

## Sample of "Hullabaloo on Main Street"

I love my hometown and am so grateful to have found my way back to it after more than a decade gone to the City. Like most little pockets of humanity where everybody knows everybody, there are quirks here that can rub you the wrong way sometimes, but I've learned to channel my sense of irritation and irrepressible irony into my writing, rather than challenge the people I use for source material. So far nobody has recognized themselves. Either they're not reading the books or it's a testament to my writing skills.

My favorite breakfast out is at The Bagel Emporium, right on Main Street, two blocks from City Hall and three blocks from my parents' hardware store. Either is a pleasant place to write when traffic is slow, but I start at the Emporium because bagels are more nutritious than nuts and bolts. I order a multi-grain with butter and a white-chocolate mocha breve in a cup that could double as a bathtub. While Shawn toasts my bagel and Pat makes my coffee, I settle down with my laptop at my favorite table with the etched-glass top and soda fountain chairs reupholstered in red and primary blue pleather. It nestles neatly into the sunny front window where Shawn has arranged all sorts of plants. It's like sitting in a garden when it's only 45 degrees outside. The weak November sun is just peeking over the buildings across the street, so that my little niche will soon be quite warm and bright.

I set up the article page and mute the Internet to limit its distractive power. The cursor blinks at me, insisting that something so innocent looking couldn't possibly be as ominous as I am casting it. Pat calls me to the counter.

"Oh, my god!" Her shriek immediately captures my attention as I accept my coffee bucket and bagel. Ellen Goodwin holds her tablet in front of her, horror contorting her features as the color drains from her face. I hadn't realized she has freckles. Is that black hair a dye job? "It's not possible!"

She taps frantically on the screen, muttering to herself, fingers twitching spasmodically. I exchange a glance with Pat, but it's his husband Shawn who answers my unspoken question.

"He won. Stole it right out from under her."