all, you will see my dirty dishes. I will give you a day to settle in and then we can discuss what’s next.” They followed her as she stepped into each room. “The sitting room, the dining area, and this living room with the radio are yours to enjoy.” Emmeline heard big band music coming quietly from the radio.

The backyard was small and narrow with a sidewalk leading to a carriage house in the back corner. This house was a labyrinth of rooms. She would welcome her return to the wide-open great rooms of the twenty-first century. These were cozy yet confining. They moved to a small south-facing room off the kitchen, full of heavily foliated plants. Even though it was winter, there were a few plants bearing fruit. A small green pear hung from one, and three large red tomatoes weighted down the branches of an otherwise sturdy plant. Emmeline didn’t own a plant or know how to care for one.

Next, she showed them the kitchen, explaining that guests weren’t to linger in this area. “Emmeline, you will of course be welcomed once we sort out chores.” Emmeline’s thoughts drifted off as she stepped further into the kitchen. It was warm from the oven’s heat and a meaty aroma filled her senses. The white oversized enamel sink was offset with a row of black tiles running along the front of the counter tops. The sparkling black and white speckled linoleum flooring continued the pattern. Mint green cupboards and the green and white gingham wallpaper softened the room. The counters were cozy with baskets of breads and eggs.

This kitchen carried a flair of calm activity, a stark difference to her own. The microwave was her kitchen staple. She re-heated her take-out for three minutes and boiled her tea water for two. Frozen sausage and veggie pizza was the only action her stove got. Emmeline’s mind returned as Helen listed the sunroom, her living quarters, and the main floor bathroom as private.

Asking if other guests were staying, Helen indicated all rooms were full. One guest was passing through. Another was at work, but both would join them for dinner. Beef roast from the butcher’s was served, along with roasted carrots and potatoes. Mentioning they appeared fresh, she said that they hold up in the root cellar if she leaves the tips on. “I like to bring out the freshest for a new guest’s first meal.”

Helen liked knowing where her food came from. She was no fan of many items showing up in the grocery stores. “I recognize necessity is the mother of invention, but it’s not healthy putting everything in a can. The frozen foods I read about aren’t natural. I grow what I can, then put up fresh fruit and vegetables that keep all winter. Mr. Williams, the butcher, can tell me exactly

whose cow this meat came from. I like that. City folk probably don't have that option, but it will be a problem someday, mark my words."

Emmeline wanted to tell her how correct many would find her predictions, but she couldn't.

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Helen watched Emmeline fumble through drawers after being asked to sift the flour for the chocolate cake being served for dessert. Emmeline felt her face heat. She knew what flour was but had no idea what sifting meant. Helen leaned down and pulled the flour bin from a lower cupboard. Then she pulled the sifter from a shelf. "The measuring cups are in the drawer in front of you."

Setting the sifter in a large bowl, she explained, "Put one cup of flour into this, and crank. Repeat that for three cups." Emmeline didn't understand why it was necessary but wasn't inclined to show her lack of twentieth century culinary skills more than she had to. She performed her task slowly, unsure what she should do next. Awkwardness left her body and her neck unknotted when Helen instructed each step after moving a smaller bowl with the butter, sugar, and eggs to the counter. "I presume this is your first cake?"

"Obvious, isn't it?"

"What is your favorite thing to prepare?"

"We're not rich or anything but my mother hired a young widow to do most of the cooking." A tinge of guilt accompanied the lie, but Emmeline was growing accustomed to making things up as she went along.

Helen offered a kind smile. "From now on, I will know to assign tasks like peeling the potatoes."

"I hope you aren't regretting your cutting the cost of our stay."

"No, it's nice to have someone in the kitchen with me. Have Ruth and Richard been behaving when you play?"

"Oh yes. They're very easy to hang out with." Emmeline caught Helen's eyes narrowing in confusion. "They're so polite and play quietly with their toys. It still feels odd being called Miss Emmeline."

"Good to hear there's no arguing and they mind their manners."

"They barely speak unless I ask a question."

"They are never to bother an adult."

Emmeline and Helen fell into a routine in the kitchen, and she finally had to confess the laundry was a mystery also.

Emmeline sat on the floor as Richard played with Lincoln Logs. She built a house then pretended one log was a rocket ship that flew to the moon. He giggled. “You’re silly, Miss Emmeline.”

She couldn’t help slipping in possibilities after Ruth’s only future vision was being a housewife or a mother. There was no leaving that alone after Richard said he wanted to be an engineer. One day playing dolls with Ruth, Emmeline made her doll a doctor and Ruth’s a patient. “Miss Emmeline, you can’t be a doctor. You have to be the nurse.”

“My doll is smart enough to be a doctor. Maybe someday she can be.”

Weeks passed. Emmeline still longed to walk out of 1938 and back to 2022, but for snippets of time there was something romantic, something simple about these days.