

**ONE  
CITY  
ONE  
STORY**

Relativity

Daphne Kalotay

2017





CITY OF BOSTON • MASSACHUSETTS  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
MARTIN J. WALSH

Dear Reader,

It gives me great pleasure to support the efforts of the Boston Book Festival and their annual short story publication, *One City One Story*. Celebrating and enhancing the role of arts and culture in the lives of our residents has been a top priority of my administration. Recent programs supporting individual artists, prioritizing public art, and working with local institutions to create nontraditional, affordable performance and rehearsal spaces all help integrate art and artists into the daily life of our city.

Initiatives such as the Boston Book Festival's *One City One Story* also bring the literary arts to our residents where they live, work, and play. Encountering short fiction at farmers' markets, coffee shops, festivals, City offices, and transit stations reminds Boston readers of the centrality of great literature to the life of our city and encourages us all to engage not only with a great story, but also with each other.

This year's story, written by Somerville author Daphne Kalotay, offers a particularly poignant message about resilience and recovery, as well as about the power of storytelling to build connections between people of different generations and backgrounds. I hope this story will inspire reading, reflection, and discussion, and I encourage you to participate in the conversation. As always, print copies of the story are available throughout Greater Boston free of charge in both English and Spanish, as well as online in several additional languages.

Happy reading!

Martin J. Walsh  
Mayor of Boston



## Introduction

The Boston Book Festival presents the eighth annual One City One Story program, a project that aims to promote literature among the youth and adults of our city and to create community around a shared reading experience.

Our goal is to make a short story available to all free of charge. By distributing 30,000 printed copies of Daphne Kalotay's "Relativity" in both English and Spanish, and by providing audio files, downloads, and additional translations on our website, we aim to ignite discussions that reveal the many perspectives and viewpoints of Boston residents. This year we are pleased to welcome back Bookbub as a sponsor of this program; if One City One Story has sparked your enthusiasm for reading, please visit [bookbub.com](http://bookbub.com) to find deals on thousands of bestselling ebooks.

We hope you will read, enjoy, and discuss "Relativity" at local meet-ups, library events, and on our website. If you are inspired by this story to discuss it or even write your own, check out the One City One Story discussion questions and writing contest on our website.

Visit [www.bostonbookfest.org/one-city-one-story](http://www.bostonbookfest.org/one-city-one-story) to learn more.

We hope you will join us in Copley Square at the Boston Book Festival on October 28<sup>th</sup> to meet Daphne Kalotay and take part in a Town Hall-style discussion of the story.

**ONE CITY ONE STORY: READ. THINK. SHARE.**



## *Relativity*

According to the notes in her file, Rozsa Fischer, aged ninety-nine, of 124 Babcock Street, was dying. Her heart and kidneys were on the verge of failure, not to mention the raw sore on her foot, from one of those new antibiotic-resistant infections. Yet hospice had trundled her home and abandoned her, after she insisted she wanted no more to do with them.

Robert, who had overseen Rozsa Fischer's case for the past four years, sat uneasily beside the hospital-issued bed. "We provide a contract lawyer free of charge," he explained, part of the dour conversation that was among his duties. He would also, again, be coordinating Rozsa Fischer's remaining doctor's visits, food delivery, hygiene services, and the aides who came to run errands and see that she took her pills—though the doctor, a fellow by the name of Turley, hadn't seemed particularly insistent about the pills.

"For any legal documents you may need," Robert continued, though it felt wrong to him, now. "Our services include—"

"Bring me the grocery flyer."

Rozsa Fischer's voice, with its sharply trilled r's, seemed to Robert as strong as ever. Though instructed to perform only

tasks within his purview, he found the Sunday *Globe* where the weekend aid worker had tossed it and searched for the slippery pages of the Star Market circular. Bright images of sliced cantaloupe, grilled salmon, water-spritzed green grapes. He handed the insert to Rozsa Fischer.

Slowly—so slowly—she pointed a long forefinger. In the past year, her bones seemed to have lengthened, flattened. Her chest was concave, her knobby shoulders and elbows like the joints of a marionette. “Melon is on special. If they look good, buy two.”

Robert tried not to squirm on the hard wooden chair. “I’m sure your afternoon aide will be happy to—”

“Also some ground beef. Eighty percent okay, nothing leaner.”

“Mrs. Fischer, I’ve restarted Meals on Wheels for you.” He had done so despite her habit of preserving certain dishes, sometimes for weeks, to display to him on his monthly visits, in order to prove their unappetizing nature.

“Two dollars for grapefruit, is *criminal!*”

“Please, Mrs. Fischer! Dr. Turley says your heart—”

“Robert.” Rozsa Fischer lay back and let the pages rest atop the knit blanket. “Dr. Turley is very nice, but he is not so smart.”

Robert hoped no reaction showed on his face. Dr. Turley was the agency’s go-to doctor because he made house calls. That appeared to be his main talent.

“I want to tell you something, Robert.” Rozsa Fischer looked surprisingly regal for someone propped in a mechanized bed. Her hair was gray and only slightly thinned, her milky eyes alert. “I see that your wife is not feeding you.”

Normally he would have laughed. It was true he had lost weight in the months since the baby was born. “I appreciate



your concern, Mrs. Fischer, but I'm here today to discuss your—plans. We provide a lawyer and other services—”

“I have done my will, thank you.”

“Ah, good.” There was also the matter of the funeral, outstanding bills, and whom she would want contacted at her death; Robert had been trained to discuss these preparations. Indeed, he had navigated such conversations many times over the past years, proceeding calmly, point-by-point, through the brochure the agency provided. Now, though, the very notion of such planning seemed to him obscene.

He placed the brochure—*Timely Decisions*—on the bedside table, within her reach. “You might find this helpful. Why don't I come again on Friday, when you've had time to read it?”

Not that it had ever seemed to him right to discuss death as a simple business matter. Some clients responded with affront. Others, like Rozsa Fischer, appeared generally unfazed. Perhaps at such a great age, death no longer frightened. Or perhaps, when you have survived Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and the surgical replacement of two hips, death seems something you might cheat indefinitely.

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Outside it had begun to rain, thick icy drops, April in New England. The trolley, packed to capacity, was rounding Packard's Corner, wheels slowly screeching against the tracks. Robert could see the students pressed up against the windows, staring impassively at their cellphones. He took out his phone to check on Katie but when her voicemail answered, hung up.

He tucked his scarf into the collar of his coat and tried

to avoid the cold puddles of grit and dirt. This stretch of Commonwealth Avenue was always gray. In the window of the chicken wings take-out place, a handwritten sign advertised “HOT JOB OPPORTUNITIES.”

He had stopped telling people, when asked about his work, precisely whom his organization aided. “Senior services,” he made a point of saying, after years of the same jokes. *You do realize that pretty soon you’re gonna be out of a job, right?*

It was true that in just the past year the number of “expired” clients had doubled. Back when he applied for the position, the year he received his MSW, he did not yet know that one-fifth of the world’s Holocaust survivors lived in the United States. Among the benefits Robert’s clients received were home visits, transportation services, psychological counseling, and a three-thousand-dollar restitution payment from the German government. Nearly eighty billion dollars paid out since 1952. And yet, among the many survivors residing outside Germany, fifty thousand had yet to submit a claim.

Of course, doing so meant exhuming the past, in order to prove having been interned in a ghetto, or deported to a camp, or hidden from the Nazis for at least six months. Still, the restitution money continued to bring survivors out of the woodwork. Such as Abe Linder, Robert’s next case of the day, Survivor Services’ youngest client. Seventy-six years old.

A retired mathematician, Abe lived just over in Brighton. He was not really Jewish, he always made a point of reminding Robert, though the papers in his file told otherwise. In the accent of a Transylvanian count, he would explain, “I am Swiss.”

That said, he wanted his three grand, plus the twenty hours per week of home care. Stick it to the Germans, as

he put it. He seemed to really like that it was the German government ponying up the money. He disliked Germans as much as he disliked Jews.

Robert (half-Jewish, nonpracticing) felt it was not his place to judge. Abe was certainly not the first client to hold special contempt for anything related to the cataclysm that had shaped his life. According to his file, Abe had spent over a year hidden with seven other Jewish children in the crawl space of a physics laboratory somewhere in Poland. In his twenties he had emigrated to Zurich, married, and raised a daughter who in turn wed an American and brought Abe over when his wife died. Now the daughter had divorced and joined a commune in New Mexico. Abe was again on his own.

He lived on the first floor of a big brown-shingled house off Washington Street. The doorknocker was a lion's head holding an iron ring in its mouth. Inside, the apartment smelled of curry from the unseen kitchen of a family on the second floor. Robert joined his client at the heavy wooden desk laden with obsolete items: a leather desk blotter with wide sheets of paper tucked into its corners, a neat round pencil sharpener and white rectangular eraser, a Rolodex thick with yellowing notecards. With Abe at his side, Robert set to filling out the paperwork that would bring in the money from the Germans.

Abe was all business, not the sort to prolong visits. No idle chitchat or stories of long ago. Other clients fell into reminiscence at a mere turn of phrase. So many stories! Robert filed them away in his mind like grisly fairy tales.

Magda Blum at the Danube: *They lined us along the river. I was at the end of the line. The officer across from me was young, and I had always been pretty. He looked left and right and moved*

*his head, like “Go.” He was letting me leave! He did not shoot when I walked away. But I could hear the shots at the others.*

Hans Aaldenberg on Liberation Day: *So we went to see what the trouble was, where was our soup? But the guards were no longer there—they had run away!*

Yvette Klinger’s baby: *I was starving when my son was born. I had no milk, I could not feed him. I ground some beans and gave him that. His stomach was in such pain, I thought I would die.*

That was always where Yvette Klinger started crying. No matter that she had been dead two years now. If he chose to, Robert would not know how to discard her memories. Or the others. Scraps of history that, frankly, served mainly to slow things down for the aides trying to get to their next clients. Hans Aaldenberg would stand, one foot on the ottoman, clear his throat and in a booming voice launch into reminiscence like a professor at a lectern, while the aid workers shifted uncomfortably and stole glances at their cell phones. Magda Blum had once talked at the rep from Blue Cross Blue Shield for forty-five minutes. Neither Robert nor the rep dared interrupt her.

Not that Robert faulted them for these interludes. Often such recollections were unavoidable, potholes along any path of conversation. One could not help but slip into them.

Still, there were those who used their dark histories combatively, lobbed like grenades at any perceived slight. Some even ranked their woes competitively. *She* was never in a *camp*—*I* was in a *camp*. Or, So what if she was in a camp—I was sent away and never saw my parents again. Or, He still has his brother—my entire family was murdered! The indifferent lumping together of so many tragedies became yet another offense.

Until three months ago, Robert had found these rankings merely curious. He had not understood the need to search for order and reason in things that would never make sense.

As for clients like Rozsa Fischer, who never mentioned their past trials, Robert used to believe there was dignity in silence. Now he was not so sure. Why should it be any less noble to cry out at the world for having been cruel to you? Robert's clients had lost their families, their childhoods, their treasures. Some had lost their names.

"Just a number," they would say, and show him the tattoo on their forearm. Or, "I used to be a Baum, but we changed it to Bolgar." Even when they did not tell him, Robert saw their documents. Stern had become Sterling. Blau had become Bonner. Kohn had become Kopp.

"I do not know why it says that," Abe Linder said now, of the consonant-laden name on his restitution documents. "It is incorrect. I am Swiss."

\*

"We must give her a name," Katie had said on their second day at Mass General. In her arms she held their daughter, a tiny being with a perfect face—mouth like a doll's, tiny ears, nose, even minuscule nostrils that flared with each breath.

A name. For months they had collected favorites on a notepad on the fridge, like some whimsical grocery list. It had become a game. Fanciful ones: Moxie, Bebe. Old-fashioned ones: Delia, Mavis. Sleek power-broker ones: Sloane, Blake. But this tiny creature, what name would not overwhelm her? What name would not seem a cruel joke?

Still, they would have to name her. It had been explained to them why.

None of the names on their list would do. Robert knew Katie felt the same way. Perhaps it was the New Englander in him that conjured a new list: those prim, humorless abstract nouns the Puritans invoked to steel children against hardship. *Patience. Honor. Prudence.* He wondered if he dared suggest them to Katie, or if that would just upset her more.

It seemed an impossible task. But they had to come up with something. You could not bury a child in Massachusetts without a name.

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His last case of the day, Emma Mueller, was eighty-nine years old. She lived with her husband in Roslindale in a house where all the doors squeaked. Her memory was failing; according to the aides, she had taken to addressing them in her native tongue. Her husband insisted all was well, but that was common. Robert had arranged for an assessment.

The specialist was to have arrived fifteen minutes ago. Waiting with his client, Robert sipped hot, bitter tea and listened to the windows jitter at each breeze. When the husband opened the side door to let the dog out, Emma Mueller called out, her words rushed, hissing under her breath. Though she spoke in German, Robert—hired in part because of his rudimentary skills in that language—understood. He would have to tell the specialist.

He told Katie that night, while they ate the microwaved palak paneer from Trader Joe's. They used to make two packages at once, but tonight they shared one between them and drank frothy beer from glass mugs Robert had chilled in the freezer. "She was warning him that if he wasn't careful, they might catch him. The S.S."

Katie shook her head. “As if once wasn’t enough.”

“She started sweating and shaking. I think she thought I was one, too. I didn’t know how to reassure her. Luckily the psychologist showed up.”

“Yeah, to interrogate her!” Katie gave a small, sad laugh.

It was good to see her laugh. Even just to talk this way, casually, about people other than themselves. Each day it seemed they were inching back toward the couple they had been.

They had agreed not to shut the episode away like some shameful tragedy. Sometimes, asked if he had children, Robert took a moment to explain—and then felt bad to have thrust his story on some unsuspecting innocent. Often he would simply give a small shake of the head. Friends and acquaintances, when they learned what had happened, said things that never seemed to him quite right: that surely it was a blessing for a child not to lead a severely compromised life; that she was an angel in Heaven now; that she would never know life’s disappointments.

The thawing beer mug, no longer frosty, had a goofy insignia on the side, from an Oktoberfest celebration that now seemed, like so many things, somehow ridiculous—residue from some naïve, frivolous life. Robert said, “What if we took a trip? Even just a long weekend, somewhere warm, Bermuda, the Bahamas.” He had been wanting to suggest it but had worried it might sound flippant. Also his salary wasn’t enough for anything lavish. But he wanted—needed—to do something to mark a break between the past and their future.

Katie took his hand in hers. She was the one who liked beach vacations; Robert tended to become restless. “So that you can get sunburned and antsy?” She squeezed his hand. “Thanks, bub. I’ll think about it.”

\*

She had done everything the books and websites said, drank protein shakes, swam three times a week. Robert had watched her practice the prescribed breathing exercises; she even listened to music said to be nourishing for a developing fetus. Everything seemed to be going fine, and nothing strange had shown up in the tests. She was young enough that after five months they stopped doing tests altogether. But when she went into labor (a full two months early, yet even that had seemed feasible), the tiny being to whom she gave birth weighed just four pounds and had no hands or feet—nor, they soon discovered, sufficiently developed vital organs.

In an age of digital readings, blood analysis and ultrasounds, the surprise of it was the part no one, when Robert later confessed the news, seemed able to believe. As if it were some craziness on Robert and Katie's part that had prevented any clue from revealing itself. But the doctors had assured them it was no one's fault. Whatever had gone wrong had happened after those ultrasounds and exams. They could not have known, nothing to be done. Their daughter simply did not possess what was necessary to survive.

And yet they would have to wait five days, it turned out, for her to stop trying.

\*

When, on Friday, Robert returned to see Rozsa Fischer, he was alarmed to find her upright and out of bed, leaning on her four-wheeled walker. Her head bobbed on the thin, loose-skinned neck, her marionette limbs lanky and strange



as she persisted toward him. The scent of something roasting wafted from the kitchen.

Robert hung his coat on the wooden rack and eyed Rozsa Fischer's swollen, bandaged foot wedged into its terrycloth slipper. Dr. Turley had said more than once that if the infection did not subside they would have to amputate.

"Did the nurse say you could stand on that leg?"

"These nurses of yours. Each one fatter than the next."

There was even some color in her cheeks. Now that he was closer, Robert also noted—with curiosity more than concern—that the precancerous mole they had made sure to have surgically removed was already growing back.

Rozsa Fischer said, "I have baked you a meat loaf."

"Mrs. Fischer—"

"I did not even take the ibuprofen today, Robert. I woke up and was not in pain. I thought, wow, maybe they are right and I am dead."

She certainly did seem in better form than in the past few months, perhaps even the past year. An odd moment, Robert supposed, to bring up *Timely Decisions*.

"Robert." With her wheelie walker, Rozsa Fischer was making her slow progress toward the drawing room. "You must *eat*."

That was when the doorbell rang. Rozsa Fischer's eyes opened wide. "I must hurry." She began the slow, awkward trek down the hall.

"Would you like me to answer that?"

She was heading doggedly for the bedroom and did not reply.

The bell rang again. "One minute," Robert called out. But he took his time returning to the foyer. Dr. Turley had already let himself in and was replacing the key in the lock box.

“Robert, hello!” Dr. Turley loped over and shook his hand. Quick strong pump-pump. He was exceedingly fit and not balding at all, which always made Robert feel inferior.

Robert said, “I was just about to leave, actually.”

From the bedroom, Rozsa Fischer called, “Take your meatloaf!”

Dr. Turley raised his eyebrows and in a booming stage voice said, “Is that you, young lady?” He was already slipping past Robert, calling out pleasantries.

Robert headed to the kitchen, where the meatloaf, wrapped in aluminum foil, sat atop the stove. She must have taken it out just before he arrived. How had she managed it? The aide had to have helped her. In Robert’s hands the loaf was warm and yielding.

He could hear Dr. Turley—jocular, loud—as he returned to the hall. Robert poked his head into the bedroom, to thank Rozsa Fischer and let her know that he was leaving.

“Now, listen, young lady,” Dr. Turley was saying, as Robert caught Rozsa Fischer’s eye and waved the meatloaf, “you’d better follow your doctor’s orders!”

Robert left quickly. If he stayed, he might say something rude.

\*

The doctor at the hospital had worn her hair in a thick gray braid. Her face showed no emotion when, explaining the path their daughter’s life would take, she said quietly, “I’m so sorry.”

That was on the first day, in the room where Katie was still recovering. The doctor sounded sincere enough, though her poise, or perhaps it was New England manners, allowed her to appear unmoved. It was the hospital chaplain, a fellow

who looked much too young for the job, whom Robert still thought of sometimes.

They had not asked for him. They were sitting silently, watching their daughter sleep. It was the fourth day, their hundredth hour at her side. When the chaplain stopped at the door to inquire if he might be of help—lightly, in a relaxed tone that made him sound like he might be from California—Katie had surprised Robert by nodding.

She said, “Come see our daughter.”

They still had not named her. It was too morbid, too futile a task. Although in his head Robert added to his list (Amity, Faith, Mercy), no name seemed right.

The chaplain looked to be in his late twenties, with an unlined face and a shaggy haircut that curled at the tips. Robert sensed an air of leisure about him, as if he had just come in from a round of volleyball. Probably it was his faith that gave him that untroubled look. Robert could not help but envy such people, envy their conviction, which he did not share and could not draw on to render this disaster somehow meaningful. He had glimpsed that certitude on a visit he and Katie made, early in their romance, to Emily Dickinson’s house, had never forgotten the simple words on her tombstone: CALLED BACK.

Like a sign on an office door: called away on urgent business. What a reassuring sense of self, of industry, necessity. In that room in the hospital, Robert felt a surge of something close to jealousy as the chaplain approached their sleeping daughter. He looked so young and unruffled, divinely armored against death’s whimsy.

The chaplain stood easily over the bassinet and gazed down at her—their imperfect child with the perfect, doll-like face.

The chaplain’s face did something then. A small twitch.

Not of alarm; more like surprise. Perhaps even amazement. What had he expected? Not this tiny slumbering thing. He looked at her and it seemed he was no longer simply performing a ritual, nor the automatic motions of his day, but seeing, taking in, their child.

Then the chaplain began to blink—an effort, Robert realized, not to cry. Robert watched him pressing his lips together as if to stop his mouth from quivering. Even when he had regained his composure, the chaplain looked somehow bewildered.

He turned to them, then, and said in a tone of astonishment, “She’s like a little jewel.”

When Robert thought about those days in the hospital, this was the moment he often arrived at. This stranger’s appreciation of their child and of their private calamity. For those few moments, this other person had held some portion of their grief.

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Over the next weeks, the weather improved, the sun warming the car between case visits. Robert realized he had been dreading the change of season. The short winter days had left less time to get through, the gray puddles of snow matching his mood. Now there was sunshine and the palpable relief of an entire city having made it through the final throes of winter.

It was a bright Friday afternoon when he finished coordinating Hans Aaldenberg’s latest round of medical visits. He stepped back outside to find Coolidge Corner sunny and bustling, just a nip of a breeze in the air. On Beacon Street the trolley rang its little bell and shoved slowly ahead.

Rozsa Fischer lived not far from here. Robert pictured the

*Timely Decisions* brochure on the table by her bed. Though Dr. Turley maintained she ought to have died by now, Robert had heard no such news. Her street, Babcock, was on the way to his last case of the day.

At her building, he removed his cap and keyed her number into the intercom. He waited a long time for her to answer the phone. Hearing her voice, thick and slow, he felt guilty to have woken her.

“No, you come up—I want to see you.”

Robert took the stairs rather than the elevator, to allow her more time. He opened the key box and let himself into the apartment. The foyer was quiet as he removed his jacket. He called out, “It’s me.”

“Come here.” Her voice came from the bedroom. She lay atop the bedcovers, wearing a yellow sweater, gray pants, and one white sock. The other, infected, foot, was greatly swollen and wrapped in gauze, propped on a thickly folded blanket. At the opposite side of the bed stood the nurse’s cart with its cotton swabs, bandages, iodine, and a big bottle of Cipro.

Rozsa Fischer frowned at him. “Sit down.” She spoke as if a wad of cloth were caught beneath her tongue. “The nurse tells me you are going on holiday.”

“Indeed I am.” Robert eyed her swollen foot. “That looks painful.”

“You go somewhere warm?”

“Bahamas, five days. Has Dr. Turley seen that foot?”

“Robert, I want to tell you something.” Rozsa Fischer reached slowly for her mug of water. The afternoon aide was known for leaving full glasses of water on every possible surface, so that one was always within reach. Robert watched Rozsa Fischer drink, a simple act that took much effort. Very slowly she placed the mug back down. She began to speak.

“In the camp we were very hungry. I had sores all over my body. One day, an onion rolled off a cart. Before I could pick it up, another girl grabbed it. She too was starving, she could have eaten one hundred onions. But Robert, she shared it with me. And the sores on my body, they *healed*.”

She seemed to wince.

“Mrs. Fischer, are you in pain?”

“Do you see, Robert, why you must eat?”

Robert searched her face to see if this were an explanation or a simple declaration, that a person could heal. Or did she mean this story for *him*? He supposed some other “provider” might have mentioned something to her. Told her what had happened with the baby. Or perhaps she had simply noticed that he had lost weight.

Robert looked at her mug of water, at the nurse’s cart laden with supplies. His pulse, he realized, was racing. He heard himself speak. “Four and a half months ago, our daughter was born. She was very ill. They told us she wouldn’t survive. But it took five days.”

At the end of those five days he had felt an exhaustion unlike any he had known. Not just his heart but his face, his bones, even the backs of his eyes, ached. Yet with each day spent in that room at the hospital, something else had been happening, growing. A sense of himself as a father and of that tiny creature as his daughter.

Rozsa Fischer said, “I am sorry for you, Robert.”

He immediately felt ashamed. For having wrenched out his pain and laid it before a dying woman. But something kept him standing there beside the bed, kneading his cap in his hands.

He felt his face turning hot. “Her name was Ruby.”

Sometimes when he found Katie crying, and held her, and

whispered useless sentiments, he would think this name to himself, how it seemed to have been handed to them, and the warm way it held their child inside it. That for much of that fourth day, and all of the fifth, their child had been Ruby, alive. And that even borne away from life, she remained Ruby, missed and longed for. Sometimes that helped.

“Ruby.” Rozsa Fischer gave a heavy nod. “Beautiful.”

Robert watched the heavy head, the marionette shoulders. He wondered if he would see her again, or if he would return from vacation to find another name checked off his list, added to that other column of names, the public ones and the secret, private ones he had been allowed to know.

He said, “I didn’t mean to talk about myself. I just thought I’d check in on you. I should be leaving now.”

“Me too, Robert.” A slow, nearly silent laugh. But she was still here.

## About the Author

Daphne Kalotay is a novelist based in Somerville, Massachusetts. Her collection *Calamity and Other Stories* was shortlisted for the 2005 Story Prize, and her 2011 novel *Russian Winter* won that year's Writers' League of Texas Fiction Prize. Her most recent novel, *Sight Reading*, was the winner of the 2014 New England Society Book Award in Fiction. She is a professor at Emerson College.

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## **The Boston Book Festival**

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