

Sandy Reay, Author

March 2024 Newsletter

The words for this month are luck and snakes.

Blame it all on Saint Patrick.



Times I Didn't Die: Snakes

1. Missoula MT

Hellgate Canyon, east of Missoula MT, was burning out of control less than a mile away, and the message on the billboard was too ironic to pass by. Wearing cutoffs, a t-shirt, and flip flops, I trotted down a tire track in a field.

As I adjusted the f-stop, light, and focus on my all-manual camera, I heard a rustling in the weeds behind me. It sounded like a mouse fussing with a piece of cellophane, perhaps from a package of cigarettes. Because that was a more comfortable mental image than the alternative.

I didn't turn around. Just snapped the photo and got out of there.

When I got back to the car, I told my friend about the rustling noise.

"It was a rattlesnake. The fire's driving critters into town. You probably shoulda gotten out of there pronto."

"I did. Right after I got the shot." One shot. Not tack-sharp.

2. Salmon River ID

On a group raft trip, some kayakers tromping through the forest cornered a rattlesnake and were poking it with sticks. The full-grown rattler had killed a large white rat, and wanted to eat, but it felt threatened. It curled up, shaking its rattle, mouth open, poised to strike.

I had my camera bag slung over my shoulder. Pissed off at the treatment of the rattler by the behavior of the others, I squatted down and spoke to the snake. It stared at me, still in strike position, tongue flickering.

Bored and/or annoyed, the others left. Moving as little as possible, I changed the lens on my camera. I couldn't change the high film speed or the dim light under the thick trees. And, the snake had killed the rat in an ancient cabin, beyond the reach of whatever sunlight leaked in through the doorway.

My camera made a clicking noise. The snake's head shot up each time I shot a picture. After a few clicks—and some soothing words—the snake decided to eat the rat.

When snakes swallow, they are defenseless. They aren't much better at defending themselves after they've swallowed their prey whole; they hide while they ingest their pray. I finished a roll of film about the time the rat's tail disappeared through the snake's teeth. Like a child slurping up one spaghetti noodle.

The snake raised its head and stared at me. Then it turned and squeezed through a hole in the back wall of the cabin.

I photographed the entire consumption of a rat by a rattlesnake from two feet away. But the shots were too grainy to print.

The Sinister Umbrella

I'm still writing the first-draft of [The Sinister Umbrella](#), a novel about a young woman whose life is destroyed in a car accident and her struggle to build a new life. It's a young-adult horror story, with a touch of humor and a twist (or three). If you want to know more, click on the link. The protagonist reaches the dark night of the soul. When she thinks it can't get any worse, it does. She has to choose. I thought she only had two choices, but one more popped up. A person out of a dangling subplot reappears. Wahoo!

Monthly email.

Theoretically, I'm working on [The Sinister Umbrella](#) and Version 12 of my memoir, [You Are the Road That Led Me Home](#). With luck, I'll get caught up on all the other chores on my todo list, finish the first draft of SU, and start the exercises to revise my memoir.

If you wish to unsubscribe, please reply and put “unsubscribe” in the subject or text. I won't send another. Unless you reply after the next monthly email. I have no idea when that will be, but I'll try for Tax Day.

If you want to read past newsletters, check out [Archives](#). If you can't see the old newsletters and want to, please email me. I found a work around, but it will take time to fix. Note: [Times I Didn't Die](#) has its own page, with some incidents that weren't included in newsletters. The other micro-memoirs from the newsletters are posted on the [Inspiration](#) page.

Necessary blah blah

I add content to my author website when the inspiration strikes (usually “monthly”) and mention what's new on the home page. For those of you who are worried about the “Not Secure” message at the top of my website: that means I didn't pay for a certificate because I don't do online commerce. All my websites display information. (I've been building web sites since 1998; I keep 'em simple and watch out for suspicious files on my server.) You could follow me on Facebook. I post there more often.

I don't collect or save your information **unless you choose to email me.**

[Sandy Reay, Author](#) – ideas to encourage creativity, where to find inspiration, short stories, micro & flash fiction, true stories, and a memoir (in progress for a decade—don't hold your breath)

[Colorado Sandstorm Music](#) – songs and poems written and co-written by Sandy Reay and Friends, and an online Cowboy Poetry Book: [Another Horse to Saddle](#)

[Colorado Sandstorm Productions](#) – info about all the other websites plus concerts and songwriting workshops by national touring songwriters

[AcousticByLines](#) – when and where you can hear supportive musicians, co-writers, and find me sometimes (when I'm not hibernating or self-quarantining)

[Sandy Reay and Friends' songs and poems on YouTube](#)

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