Meet Constance.

I want you to meet my new friend, Constance. She arrived just today all the way from Lindsborg, Kansas, which by my map is about 1182 miles away, smack dab in the middle of the USA. That seems appropriate because she seems to be a midwest kind of gal---hard working, practical and with no need for anything too fancy to make it seem like something she's not. At first I thought we were the same age, but turns out she is the same vintage as my little brother, 1967. Close enough. Souls are ageless and genderless anyhow and I know our souls are going to get along just swell.

Let me describe her. She's kind of patriotic in her red, white and blue trimmings, but she's not the ornamental type. She is certainly not high maintenance. In fact, she's just as much at home under the maple at the back of my weedy yard as she is when perched at my writing desk rubbing elbows with Macbook Pro. She requires nothing but the essentials: a new black and red striped ribbon now and then, a gentle cleaning and maybe a little oil for her joints when things get creaky. She is in her fifth decade after all. This gal was meant for work. She not only gets the job done, but she's got all the smarts she would ever need for years of happy partnership. Three choices for line spacing, RED or BLACK ink, variable tension to keeps things nice between us, and that great 1960's invention the Power-Space for when she really needs to move it to the end of the line.

The first thing I noticed when we sat down at the kitchen table together is how solid she feels. She's all metal and made in America at a time when we still made things right. No kidding, she weighs as much as my full-sized 2009 Brother (plastic) that takes up twice as much space on my desk and makes all sorts of electric racket. She feels really nice under my hands, like I can be a little reckless and rough when the passion strikes me. She seems like she may even prefer it that way from time to time. But one thing is for sure, she wants you to take your time. If my fingers fly too fast over her she gets her keys all in a wad and stops you dead until you get the hint and take things back to a more pleasurable speed. It certainly makes me a more considerate typist.
and slows my sometimes frantic train of thought to a more fluent pace.

Of course as we are becoming acquainted with one another I find myself wondering about her past. Whose hands caressed her for all of these years? Did she travel with them to exotic places, or was she content on the desk of a farm house in Topeka? From the looks of the luggage that arrived with her she's been around a bit, but she's in good enough shape to suggest that someone really loved her and knew how to treat her right. I think it will be fun to muse on where she's been before, and I'm hoping some of her tales become known to me as we go along making stories of our own.

Like I said, she's pretty simple stock in some ways. She does not yelp at me when I've made a mistake or misspelled a word. She does not glibly lead me to believe that she knows more than I do and that she has corrected all of my shortcomings. She leaves the work for me. I have to rely on my own good sense, with my Webster's and Chicago Manual of Style nearby, of course. She does not put on appearances, or let me dress up my words with fancy formatting, fonts or millions of colours. Straight up 10 pitch Pica, baby, with a choice between black or a daring red ink. Just words on the page, the way it should be.

Another thing I just adore about her? The gentle rhythm she mutters for each letter of every word. And when I'm done with a line she reminds me with a sweet, melodious chime. She really helps me feel every word, with that slower and more thoughtful pace that allows me space to breathe and (hopefully) think more clearly. She's kind of got that Zen thing going on. I appreciate that.

Why did I name her Constance? Well, it has something to do with my favourite book of poems by Jane Kenyon, but it also means that I know she will be my long time and constant companion as I struggle to get my words down on paper. She may not be as readily available to me at any time or any place, or as effortless when it comes to rearranging my sentences as my high-tech and lately unreliable friend the laptop. And I may not have the virtual world of bountiful information at my fingertips when she and I spend time
together, but really I'm looking for more quality one-on-one time anyhow. I know she'll always be there, even if just a warm thought in my mind as I anticipate our next encounter. The best things require a little more effort from us anyways. Don't you think?