

# The Writer

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*To the spirit that abides in all of us.*  
*P.V.A.*

1  
*The Arrival*

As I stepped off the train into the deserted station, a wall of heat slapped me across the face. It was 5:00 o'clock in the morning, and the few passengers slouched their way to the exit. I grabbed my backpack and computer bag and followed them. Outside the sky hung low and grey and menacing. Rain clouds loomed in the distance. I glanced along the empty dock, but Margaret wasn't there to greet me. She didn't know I was coming. No one did. I needed to be alone. I'd call her once I was settled in. Otherwise, she'd nag me into staying at the old place.

"Taxi, sir?" someone asked.

"Uh, yes, please, the Triangle Hotel on West Main Street."

I hunkered down in the back seat as the yellow cab sped along the pot-holed streets. What was I thinking when I decided to come back here? Nothing had changed except maybe the trees were a bit older, more moss, and more fungus. As we passed the old cemetery with its ornate iron gate, I searched for the familiar tombs, high and imposing among the smaller

less costly stones. Despite the heat, I shivered. Everyone from my childhood, well almost everyone lay beneath the sod.

“Where’re you from?” the driver intruded into my thoughts.

“New York,” I lied.

“Oh, that is a very big place; nothing like here,” he said. “I used to drive there, but I prefer here. Not so stressful.”

“Small is good,” I mumbled.

“Oh yes, I prefer small places, too, good place to raise a family. Safer, too,” he said.

“I suppose so.”

The cab crossed the river and drove a few more blocks.

“Well, here we are, the Triangle Hotel,” the cabby said as he pulled onto the curb.

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How many years had it been? Three? Four? The stone steps were rounded and worn in the center, and the circular door from centuries past stood next to the more recent glassed one. Throw rugs masked the wooden floorboards, but the peeling wallpaper belied the passage of time and lack of maintenance.

“How long will you be staying, sir?” the clerk asked.

“A week,” I said as I filled in the paperwork. “Is there a strongbox in the room?”

“No, sir, but if you have any important papers, we can keep them for you here in the safe in the office.”

“Thank you, I’ll bring them down later.”

“You’re in Room 204; it’s a corner room with a view to the park.”

“Thank you.”

“I’m sorry, but our lift is out of service temporarily, you can take the main staircase. Your room is at the end of the hall on the left.”

“That’s not a problem. I prefer to use the stairs anyway.”

“We have a small dining room that’s open for breakfast from 7:00 – 9:00 in the morning, and for dinner from 6:00 – 10:00 in the evening.”

“Thank you,” I said and climbed the stairs to my room.

The room was minimal but neat; a double bed with an iron frame dominated the space. A Victorian dresser stood against the wall near the door to the bathroom. A small writing table and wooden chair hugged the window that indeed gave off to the park. A faded watercolor print of a group of dahlias hung over the bed. I felt at home, almost cozy.

I picked up my cell phone and checked the time – 6:00 a.m. – too early to call Margaret and too early for breakfast downstairs. I emptied my few possessions on the bed and stashed them into the dresser, leaving my passport and wallet in the backpack. I opened my laptop onto the writing table and sat down to write.

The first chapter would be the easiest, I thought. It would be all about my parents, how they met, how they lived and how they died. I would leave no leaf unturned...

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