

# WHAT THE NOVELS ARE ABOUT

(For short synopses, see the following pages)

## Dot and Charlie (A Comedy About Love, Sexism, and Infidelity)

In this comedic love story, Dot, who likes to think of herself as 'modern' and enlightened, and Charlie—referred to as 'part of the original bedrock' by his son Tom—cope with their own mismatched but affectionate middle-aged relationship, a daughter's infidelity, and a changing society. They attempt to deal not only with their own reactions to family scandal, but also with those of their community—a mid-sized Anywhere in flux. This is a story about ordinary people facing the everyday challenges of the contemporary world with heart and resolve, set in the era of the 2008 recession. This novel is written under the *I Ching* governing hexagram of Ch'ien which represents the father, the creative, and heaven; it is the first of eight novels under the eight family signs of the *I Ching*.

## Babson Fitterley and the Perfect Woman

*Babson Fitterley and the Perfect Woman* is a gentle satire about two cousins who are much attached to each other, but who also have their differences. Babson is a young oboist in the metropolitan orchestra, his cousin Sally a thoughtful and equally young sprout who helps manage a DVD store. Sally, a lesbian and a confirmed feminist, has taken it upon herself to educate properly both Babson and their recalcitrant friend Henry; Babson is a little dazed by all the information, Henry largely impervious to it. And then there's Jo, or the insecure Rommie the Mole as she's first known, who's slept with all three of them in the past, only to become a source of contention among them two years later. Can Peter Fitterley, Babson's father, help to unravel the tangles of young love in the twenty-first century? Can his wife Malory, taking a tack of her own, lure him onstage without impugning his authority in the family? And can the whole group make sense of their past experiences without losing track of the present? This comedy genially answers these questions and entertains the reader with an unforgettable cast of characters. This novel is set in 2010, in the last two years of the G. W. Bush presidency. This novel is written under the *I Ching* governing hexagram of K'un, which represents the mother, the earth, and the receptive. It is the second of eight novels under the eight family signs of the *I Ching*.

## The Long and the Short of It, Root and Branch

What do romance writers think about while they are writing romances? What do they think and say about having happy endings? How do they fall in love? Of course, one has to assume they are not all alike, and have as many differences among them as other people. Enter the writer Mossy Granger, born Ruth Anne Grubb, a thirty-two-year-old writer living alone on the edge of a small community which does not at first seem promising to her as a source either for characters or for companions. What happens when elements of her former post-college life and her new solitary life collide is the subject of this spoofy, off-beat romance, which shows that love can surprise even the wariest of us. This novel is set in a backwater town, in the last two years of the second Bush presidency. This novel is written under the *I Ching* governing hexagram of Sun, which represents the eldest daughter, the penetrating, the wind, and the gentle; it is the third of eight novels under the eight family signs of the *I Ching*.

## Tales of Lightning and of Thunder

What makes a man a hero, and how does his real life consort with the legend that arises about him? Does every hero have a legend? And what if a modern sort of hero has no real legend except what the readers of a novel have to say about him? We know that Charles Dickens in writing *David Copperfield* wrote what would in Germany have been called a Bildungsroman (a novel of growth and development), and he suggested that his book was about a young man who might turn out to be “the hero of his own life” if no other took that spot. So, what about Jason, the ancient Greek hero who led the Argonauts—he wasn’t always noble, and he was often downright manipulative and disingenuous—how would he look in modern garb? Many other authors, both ancient and more modern, have written about Jason, and in this novel, *Tales of Lightning and of Thunder*, yet another of the remote Jason’s namesakes, Jason St. John, steps onto the literary scene, except that here he begins as an infant and progresses (and regresses) to the point where he is shown to be sometimes ordinary in our terms and sometimes unusual, and according to the old legend due to be visited by “fate.” So then, how is a modern fate assigned to a modern hero, in an age when fate is no longer believed in? How about with a bit of parody of the Bildungsroman form itself, and a tongue-in-cheek picture of the hero’s path through life? And how will he end up? These are the questions and issues in the most serious novel in this series to date, which readers may hope to enjoy not just for the comedy that of course is in it, but also for the character sketches and guesses at what a classical hero’s modern equivalent might be. The events of this novel take place during the first year of the first Obama Administration, though some of the hero’s characteristics are timeless ones, true of heroes everywhere. This novel is written under the *I Ching* governing hexagram of Chen, which represents the eldest son, the arousing, shock, and thunder; it is the fourth of eight novels under the eight family signs of the *I Ching*.

## The Problem With Ursula (The Story of the Cuffs)

Though every family is different, some are determined to be the same, and always the same, as everybody else. Only, of course, this attitude of strict conformity only works if all the participants pull together. So, what's the result to two conventional-minded parents when their own young not only step out of order, but in the course of growing up become involved with other threats to the boring but safe family domicile? The result is twists and turns and upside-down comedy for all but the protagonists involved. Meet the Cuff family, the parents Abigail and Jeremiah, and the children Daisy (a born rebel), Robby, Neddy, Danny, Roddy, and Andy. Each has his or her own take on what "fit, though few" friends are. The reader is promised a trip through an increasingly chaotic wonderland of developing humor and new perspectives. The time setting of this novel begins in the mid-2000's and ends in the second Covid-19 year of 2021. This novel is written under the *I Ching* governing hexagram of Li, which represents the middle daughter, the clinging, fire, and clarity; it is the fifth of eight novels under the eight family signs of the *I Ching*.

## Abyss of an Attendant Lord

What happens when a responsibility-oriented professor in the academic setting of large Hallowsdale University has to confront the results of a moment's so-called "dereliction of duty" on his part coinciding with his wife's determination to save him from himself? And what is the result of a casual enemy's attempt to steal Dresart's wife out from under him for some sexual fun and games? Can anything else happen other than academic satire? In this short novelette, Robert Dresart, Professor of Postmodern Poetry, is so eager to work on a paper for publication that he tries quickly and haphazardly to put his obligation of doing some committee work behind him, from whence it just as quickly proceeds to bite him in the derrière. Can he and his wife Bertilde recover from his momentary misstep and save the situation? Laugh your way through this tribute to the comedy of P.G. Wodehouse to find out! This novel first saw the light of day as a work in 2013, but it is eternal in its academic satire of campus shenanigans and authorities. This novel is written under the *I Ching* governing hexagram of K'an, which represents the middle son, the abysmal, water, and danger; it is the sixth of eight novels under the eight family signs of the *I Ching*.

## Emmeline, Sadie Greye, and the Men in the Case

When a natural storyteller, Emmeline, meets up with a naturally receptive audience member, Sadie Greye, tales of her past men and loves and a lot of “nattering” and “chuntering” may well go on. But Sadie is a younger woman and the storyteller, Emmeline, is an older woman, an aunt whom she much admires, and who is inclined to give her her freedom when her parents park her in Emmeline’s house to prevent her from seeing a young man she’s partial to. Under these circumstances, the narrative experience can become transitive, and can result in all sorts of changes in both people’s lives, due to their newly formed affection for each other, and their desire to see each other happy. Emmeline becomes an inspiration for Sadie, an example of someone who has fully lived her life with men; Sadie, in turn, brings her young life and thoughts to bear on Emmeline’s problems, and through loving and generous involvement in them, keeps Emmeline from getting older too fast. And then, there are the other characters, in their rich variety, who have their own tales to tell, and their own contributions to the two women’s lives to make. At the end of the day, true happiness is seen to reside not in never losing and not in having all one desires, but in rolling with the punches, as both Emmeline and Sadie have to do. And as the two women both find by the end of the novel, such a path through life can bring its own kinds of rewards. This novel takes place during the summer and fall of 2021, when the Covid crisis was to some small degree in abatement. It is written under the *I Ching* governing hexagram relating to the youngest daughter, the mouth (or telling and relating), the autumn, the west, metal, and



the joyous. It is the seventh in a series of eight novels drawn from the eight family signs of the *I Ching*.

## Mountain Men

*Mountain Men* is a quasi-dystopian regional novella. It features characters and situations based on some of the people and areas of the mountainous regions along the Eastern U.S. ranges.

These characters are imagined in a future U.S., in which the government is flawed and weakened, and a number of militias, both good and bad, proliferate. The people in it are drawn to resemble the often rhetorically gifted people of the area, and much of the novella is in their dialects. It is written under the *I Ching* governing hexagram Kên, relating to the youngest son, the mountains, and keeping still. It is the eighth (and last) in a series of eight novels drawn from the eight family signs of the *I Ching*.