

Roast Beef, Cheese, Love
and Pickles

Paris Portingale

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Preface

The style of this book is suitable for general fiction. It is set up as a 6 x 9 inch, which means the final trim size will be six inches wide and nine inches high. This is the most common print on demand size currently in use.

This style of this sample is similar to an airport novel, in that there are no page breaks between the chapters and they are separated only by numbers.

We would sincerely like to thank Paris Portingale for allowing us to use his short story, *Roast Beef, Cheese, Love and Pickles* to demonstrate these different layouts to you.

To find out more about Paris, please refer to the back pages of this sample book.

Features Checklist

Body text

- Font: Centaur, 14pt
- Line spacing: 1.1pt
- Style: indented paragraphs, with block paragraph beginning each section

Main Headings

- Alignment: centre
- Font: Centaur, 16pt

Subheadings

- None

Page Headers

- Alignment: outer corners
- Contains: book name (left), section name (right)

Page Footers

- Alignment: outer corners
- Contains: page numbers

Page Setup

- Size (width by height): 6 x 9 inches (15.24 x 22.86 cm)

- Margins: 2 cm (top), 2 cm (bottom), 1.8 cm (outside)

Other Features

- Dividers: </>
- Table of Contents: none
- Footnotes: none
- Endnotes: none
- Section headings: Centaur, 26pt

Part I

I

It was the second time Graham had bought his lunch from 'Don's – Freshley Cut Sandwiches'. The sign had been painted on the front window in a now dulled, red running-script and for the more than four years Don had been operating there, no one had ever challenged him over his special spelling of the word 'freshly'.

'Roast beef, cheese and pickles,' he told her.

'What kind of bread?' she asked him.

'White,' he said.

'Like yesterday,' she said, and smiled, but just a little, because that was all she ever smiled from behind the counter, being the kind of person she was, and she only smiled then because she liked his voice, it being nicer sounding than most of the other customers.

'Yes,' he said, and she made him the sandwich quietly and nothing more passed between them except her saying how much the sandwich cost, and him giving her the money and saying thanks and her nodding, then shifting her concentration to the next person in the queue, a man with coaldust only partly cleaned from his face, and fingernails with so much black caked underneath them they looked almost swollen at the tips.

The sandwich was in a white paper bag with the top folded over twice and he took it to his truck with 'Graham Grahamson – Plumber' and a phone number, painted over both the driver's and passenger's doors, and he put it on the

passenger's seat and drove to an underpass, where he parked. He ate his sandwich in the rusted light, whatever of it could find its way through, between the concrete stanchions and the pre-stressed, prefabricated lengths of highway that sat on top. When he finished he brushed himself for crumbs and smoothed and folded the white paper bag into four and put it in the glove-box, on top of the other white paper bags, folded in an identical manner.

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The next day was a Wednesday and at 12.30 Graham was in line again, at the sandwich shop, and without any conscious consideration, he took the queue that led to the half-smile sandwich girl who'd served him the day before, and the day before that, even though that queue was two persons longer than the alternative.

When he was finally in front of her, before he could say a word, before his mouth even began to open to say, 'Roast beef, cheese and pickles,' as he'd planned, she said, 'The usual?' and it took him quite by surprise and he said 'Roast beef, cheese and pickles,' and she said, 'The usual then,' and began to make the sandwich.

'On white bread,' he said, to show he was still a little in charge, but she said, 'I know,' and anyway, she'd already started making the thing and had the bread buttered, just a skim, because Ray, the proprietor, was anything but recklessly wasteful and had guidelines to govern such things, and she was putting in the meat even as he spoke the words.

During the process of constructing the sandwich he stood, trying to think of something else to say, but it was a difficult

process. With women, he found, thinking of things to say on the fly could be problematic. Intent could be misinterpreted, particularly with women he guessed knew they were attractive, and at the drop of a hat he could worry that they thought he was coming on to them. The simplest of statements could suddenly and shockingly seem lewd, once said, and of all the things he didn't want to appear, in front of attractive women, the few he ever met, was lewd. So he stood, trying to will into cooperation whatever section of the human mind it is that produces things-to-say, but it remained uncooperative till the final moments of the transaction, as she was giving him his change and the twice-folded white paper bag with his roast beef, cheese and pickles sandwich, when his things-to-say section finally coughed up a morsel for him, which was, 'You've got a good memory then.'

She said, '*Sorry?*' and he repeated his one and only line for this part of the encounter, saying, 'You've got a good memory then.'

'Nothing much to remembering a roast beef, cheese and pickles sandwich,' she said, and his things-to-say area, almost reluctantly, dropped him one last crumb and he said, 'On white bread,' and she almost smiled again.

He checked to see if, on the off-chance, there might be anything more there to say, but there wasn't, and he took his change and sandwich and left the counter as the man behind him said, 'Egg-salad love, and I'll have one of those,' and a tiny part of Graham the plumber's mind briefly wondered what one-of-those was, then the wondering began to dissolve into a sort of wondering mist, and by the time he reached the door he could no longer even remember wondering it at all.

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The next day, the Thursday, he was on the other side of town and bought his lunchtime sandwich at a coffee shop with tables and chairs and a hissing cappuccino machine, and when he ordered roast beef, cheese and pickles, the assistant merely and rudely pointed to a chalkboard menu of standard sandwiches and said briefly, 'No specials,' and Graham had to read down the list while a woman in the queue behind him sighed loudly and tapped her foot. Feeling rushed and uncomfortable he chose the third offering from the list, a Reuben, corned beef, sauerkraut, Swiss cheese, and Russian or Thousand Island dressing.

The assistant, a homosexual man with the very beginnings of a lisp, who's homosexuality was totally lost on Graham, said, 'Russian or Thousand Island,' while sharing a raised-eyebrow look with the impatient woman next in the queue, so they had a special moment together where Graham was the focus of a joint, 'oh-dear-the-idiots-we-have-to-put-up-with' fermentation.

Graham said, 'What?' and the assistant had a sigh himself and said, 'Dressing. Russian or Thousand Island?' and Graham, who, while holding little grasp of even the most basic tenets of socialism, still held a mistrust of Russia and its subversive embrace of that system, and instinctively decided on Thousand Island. The transaction was concluded without another word as the prices were listed beside each sandwich.

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The Friday found him back in familiar territory. Where, on the Monday, when he ordered his beef, cheese and pickles

sandwich, he'd felt himself in a place somehow foreign, now, after the Rubens affair, he found that same place to be friendly surroundings. He felt at home and strangely safe and it energised his things-to-say area, somewhere there inside some odd corner of his mind, and when he reached the counter he was prepared and said to his half-smile sandwich girl, 'Ham, mustard and potato salad. I'm feeling...' and he lost the word for a moment and she waited awkwardly while he found it. 'Adventurous,' he finally said, when the lost word somehow found its way back to him, and she silently breathed a little sigh and started on the construction of his sandwich. And because of his new found confidence perhaps, or because he was a little more hungry today, or he was inspired by the almost-brazenness of Wednesday's egg-salad man and his casual confidence, he added, 'And I'll have one of those,' but without indicating which one of the many ones-of-those on display he meant, so that she had to say, 'I'm sorry? One of what?'

Embarrassed, and feeling his confidence begin to founder, he pointed to a jam tart, wishing he'd never asked for one-of-those.

'Tart,' she said, and he nodded and made a to-do of getting money from his pocket.

'Red jam or green?' she asked, and he said, 'Red,' but too softly to be heard so she had to ask again, awkwardly, and this time he said green because asking for red now seemed like a mistake to be rectified.

'Green,' she said, and put the pastry in a separate white bag with its own double-folded top.

He paid, and picked up his sandwich and was halfway to

the door when he heard her call out, just heard her, because her voice was soft at its loudest of times. She called, 'Your tart.'

He turned and saw her holding up the bag and he walked back and took it from her and he knew everyone in the shop was looking at him. Torn between the choice of saying 'thanks' or 'thank you,' he said, 'Thanks you,' then coughed in the hope that the end of his awkward little sentence, the misplaced 'you,' would be swallowed and seem part of that noise.

He felt them all looking at him still, as he got into his truck, but of course they weren't. Some were composing their orders, two women were planning the night's meal, another was thinking of how badly she wanted to pee, and one man was as close to thinking nothing at all as it was possible for any member of a self-aware species to be. But Graham Grahamson, the plumber, was of the firmest of beliefs that everyone was concentrating on him and his stupid slip with the tart, and he was so full of the business he couldn't bear to eat the thing when he parked his truck under the concrete highway. In fact his ham, mustard and potato salad was proving a chore and he wished he'd stuck to his usual instead of trying to impress the sandwich girl who now, he was sure, thought him an idiot and a buffoon. And he was glad it was Friday, so he'd have two days to get himself back into some sort of order.

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On the Monday, Graham called into the hotel just up from Don's and drank a glass of beer, the largest glass they served, and he waited the couple of moments until he could sense

the rising effect of the alcohol, then he walked the few yards down to the sandwich shop and joined the queue in front of the second sandwich girl, not his usual girl's queue, as he felt a loss of trust with that one, not in the queue so much, but in himself.

When he placed his order, roast beef, cheese and pickles, his usual girl looked across at him and said, 'Not feeling adventurous today?'

The girl serving him said, 'Bread?' and in confusion he said, 'Yes,' and she looked at him the way you can look at a smart-arse sometimes, when you know you are better and faster and wittier and much, much more clever, and she said, 'There are people *waiting* you know,' and his usual girl said, 'White, Mary,' then looked at him and said, 'That's right, isn't it?' and he nodded and said, 'Yes, thanks.'

His usual girl, cutting a sandwich in two, in a moment of unusual boldness, said, 'I thought I was your favourite,' and still in the middle of his confusion he replied, 'No,' then, 'Yes,' then, 'You've got me all confused,' so she said, 'Sorry,' and he said, 'No,' again, to indicate she shouldn't be sorry, but mere fractions of a second after saying it, he felt his heart bump and worried she'd hear the no as a reinforcement of his inadvertent rejection of her being his favourite.

The sandwich was ready then and his new sandwich girl put it in a bag and, holding the two corners, swung it around twice like an out of control trapeze, and seeing it he thought momentarily how much more difficult it would be to flatten properly, before being folded into four for the glove box.

He checked momentarily if his things-to-say area had left anything for him, but it hadn't, he was empty, so he left the

shop with a still buzzing confusion so that he pushed the door instead of pulling it, the way the sign said.

In his truck, under the highway, everything coated in a dull grey light because it was drizzling rain which made the concrete darker and, in an odd way, baleful, with an exaggerated, unfocused foreboding, he sat without touching his sandwich, thinking about how he'd said 'No,' when his usual sandwich girl had said she thought she was his favourite. The things-to-do area of his mind had him reversing the position, so that he was in a situation where he said to someone, probably his usual sandwich girl, that he thought he was their favourite, and the other person said, 'No,' and it occurred to him he would be mortified and embarrassed and full of a feeling of heading for the hills to escape and regroup, if regrouping were even possible after something like that. It had gotten itself in a loop so that every time the scene ended it rewound and started again, from where he was saying, 'I thought I was your favourite.'

So he was late back on the job and, with his mind elsewhere, he botched two gas pipe welds and had to do them over again. He'd be on this job for another two weeks and he wondered where he'd get his sandwiches, now that he'd made it impossible to ever go back to his usual sandwich shop, because of all the foundering and embarrassing flapping around he'd made.

2

Johanna had just finished making an egg, tomato and lettuce

with plenty of pepper on white bread and was wiping the tongs.

She greeted the next customer from the queue, saying, 'Hi.'

He said, 'Roast beef, cheese and pickles,' and she recognised his voice from the day before because she'd noted a light Irish, or perhaps Scottish lilt and his voice had a timbre that she found strangely soothing and comforting and at the same time a little tingly, and that combined with the slight exoticness of the accent had made her take a special note.

'What kind of bread?' she asked him.

'White,' he said.

'Like yesterday,' she said, and smiled. She hoped saying, 'Like yesterday,' would cause him to say more to her, so his timber and accent could tumble over her again, like a little wave.

But all he said was, 'Yes,' and she had to make do with that, and try to hold *as long as possible* the funny feeling his voice gave her. She told him the price and he paid and left and the funny feeling stayed long enough for her to stuff up the next sandwich order of meatloaf, egg, lettuce, and English mustard on rye bread by using German mustard, so she had to make it again, this time with the English mustard because, as the customer told her, a little testily, it was way hotter than the German and who'd won the damned war anyway, I'll think you'll find it was our side.

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The next day Johanna saw him come in and she watched him

join her queue, even though it was longer, and she found herself touched with a tiny feeling of relief, and resolved to say, 'The usual then?' when he got to her.

When he was in front of her she took a breath and smiled her little smile and said, 'The usual?' which was one word short of her original composition.

She thought he looked surprised by her remembering his usual, and then he said, 'Roast beef, cheese and pickles,' which sort of spoiled the feat of remembering and she started making the sandwich with no further communication, so that, when he said, 'White bread,' she said, 'I know,' then worried that that sounded a bit stand-offish, but there was nothing more she could add and she just went on and finished the sandwich.

As he was paying he said, 'You've got a good memory then,' and as there'd been nothing between them since her stand-offish outburst about the bread she was taken by surprise and said, 'Sorry,' so that he had to repeat, actually unnecessarily, what he said – 'You've got a good memory then.'

She took it as a personal thing to say, nothing sandwichy, no reference to fillings or type of bread, but she said, 'Nothing much to remembering a roast beef, cheese and pickles sandwich,' which was back to sandwichy and she squeezed her toes up and wished she'd said something like, 'Tell me your name and I bet I remember it tomorrow,' or, 'Your voice is sort of nice, it makes me feel washed over with comfortableness. I think I could remember the sound of it forever.' But she'd said a sandwichy thing instead and the moment was gone and he'd said, 'On white bread,' another

sandwichy thing, instead of something personal again, like, ‘What’s a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?’ to which she could, but probably would never reply, ‘Waiting for a man whose voice can soothe and tingle, both at the same time,’ or some such.

Then the next man in the queue was standing there and he said, ‘Egg-salad love, and I’ll have one of those,’ pointing to a chocolate éclair, and she noted how rough and uninteresting his voice sounded to her.

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She watched for him the next day, but he didn’t turn up and she put it down to something she’d said and she determined not to watch for him again because of the little tiny hurt it left inside her when, at the end of the midday rush, he hadn’t come in.

But, despite her determination, the next day she watched for him once again and she saw him come in and join her queue and she felt a tingle in her chest and she was suddenly and unexpectedly filled with a lightness that surprised and delighted her when, after a straight fishpaste on white and a ham and French mustard, she chose to examine it.

When he reached the counter she was about to say, ‘I missed you yesterday,’ but before she could get the first word of it out he said, ‘Ham, mustard and potato salad. I’m feeling...’ and he stopped suddenly, clearly looking for the word to describe how he was feeling and she held her breath and felt her eyes slightly widen and she tried to think of what the word could possibly be, but without success, so when he said, ‘Adventurous,’ she let out a little sigh and relaxed again.

It came to her to repeat the line about missing him yesterday, but again, before she could speak, he added something to his order, saying, 'And I'll have one of those.' He hadn't pointed to anything, or she'd missed seeing him point to something, so again she couldn't get out the words, 'I missed seeing you yesterday,' and she abandoned, then, the idea of saying them at all, and resigned herself to flat sandwichy talk and said, 'Sorry? One of what?' and the tingle that had built up as he'd approached her in the queue dissipated, leaving an ever so small empty feeling in the space where it had once been.

He pointed to the plate with the jam tarts, red and green jellied, and she said, 'Tart?' and he nodded and fumbled in his pocket for money, loose change that he sorted in his hand, and she wished he'd say something more to her, and as she reached towards the plate she said, 'Red jam or green?'

The reply was spoken softly, and with the accent she missed the word, so she had to ask the stupid, sandwichy question again, and he said, 'Green.'

After he paid, using his carefully sorted loose coin, he left the counter, leaving his green-jam tart, so she called after him, 'Tart,' while simultaneously wondering if was still possible to say, 'I missed seeing you yesterday,' but when he said, 'Thanks you,' in obvious confusion, she once again abandoned the idea.

Her next customer ordered cheese, beetroot, lettuce and tomato on white bread, and she said, 'Salad on white,' and he said, 'And a coke,' in a standard, ordinary person's voice.

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Despite her determination not to be fussed at all, the next Monday she found herself watching for him again, so she saw him come in, and she saw him join Mary's queue and there was a brief weight in her chest, but she released it to a ham, cheese and mayonnaise on mixed-grain, ordered by a man with an unpleasantly gravelly voice, and when Graham reached the head of Mary's queue and ordered roast beef cheese and pickles, she turned to him and said, 'Not feeling adventurous today?' which was true, because he wasn't at all.

Then Mary got snotty about the bread and she stepped in on his behalf and after that she couldn't help herself, and in a voice she hoped was all jolly and jokish, she said, 'I thought I was your favourite,' and he said, 'No,' then, 'Yes,' then something about being confused, then, 'No,' again, which settled it that, no, she was not in fact his favourite, even though the only other choice for being his favourite was Mary and she'd been snotty about the bread. So that was that. He didn't come back in again, and by the following Friday she'd stopped looking for him and when the end of the next week came and went she discovered she couldn't remember any more the special way his voice had sounded to her.

Part 2

3

So, it was funny when, some six weeks later, he found himself in the I2 items queue at the supermarket, standing behind her. He knew it was her, even without seeing her face. It occurred to him to say something, but it would mean leaning around her, or touching her, and both felt awkward, and anyway, he wasn't sure what he could or should say, and if it should be something about sandwiches or just something general. He considered, briefly, moving his head towards her and saying, 'Roast beef, cheese and pickles,' in a kind of jokey way, but dismissed it, thinking it had been so long since they'd been associated in that way, it might not mean anything to her, so he considered, 'Cold for this time of the year,' but it wasn't, it was about average for that time of the year, so he moved to, 'Still working in that sandwich shop?' but dropped that because he feared it intimated she was stuck in some sort of dead-end rut. Nudging his things-to-say area he was delivered, 'You really were my favourite sandwich girl,' and then, in an unusual burst of generosity, he received, 'No one makes a better sandwich than you,' and he was about to use the second when she moved up to the cashier and told the woman she had her own bag and produced it from her basket. She was standing sideways to him now, but with her head turned oddly away, and he stood as still as possible, so as not to attract her attention, because he suddenly felt uncomfortable with, 'No one makes a better sandwich than you,' and further requests to his things-to-say section were proving fruitless.

So, he watched her pay and thank the cashier and take her bag and walk off out of the store and as he emptied his basket of exactly twelve items onto the rubber conveyor belt, he thought it was probably best that they hadn't spoken.

4

It was in the frozen goods aisle that Johanna saw him. He was looking through one of the glass doors at something frozen and, while she actually wanted frozen peas herself, she turned and went to 'Eggs – Spices – Flour – Sugar,' where she waited for the count of one hundred, after which she checked frozen goods again and found he was gone. She saw him once more, down an aisle that held no items of interest for her, so she just skimmed by, and after a stop at cheese and soy-based products, she headed for the 12 items checkouts.

Choosing a queue, she put her basket on the ground in front of her and as she straightened she got an odd sense that he'd just come up and was standing behind her. Not wanting to turn, to establish if in fact it was him, as it felt, she tried to catch a reflection in the glass doors just beyond the queue, but the lighting was all wrong and the angles weren't right and it was impossible to make anything out, so she gave up and concentrated on not turning around. But it was two customer movements down the queue later that she saw the closed circuit TV screen which showed it was in fact him behind her and she stiffened slightly and determined to avoid any form of recognition, because she felt it could only be

awkward, and anyway, he probably wouldn't remember her after all this time, which she estimated to be about six weeks, and ample for any recollection of her to have been well and truly scattered off into the universe. She kept her head turned as she paid, hoping he wouldn't recognise her, then she left the store without looking back, as not only was there now no need, it could possibly expose her to recognition, which was quite out of the question now.

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Out in the car park, as he approached his truck, he saw her open the boot of a car, one down from where he was parked, and as she lifted her bag to place it inside, one of the straps slipped and the side dropped and oranges, eight of them, spilled onto the ground and, as one was rolling towards him, he dropped his bags and bent to stop it, and when he stood she was looking at him. He moved towards her, holding out the piece of fruit, and he said, 'It's you,' and she said, 'I know,' and he tossed a coin in his mind. It came down heads, but it wouldn't have mattered either way, because he'd already decided to say, 'You were my favourite sandwich girl once,' which he did, and Johanna said, 'I thought I wasn't,' and he said, 'No, you were.'

She said, 'You didn't come back,' and he said, 'I couldn't help it,' and she nodded and he gave her the orange and began to help pick up the others, and as he was on his hands and knees, reaching under her car, he said, 'I could come back tomorrow,' and she said, 'Roast beef, cheese and pickles?' and

ROAST BEEF, CHEESE, LOVE AND PICKLES

he said, 'Okay, roast beef, cheese and pickles. Then he added, 'Unless I'm feeling adventurous.'

About the Author

Paris Portingale lives the life of the quintessential writer—tucked away deep in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney, New South Wales, creating casts of unbelievably believable characters who feature in stories that most of us wouldn't be able to conjure up even after a week of absinthe and seclusion.

A computer programmer by trade, Paris lives with his wife, Diana, and dog Gerry with a 'G', and has entertained the local residents for many years with his prolific writings to the Blue Mountains Gazette.

Also by Paris Portingale

If you enjoyed *Roast Beef, Cheese, Love and Pickles*, you may also enjoy some of Paris' other writings:

Art and the Drug Addict's Dog

2000 Jews Walk into a Bar

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