



January 10-24, 2023

Dear Reader,

I'm delighted that my novel-in-stories, *If Sylvie Had Nine Lives*, has been selected for Together We Read Canada. Libraries have always been an essential part of my life, from borrowing books by mail through the provincial library when I was a kid in a small prairie town, to reading newspaper clippings in the local history room at Saskatoon Public Library as part of the background research for Sylvie.

How does a life change course? Sometimes a decision that ripples down the years is the result of thoughtful mulling over, and sometimes the trigger is a small thing: a person sitting next to you sneezes and the distraction throws you off course; or someone pinches you at a key moment and the short, sharp pain brings you back to your senses.

I sometimes think back to my own turning points and wonder how my life would look today if I'd made different decisions. I can't travel in time to explore those other possibilities, and so I wrote a book that allows someone else to do that in her own life. *If Sylvie Had Nine Lives* follows a woman through the adventures and misadventures of nine alternate lives over a span of forty years. She makes some tragic decisions along the way, and she makes some good ones too. Her wry sense of humour, which I share, keeps her going through it all.

You'll meet nineteen-year-old Sylvie Fletcher at a moment in 1974 when she's about to make a crucial choice. From there, her possible lives go off in all directions. A wonderful book designer created a series of maps to help you see which of Sylvie's separate lives you're about to enter as you begin each new section. Think of these as similar to the map you find in a huge city park or an enormous mall, the sort with a white dot that says, "You are here."

Writing this book gave me the opportunity to explore themes I've been curious about for some time: desire, chance, choice, and how the decisions we make affect not only our own lives but also the lives of the people around us and beyond.

It's been fun to hear from readers who've told me that reading *If Sylvie Had Nine Lives* prompted them to think about moments when their own paths turned this way or that. I'm grateful that this program will give new readers a chance to discover Sylvie. I hope you enjoy the read, and the conversations it leads to.

Best wishes,

Leona Theis