

TABLET

See more of Janice MacLeod's illustrated letters.

EXCLUSIVE!

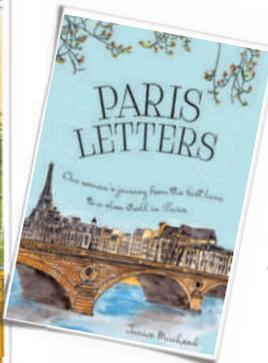


FROM PARIS,

xoxo

Imagine leaving everything behind and starting over. **Janice MacLeod** talks to *Chatelaine* about writing her own happy ending

BY LORA GRADY



FRENCH KISS

From left: Author Janice MacLeod in Paris; one of her illustrated letters; the cover of *Paris Letters*.

When Janice MacLeod found herself in a dead-end copywriting job, she made a radical decision: Save money, take a year off and move to Paris. What she found there was a whirlwind romance (with a handsome butcher) and a fabulous career based on the beautifully illustrated letters she wrote to a friend, which also became a book. Today, she lives with her love and makes her living with *Paris Letters*, a business that each month sends subscribers a personalized copy of a handwritten, hand-painted letter about her new life.

ON PARISIAN CULTURE

"I grew up in Clear Creek, Ont. Canada offers wide open spaces of natural splendour, while Paris provides beautiful displays of the man-made: bridges, botanical gardens, even the food—Julia Child once said, 'It's so beautifully arranged on the plate, you know someone's fingers have been all over it.' That's Paris. Layers peel away to reveal yet another street or garden, museum, shop or artist. I recently explored exquisite covered arcades from the 18th century. I also met a street poet who will instantly write a poem for you on an old typewriter."

ON THE CHARM OF LETTER WRITING

"A handwritten letter from a friend is a smile, a wave, a small kindness. It's just paper, ink and a stamp, yet it's magical. One subscriber of mine named Mary lives in Massey, Ont. She takes her letter to her knitting group at the library each month to share. Knowing there's a group of women in Northern Ontario getting excited about reading a letter from a girl in Paris? Bliss! I have the best job on the planet!"

ON HAVING NO REGRETS

"After I decided to literally leave my troubles behind and move to Paris, everything slipped into place. My failing love life became a blossoming romance. My soul-wrenching job writing junk mail became an inspiring, arty letter-writing business. Hours spent in traffic morphed into a life without a car in which I walk down some of the most beautiful streets on earth. How could I possibly have regrets?"

ON WHAT'S NEXT

"I'm currently creating a unique photography collection that encapsulates the serenity, charm and magic of Paris for my Etsy shop. There have also been interesting discussions regarding a film of my *Paris Letters* memoir. Imagining how the scenes would play out and who would play the parts will be a lovely preoccupation in 2014." **C**

➤ Sign up to receive Janice's beautiful letters at etsy.com/ca/shop/JaniceArtShip

MAGIC AND ROMANCE

MODERN FAIRY TALE

One night, groggy American expat George finds himself tending to an injured crane that bizarrely appears in his London backyard. The next morning, Kumiko—a quiet, independent woman—soars into George's life. She vaguely reminds him of the crane and leaves him wondering whether he was dreaming. As if in a storybook, Kumiko brings opportunity, human interaction and love to the lonely man but remains an enigma. George's yearning to know more about her threatens their relationship and endangers their lives. **THE CRANE WIFE**, Patrick Ness, \$20.—K.Q.



WILD RIDE

Ferret, a pickpocket turned ventriloquist, performs amid the potion peddlers, organ grinders and lion tamers at the 1898 Omaha World's Fair, until he falls in love with Cecily, an actor in the midway's Chamber of Horrors. The couple attract the attention of the fair's sinister founder, only to prove that love cannot be defeated, even in death. Constantly surprising and utterly mesmerizing. **THE SWAN GONDOLA**, Timothy Schaffert, \$30.—S.L.



TEXT: K.Q., KRISTENE QUAN, S.L.; SYDNEY LONEY