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Murky Business: A New Anthology Dives Deep into the Universal Agony — and Unexpected Joy — of Waiting

[Bailey, CO] – [July 21, 2026] We're all familiar with waiting for something, whether it's the results of a diagnostic test or simply for the workday to end. What makes waiting at once universal and wholly unique? Is waiting a skill worth the effort of developing? Is waiting an experience with its own lessons? What does it mean to wait?

Writer and teacher **Kathy Curto** began pondering such questions in the throes of grief after she found herself waiting for her dead mother to walk inside the house they had once shared. Bewildered and searching, she seized on the idea of asking other writers along with poets and artists to join her in exploring the peculiar agony of waiting.

The result is ***What Are You Waiting For? An Anthology*** (Motina Books; July 21, 2026). Compiled and edited by Kathy Curto, this thoughtful collection features a diverse group of voices—twenty-nine men and women of various ages, races, ethnicities, gender identities, backgrounds, lifestyles, and credentials—on the topic of waiting. Some are well-known, award-winning writers and artists; others are emerging talents, never before published. Their contributions include deeply personal essays, poems, artwork, stories, including a few in graphic form, and even a playlist. While eclectic in scope and perspective, the selections all capture the essence of waiting in a way that will resonate with readers and perhaps make them feel less alone as they wait for... whatever.

"Waiting is murky business, fraught with emotional ups and downs and twists and turns," observes contributor Kate Sweeny, a professor of psychology who has done extensive research on the stressful experience of awaiting important news. Yet, as other contributors convey, waiting can also take the form of eager anticipation, such as waiting for a long-planned vacation or a holiday to unwrap presents. Drawing on what she has learned about waiting over the nearly three years she invested in creating this anthology.

About the Editor

Kathy Curto is the author of *Not for Nothing—Glimpses into a Jersey Girlhood* (Bordighera Press, 2018). She teaches writing at Montclair State University, The Writing Institute at Sarah Lawrence College, and various public libraries and community centers in the New York metropolitan area. She is co-founder of Key to the Castle Workshop and serves on the board of the Italian American Writers Association. She lives in the Hudson Valley.

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Who's Who in *What Are You Waiting For?*

An A-to-Z list of the contributing writers, poets, and artists

HALA ALYAN is the author of the novels *Salt Houses*—winner of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize and the Arab American Book Award, and a finalist for the Chautauqua Prize—and *The Arsonists' City*, a finalist for the Aspen Words Literary Prize. She is also the author of five highly acclaimed collections of poetry, including *The Twenty-Ninth Year* and *The Moon That Turns You Back*. Her work has been published by *The New Yorker*, *The Academy of American Poets*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *Guernica*. Her debut memoir, *I'll Tell You When I'm Home*, was recently published by Simon & Schuster. She lives in Brooklyn, where she works as a clinical psychologist and professor at New York University.

ISABELLA BANNERMAN has enjoyed drawing and humor all her life. She graduated from Pratt Institute with a degree in printmaking but then began her career in television animation, creating work for shows such as *Doug* and *The Busy World of Richard Scarry*. She is currently the Monday artist for King Features' "Six Chix"—the unique daily comic strip written and drawn by six female cartoonists. Isabella has won prizes for her work from The National Cartoonists Society, The Newswomen's Club of New York, and the Newseum.

SHANEQUA BENITEZ is a Harlem based artist, originally from Yonkers, New York. Her work draws from her experience growing up in public housing and engaging with issues of systemic inequality. For more than ten years, she has focused on themes such as community, social justice, environmental racism, healthcare access, and food insecurity, using art as a means of self-reflection and dialogue. She works across painting, mixed media, photography, and writing to document and share underrepresented stories. Her projects have included residencies with Yonkers Arts, the Riverfront Art Gallery, and San Diego State University. She recently presented a solo exhibition at Sarah Lawrence College, supported by the Mellon Foundation in partnership with Groundwork USA.

COOPER LEE BOMBARDIER is a queer, trans American writer and visual artist living in Canada. He is the author of the memoir-in-essays *Pass With Care*, a finalist for the 2021 Firecracker Award in Nonfiction. His writing appears in *The Kenyon Review*, *The Malahat Review*, and *Nailed Magazine*, among other outlets, and in 18 anthologies, including the Lambda Literary Award-winning *The Remedy—Essays on Queer Health Issues* and *Meanwhile, Elsewhere: Speculative Fiction From Transgender Writers*, winner of a 2018 American Library Association Stonewall Book Award. A two-time Lambda Literary Fellow, he teaches in the Creative Nonfiction MFA program at University of King's College.

CRYSTAL CASTRO grew up in New Jersey, in a town where people cared whether you were a Northender or a Southsider (she was a Southsider). When she isn't writing, she helps edit books for Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.

MEGAN CAYLER is a traveler, a writer, an artist, a maker, and a healer. Grown in California and honed in New York, she's made home in many places and found family in each. In her first career, she raised funds and awareness for education, women, climate change, and animals. She

is currently developing a memoir on the journey with spirit and intergenerational healing that's carried her around the world and building Living Ritual, a home for ayurveda, yoga, and living well together. Megan attended Sarah Lawrence College, completed her BA at the University of San Francisco, and received her MBA from Hult School of Business. She is a certified yoga teacher and ayurvedic health counselor.

LELAND CHEUK is an award-winning author of three books of fiction, most recently the novel *No Good Very Bad Asian*, and the founder of the indie press 7.13 Books. His work has appeared in *The Washington Post*, *Boston Globe* and *San Francisco Chronicle* as well as featured on NPR, Salon, and other outlets. He has been awarded fellowships at MacDowell, Hawthornden Castle, Djerassi, and elsewhere. He lives in Los Angeles.

PATTY DANN has published seven books, four fiction and three nonfiction. Her work has been translated into French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese. Her novel *Mermaids* was made into a movie, starring Cher, Winona Ryder, and Christina Ricci. Her articles have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *O Magazine*, *Oregon Quarterly*, *Redbook*, *More*, *Forbes Woman*, and *Poets & Writers Magazine*. *New York Magazine* named Dann one of the "Great Teachers of NYC." She is married to journalist Michael Hill. Between them, they have three sons.

EVAN DEKENS won the 2024 Apogee Chapbook prize from April Gloaming Press for his debut chapbook collection, *Anatomies of Disappearance*. He received degrees in English and Transformative Urban Education from Montclair State University and briefly studied fiction writing in the University of North Carolina Wilmington's MFA program. After leaving the program, he dedicated his work primarily to education and poetry. His criticism, reviews, and poetry appear or are forthcoming in *The Humanities Review*, *FilmMatters*, and *Public Books*. He lives in Montclair, NJ and is proud to work in Newark as a teacher of high school English and Creative Writing.

MELISSA FALIVENO is the author of the novel *Hemlock* (Little, Brown, 2026) and the essay collection *Tomboyland*, an NPR Best Book of 2020 and recipient of a 2021 Outstanding Literary Achievement Award from the Wisconsin Library Association. Her writing has appeared in *Esquire*, *The Paris Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *Literary Hub*, and *Ms.*, among other periodicals, and in the anthologies *Sex and the Single Woman* (Harper Perennial, 2022) and *Hit Repeat Until I Hate Music* (Split/Lip, 2026). Born and raised in small-town Wisconsin and a longtime resident of Greenpoint, Brooklyn, she currently teaches creative writing at the University of North Carolina and lives in the woods outside Chapel Hill.

MARIELA FLORES is a first-generation graduate of Providence College in Rhode Island and embraces every intersection of her identity as a low-income, queer, Latinx woman. Raised by Central American immigrants in Central Falls, RI, she uses her talent for writing to break generational curses. Mariela is working on her portfolio for graduate school and hopes to study for an MFA in creative writing.

ANN IMIG founded the nationwide storytelling phenomenon Listen to Your Mother in 2010, which continues Giving Motherhood a Microphone on stages all over the country. She is editor

of the critically acclaimed *Listen To Your Mother: What She Said Then, What We're Saying Now* (Putnam, 2015), and her writing has been featured in *The Washington Post* and on *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, among many web and print outlets. Ann's blog *In Ye Olde Bloggyng Days* was named a Babble Top 100 Mom Blog, A Blog Her Voice of the Year, and a SheKnows Top 5 Funniest Mom Blog. She now works as a positive psychology certified coach helping people face life's inevitable challenges with more ease and optimism, improve their relationships, and expand their potential.

MIYA LEE is the editor of Modern Love projects. She began working on the column as an intern in 2014. In her current role, Miya evaluates submissions to Modern Love, contributes edits to the column's essays, selects and edits Tiny Love Stories, oversees special projects, and is involved in all other aspects of the Modern Love franchise, ranging from books (*Tiny Love Stories*) to the Modern Love podcast. Miya lives in New York City and makes documentaries about the city in her free time. Her short documentary, *Writing on the Wall*, opened the Rooftop Films 2021 Summer Series.

STEVEN LEWIS is a former mentor at SUNY-Empire State College and the Sarah Lawrence College Writing Institute, as well as a longtime freelancer and editor. His work has been published widely, from the notable to the beyond obscure, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* to *The Rosicrucian Digest* and *Road Apple Review*. He is currently Senior Editor at WritersRead.org. His recent books include a novel, *The Lights Around the Shore*, and a poetry collection titled *Fire in Paradise*. His latest poetry chapbook, *Infinity Mirrors of Love and Grief*, was published in fall, 2025.

TERRI LINTON holds BA and MFA degrees from Sarah Lawrence College, and a JD from Rutgers School of Law-Newark. She is an adjunct professor of English at Pace University and of Criminal Justice at Sacred Heart University's Graduate School of Public Administration; she's also an instructor at The Writing Institute at Sarah Lawrence College. Prior to entering academia, she worked in the criminal justice system. Her writing has appeared in the anthology *Solo Mom Stories of Grit, Heart, and Humor*; *Catapult Magazine*; *Midnight and Indigo*; *Blue Mountain Review*; *Zibby Mag*; and other online sites. In 2021, she was awarded a Money for Women/Barbara Deming Memorial Fund grant for creative nonfiction writing. Terri curates generative nonfiction writing workshops for women and is working on a collection of personal essays.

DEWAR MACLEOD is a historian of popular culture and the author of *Tommy, Trauma, Postwar Youth Culture* (2023), *Making the Scene in the Garden State: Popular Music in New Jersey from Edison to Springsteen and Beyond* (2020), and *Kids of the Black Hole: Punk Rock in Postsuburban California* (2010).

KATHRYN MAYER is a potty-mouth essayist writing out loud about the minutia of real life, social issues, and midlife angst. She is occasionally funny on Instagram and mostly ignores Facebook. A reluctant inductee to AARP, she has raised four half-flown, off-the-payroll voting adults, and due to crappy genetics, is an unfortunate hospice expert. Her essays appear online, in print, and when possible, at a mic in front of listening ears and open hearts.

SARAH MCCOLL is the author of the debut memoir and Belletrist Book Club Selection *Joy Enough* (Liveright/W.W. Norton & Company, 2019). For five years, she published *Lost Art*, a Substack bestseller about the creative work of (mostly) dead women and a 2023 finalist for the Andy Warhol Arts Writers Grant. In 2026, she launched *Paper Choir*, a collaborative print publishing project with artist LK James. Her essays have appeared in *McSweeney's*, *The Paris Review*, and *Story Quarterly*, and she is the recipient of fellowship awards from MacDowell, Millay Arts, Ucross, and Vermont Studio Center. She holds an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College and lives in Northern California.

ZANTA NKUMANE is a Swazi writer, a journalist, and an ex-scientist. His work has appeared in *The Mail & Guardian*, *Okay Africa*, *This Is Africa*, *The Johannesburg Review of Books*, *Kalahari Review*, and elsewhere. The 2022/23 UEA Booker Prize Scholar and Short Story Day Africa Inkubator Fellow, he is the incumbent nonfiction editor at *Doek!* literary magazine.

IRENE O’GARDEN has won or been nominated for prizes in nearly every writing category: stage, hardcovers, literary magazines, and anthologies. Her plays include Off-Broadway's critically acclaimed *Women On Fire*; *Little Heart* (premiered in 2023), and *Alice in Widowland* (premieres 2026). She won a Pushcart Prize for “Glad to Be Human,” included in her book of essays by that name, published by Mango in 2020. Harper published her first memoir, *Fat Girl*; Mango published her second, *Risking the Rapids*. Harper also published two of her three children's books, and Nirala published *Fulcrum*, her poetry collection.

JESSICA L. PAVIA is a secondary English teacher and creative nonfiction writer. Her work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and can be found in *The Sun*, *Brevity*, *Electric Literature*, *Longreads*, *Catapult*, Roxane Gay’s *The Audacity*, and elsewhere. Jessica has an MFA in writing from Sarah Lawrence College and moonlights as a freelance Arts & Culture writer for her local magazine. On most Saturdays, you can find her leading upwards of thirty people at the community writing group she founded. She lives in Rochester, NY with her fiancé and her cat, Romeo.

AMANDA PETRUSICH is a staff writer at *The New Yorker* and the writer-in-residence at New York University’s Gallatin School. She is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in nonfiction and has been nominated for a Grammy Award. Her criticism and features have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Oxford American*, *Spin*, *Pitchfork*, *GQ*, *Esquire*, *The Atlantic*, and the *Virginia Quarterly Review*. She is the author of three books, including *Do Not Sell at Any Price*, which explores the obsessive world of 78-r.p.m.-record collectors.

NATALIE SERIANNI is a Seattle-based writer, instructor, and mother of two. She has written for *The New York Times*, *HuffPost*, *Scary Mommy*, *Business Insider*, *Brevity*, *Motherwell*, *ParentMap*, *The Keepthings*, and *Mutha Magazine*, among others. She has taught college-level writing for over 25 years and teaches personal essay writing at the University of Washington, Writing Workshops, and Hugo House. She's at work on a manuscript about midlife parenting and long-held grief.

KATE SWEENEY is a Professor of Psychology and the Associate Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs at the University of California, Riverside. Her primary research focus for over a decade

has been the stressful experience of awaiting important news. She has published more than 100 papers and chapters on waiting and related topics, which have collectively revealed complex and uniquely challenging dynamics of stress and coping during uncertain waiting periods. This work has been covered extensively in the media, including on NPR, on various podcasts, and in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

ARA TUCKER is a writer and visual artist whose work focuses on the intersection of race, class and gender in daily life. She has designed I'm Here Too, a website dedicated to storytelling in multiple forms. Her other creative projects include the novels *How to Date a Black Girl* and *How to Raise an Art Star* as well as *Black Like Us*, a documentary video that explores the lives of an intergenerational group of affluent African Americans. Her artwork has been included in group exhibitions in London, New York City and Detroit. Ara majored in Art History and Visual Arts at Princeton University and received a JD from the New York University School of Law.

CHRIS L VAUGHAN is a disabled dad who writes about family, parenting, and navigating the world with cerebral palsy. His experiences have been published in *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *Writer's Digest*. He has a Substack called Unclenching where, in addition to writing about these topics, he occasionally muses on his favorite outfits.

MILLIE VON PLATEN is a Swedish-Korean editorial illustrator born in London and raised in Stockholm. She has a BA in English Literature and Studio Art from Middlebury College and an MFA in Illustration from School of Visual Arts. Her work has been featured in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Hollywood Reporter*, and *Bloomberg Businessweek*, and on Vox. Based in New York City, she is the author and illustrator of the picture book *Zohran Walks New York*.

CARLA ZANONI is a writer, poet, and journalist whose Spanish-English chapbook *Knowing/Saber*—exploring grief, whimsy, and life in New York City—was published in 2024. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Common*, *Modern Loss*, and more. She is a media executive, formerly of *The Wall Street Journal* and TED, and leads the Engagement Journalism program at the Newmark Graduate School at CUNY. She also writes a monthly newsletter, The EmDash. She studied at the One Spirit Interfaith Seminary and is writing her first book, a literary memoir about trauma, addiction, and healing that examines how we measure our own worth. Carla splits her time between New York City and the Catskills.

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