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Mr. Steven Laube  
c/o Mount Hermon Christian Writers Conference

Dear Mr. Laube:

My name is Mildred Koppelheimer and I'm working on a novel, Shaving Babbitt, which I would like you to consider.

The central character, Babbitt, is the oddball of his small town, Westerville. Every day Babbitt comes into the town barbershop to be shaved. And every day, the barber asks the same question: "What's new, Babbitt?" Whereupon Babbitt spins a strange tale about people and places never before heard of in Westerville—Long John Silver and a mysterious island full of pirate's treasure; a bizarre person named "Baggins" with a piece of jewelry he can't seem to get rid of; a strange and wholly unbelievable gentleman by the name of "Gatsby."

Babbitt, as you may have guessed, is an avid reader, but he's completely unable to convey to his townsmen that the stories he's telling them come from books, and that he is not simply making up lies. To his compatriots, Babbitt is nothing more than a shameless prevaricator who would be jailed if he weren't so pathetic.

Shaving Babbitt is a satirical allegorical spoof of postmodern America. I have obtained endorsements from a number of authors you may know, including Sigmund Brouwer, Brandilyn Collins, and James Scott Bell. I hope you'll find time to read my enclosed proposal.

Sincerely,

Mildred Koppelheimer

Shaving Babbitt: A Novel

by

Mildred Koppelheimer

## Shaving Babbitt

### Summary:

Shaving Babbitt is a heartwarming story set in a small midwestern town. Babbitt is the local oddball of Westerville, despised by all, persecuted in many petty ways, mocked behind his back. Babbitt is, apparently, a deluded soul, living in a dream world filled with pirates, space aliens, “hobbits”, wicked city men, and other outlandish folk. In reality, Babbitt is merely a well-read man, attempting to educate his illiterate townsmen with excerpts from great literature, but wholly unable to make them understand that it’s all just fiction.

### Takeaway Value:

In Plato’s allegory of the cave, we read: “And now look again, and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows . . . Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown him?” (Plato, Republic, vii, 514A-517A)

Likewise, Babbitt’s townsmen prefer their dull shadow world of Westerville to his bizarre world. And likewise, postmodern America prefers any myth other than “the myth that is true”, as Tolkien famously remarked of his Christian faith.

### Details:

Shaving Babbitt is a novel of almost 85,000 words. The manuscript is complete and ready to publish. I have taken the liberty of obtaining endorsements from a number of writers, including James S. Bell, Brandilyn Collins, and Sigmund Brouwer. See the next page for the comments they have so graciously given me.

### Endorsements:

“Here are characters that will make you laugh, make you think, and ultimately . . . make you cry. A startling allegory that will pierce your heart.” -- Sigmund Brouwer

“A close shave of a read. Koppelheimer’s wit is razor sharp!” -- Brandilyn Collins.

"Shaving Babbitt is a deep tale, rich with pathos, dense with unexpected insight and humor." -- Hannah Alexander.

"Shaving Babbitt is one of the most profound and touching allegories I have ever had the pleasure of reading. Triumphant and bold." -- Rene Gutteridge, author of Troubled Waters.

"Wow! Ms. Koppelheimer's crisp writing style, coupled with her deep, believable characters, kept me reading into the wee hours of the morning. Shaving Babbitt is sure to soar straight to the top of the best-seller charts!" -- Marlo Schalesky.

"Shaving Babbitt will keep you up late at night digging through the all different strata of meaning. Mildred's use of double, triple and even quadruple entendre still has me laughing." -- John Olson, author of Oxygen and Fifth Man.

"Shaving Babbitt is that rarest find, a delicious read that I never wanted to end. It left me forever and irrevocably changed." -- Cindy McCormick Martinusen, author of North of Tomorrow.

"Gentle humor and a down-to-earth style make this sly, subtle satire of post-modernism a compelling read. Recommended!" -- Randall Ingermanson.

"Shaving Babbitt is a tour de force of literary excellence." -- Colleen Coble, author of Without a Trace, W Publishing Group.

"Koppelheimer's writing is riveting! This has a story that has waited too long to be told. Shaving Babbitt had me reaching for my husband's razor!" - Kristin Billerbeck.

"Spellbinding! I admit, I was skeptical. The lyric quality of the prose, the magnetism of the characters, and the sheer power of storyline won me over. A must read for Christians." -- Jack Cavanaugh, author of the Christy Award-winning, While Mortals Sleep.

"I can't believe I just stayed up till 3 AM reading Ms. Koppelheimer's marvelous book, Shaving Babbitt! What a wonderful, deep, satisfying read!" -- T.L. Higley, author of Retrovirus.

"Mildred Koppelheimer 's writing is strong and true. Welcome to a new, refreshing voice!" -- James S. Bell.

## Chapter 1

There ain't nobody like Babbitt, and I'm glad of it.

Babbitt, he walks into my barbershop again this morning, and he's got that fool look on his face like he always does and he sets down in my chair, just like every day, and he says, "The usual, Joseph."

That's what he calls me—Joseph. Crazy fool. Ain't nobody else in Westerville calls me Joseph. I'm Joe and proud of it, but there ain't no telling Babbitt nothing because he's just a crazy fool.

I see a big old fat grin sliding across Bert Thompson's face and I know we's in for some fun today. Bert, he's funny, he is. Likes to pull on Babbitt's tail, and Babbitt, he don't even have sense to know he's being pulled. So Bert, like I was saying, he starts grinning, and then Donnie Miller, he's grinning too, 'cause he sees what's coming, and it's going to be fun like to split your sides right off. And Drew Simpson and his brother Bob, they's sitting up straight and peeking outta the corner of their eyes at old Babbitt, who ain't got the sense of a punched out possum.

Anyways, Bert, he kinda pulls closer to Babbitt and he says, real interested-like, "So Babbitt, how's that friend of yours doing, that . . . Baggitt fellow?"

Babbitt, he's leaning back in his chair now, and I've got soap lathered up good all over his neck. You know, it ain't easy to talk when you're leaning back with your neck stretched out like that. Babbitt's big old

Adam's apple, it kinda slides up and down again, and then he says, "You mean Baggins, don't you, Bert? Baggitt isn't a name."

Well of course, that's just the funny part, because everybody knows Baggins ain't a name neither. Fer heavens sake, Babbitt ain't figured out yet that Bert's just funning him.

So I pulls out my blade and I commence to shave that long old skinny neck. Scrape! Ain't that just a delicious sound, that first long stroke on a unshaved neck? I think so, anyways.

Well, Bert he ain't done yet. Bert, he's a hoot, and ain't giving up till Babbitt has been lathered and scraped and rinsed and towelled and paid and out the door. And on a good day, that's a spell.

Bert, he knows I'm gonna give him as long as he wants, so he licks his chops and he says, "My mistake! Of course, I meant Baggins."

Ain't that a good one? Bert's already talking in that funny way Babbitt does. Bert, he's a clever one, and he can put it on just like that!

Anyways, Bert, he keeps plowing. "Babbitt, explain to me about why this Baggitt fellow wants to get rid of that there bracelet thing."

Well, you ought just to see Babbitt's neck tight up! You'd think somebody lit his drawers on fire. He says, "The ring contains the power of the evil lord Sauron and it seduces all who hold it. Frodo can't keep the ring and he can't hide it. Gandalf won't take it and Elrond won't either. Therefore, he has no choice but to throw it into Mount Doom."

It just makes me sick sometimes to see what a liar Babbitt is. Bert and me and everybody, we all know there ain't no Baggins in Westerville. Never has been, never will be. If this feller Baggins ever come to Westerville, like as not we'd throw him out before he could say Bandalf. I'm a honest man, myself, and I don't hold with lying. Bert don't neither. Nobody does in this town. Nobody except Babbitt.

We don't hate him, we feel sorry for him.

A man who can't just tell the simple truth, he ain't good for much. Babbitt, he's a liar, and if he weren't just a crazy fool, I'd tell him so. But you can't tell a fool nothing.

Well, Bert, he ain't taking none of this lying down. He's got a grin on his face just as wide as a jack o'lantern. He says, "Why thank you, Babbitt. That explains it all."

Ain't Bert a hoot? He can talk just like Babbitt, he can. Wished I could talk fancy like that, but it just ain't in me.

Anyways, Bert, he ain't stopping. He says, "But I'm just a mite confused on this one thing. Where is this Baggitt feller? How come we ain't seen him lately?"

Well, that's just throwing gas on the fire, that is. There ain't no stopping Babbitt now. He's talking like you won't believe, going on and on about some street called Bad End and some part of town called Hobbitown and somewheres else called Shire. It ain't no hurt to let him ramble, but it's all just guff. See, I been all over Westerville and there just ain't no

street named Bad End. Ain't no Hobbitown. No Shire, neither. Babbitt, he's just flat out touched in the head, I guess. It's a sad thing, you think about it. Babbitt, he's a nice enough feller, but he's just gone whack and there ain't nothing to do but laugh or else you'd just bust down and cry.

Well, I keep scraping with my blade, and pretty soon I'm going slower and slower. Wouldn't want to cut dear Babbitt, you see. He's still quacking on, but it ain't making more sense, it's making less. Takes all kinds, we like to say around here. Babbitt, he's one of the kinds it takes all of, I figger.

So finally, Babbitt, he comes up for air, so to speak. He quits his gabbing and lets me finish scraping off his whiskers. I rinse his face and dry it off with a nice white towel and I hold up the mirror for him to lookit.

He gives me this funny signal with his hand and says, "Say, Joseph, that was A-OK." He talks like that, yes he does, but it ain't no harm, it's just sad, that's all.

Then Babbitt, he fishes in that big old baggy pocket of his and he rousts out a quarter and he gives it to me.

Old Bert, he knows not to give up. He says, "But Babbitt, tell me again. What does it all mean?" And Bert, his grin has got so wide and floppy now, it looks like it's ready to slide on out the door and down the block.

Babbitt, he kinda smiles at Bert, and he says, "Why, Bert, it's an allegory about the battle between Good and Evil. That's all. An allegory."

And he whacks Bert on the shoulder and just goes on ambling out the door and down the block.

Well! That's the signal for my little barbershop to just go wild. I mean Bert, he's rolling on the floor and laughing like he's crying, and Bob and Drew, they's so busted up they can't hardly breathe. Donnie Miller, he's laid out in his chair roaring like a regular lion. I'm so tickled, I can't stand up neither and I just fall in my own chair and laugh. It's either that or cry, because you think about it, Babbitt is got to be sick in the head, and that ain't a pretty sight.

There ain't nobody like Babbitt, and I'm glad of it.