

# *sine cera*

a DiverseCity Writing Series anthology

## Saturday

Volume 6 Number 1  
May 2008

*sine cera* is published by the SLCC Community Writing Center  
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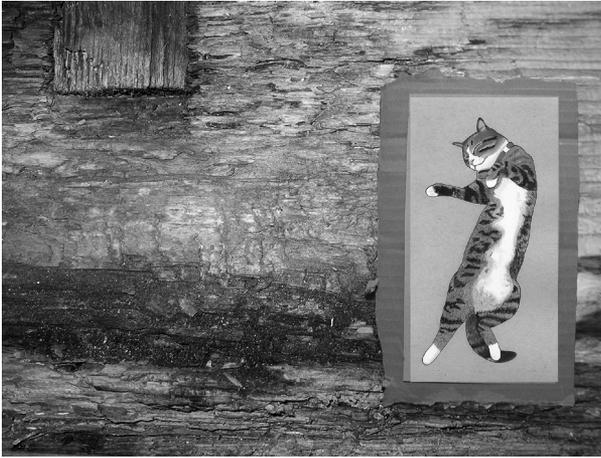
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This edition of *sine cera* was compiled and edited by  
DiverseCity Writing Series Coordinator, Jeremy Remy  
with assistance from Quintin Graves.

*sine cera*: Saturday  
ISBN 0-9789581-9-5  
© May 2008





cover: **Saturday**  
by Alex Remy

Alex Remy is an award winning artist and teacher living in Salt Lake City, Utah. You can find more information at [www.alexremy.com](http://www.alexremy.com).

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# Introduction

## Everyone Can Write!

In August of 2000, the SLCC Community Writing Center began working with writers from local organizations in two-month writing workshops. Each workshop culminated with a publication and a public reading. During the first two years, this DiverseCity Writing Series worked with a variety of organizations: the Liberty Senior Center; Justice, Economic Independence and Dignity for Women; The Road Home shelter; and Cancer Wellness House.

In the summer of 2002, the DiverseCity Writing Series expanded to offer multiple, on-going writing groups. Volunteers were trained in collaborative writing strategies and became mentors for a variety of open-interest and specialized writing groups.

In the fall of 2003, the pieces written in these groups were assembled to create *sine cera: People Are Strange*, the first DiverseCity Writing Series anthology. The anthology celebrated the work of participants, who were then invited to present their writing at a public reading.

Over the past four years, the DiverseCity Writing Series has grown and changed, but the mission remains the same.

The SLCC Community Writing Center would like to thank the mentors and participants who have helped to make this program an ongoing success:

The Salt Lake City Main Library Group

The Environmental Writing Group

(at the Main Library)

The King's English Group

The Literacy Action Center Groups

The Poetry Group

(at Barnes & Noble in Sugarhouse)

The Sam Weller's Group

The Utah Pride Group

The Veterans' Affairs Group

We look forward to the future growth and development of the DiverseCity Writing Series, and are happy to present our tenth publication:

*sine cera: Saturday*

## Preface

*The DiverseCity Writing Series bridges the Salt Lake community's diverse social, economic and educational backgrounds through writing, collaboration and dialogue.*

—DiverseCity Writing Series Mission Statement

This year, the SLCC Community Writing Center re-worked the DiverseCity Writing Series (DWS) mission statement. We wanted to better define the purpose of the DWS, and provide a framework for current and future DWS programs. With that in mind, I took a look at our publication, *sine cera*.

The book you're currently holding has an unusual name—one often mispronounced and inevitably begging the question, “What does that mean?”

The phrase, *sine cera* (pronounced “sin-ah care-ah”) is Latin for “without wax.” The story goes that dishonest or untalented sculptors in ancient Rome or Greece covered flaws in marble and pottery with wax. To demonstrate a quality product, honest sculptors labeled their creations “sine cera”—indicating a piece with flaws left uncovered. The term, *sine cera*, became synonymous with such honest presentation, that it eventually became the root of the word “sincere.”

It's a fantastic story. And also a false one. More likely, the word “sincere” is derived from the Latin *sincerus*, meaning “pure.” If that isn't enough, the Oxford English Dictionary says “there is no probability” in the “without wax” story being true.

The purpose of this anthology is to provide a public space for people that might otherwise not be heard. We chose *sine cera* to demonstrate the sincerity of their words and honestly present them. And now we find this meaning to be a myth. But what better way to bridge social, economic and educational backgrounds? Myths, such as the one created

here, present universal meaning through their perception and misperceptions, through narrative and symbolism. In some ways, myth can bring us closer to truth.

This DiverseCity Writing Series anthology is a collection of writing from people living in the Salt Lake community. In the spirit of the *sine cera* myth, we choose to print the words with limited edits. The title and the words included in the anthology, are labeled “sine cera” to indicate how these flaws have been left uncovered. You’ll find mistakes in this book, if only in the title itself. But you’ll also find sincerity in the words and an honest presentation of each writer’s ideas, memories, dreams and experiences. They aren’t always factual, but they are always sincere. They might be true, but they aren’t always accurate.

Included are stories of families and familiars, veterans and missionaries, students and customers, heroes and saviors. You’ll find tales of drinking, prayer, sex, love, nature, nightmares, offense and inspiration. I invite you to join this community, and welcome you to share the sincere expression in this collection: *sine cera: Saturday*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JEREMY E. REMY'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'JEREMY' and the last name 'REMY' being more prominent.

Jeremy E. Remy  
DiverseCity Writing Series Coordinator  
SLCC Community Writing Center

# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the DiverseCity Writing Series volunteer mentors:

**Dave Bastian, JoLyn Brixey, Marylee Clarke, Randy Eggert, Katharine English, Pace Gardner, Quintin Graves, Melissa Helquist, Kellie Jensen, Vondell Jones, Christine Lee, Joseph Lindberg, Cyndi Lloyd, Mindy Lukens, Olivia Moreton, and Steve Pastorino.**

Thank you for all of the work you put into making the DiverseCity Writing Series an ongoing success. Your dedication is both inspiring and greatly appreciated.

Also, thank you to **Tiffany Rousculp, Melissa Helquist** and **Andrea Malouf** for support and advice. And thanks to everyone at the SLCC Community Writing Center for feedback and editing assistance: **Chanel Earl, Christina Smith, and Quintin Graves.**

A special thanks to **Alex Remy** for creation of the cover art for this edition of *sine cera*. Also thanks to **Ard Hesselink** for use of his photography.

The staff of the SLCC Community Writing Center, and everyone in the DiverseCity Writing Series, would like to bid Melissa Helquist a fond farewell, and wish her success and happiness in the future.

We would also like to express our gratitude to **Deb Young** of the Literacy Action Center, **Jim Rosinus** of Sam Weller's Bookstore, **Anne Holman** of the King's English Bookstore, **Lydia Martinez** of Barnes and Noble in Sugarhouse, **Jennifer Nuttall** of Utah Pride, and the **Salt Lake City Public Library** for the use of their facilities and continued support.

Thanks to **Salt Lake Community College** for making this publication possible.

And, of course, thank you to all the writers!



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# Mom's Eyes

by JoLyn Brixey

JoLyn Brixey is a CWC writing group mentor who enjoys writing about her family almost as much as she loves them. She is the wife of Dave and mother of Adam and Glen.

My mom always seemed to know everything. At least, it seemed so to me, especially when I was a little girl not even old enough for kindergarten.

If I bothered my sister or dropped food on the floor or colored on the wall, my mom knew what I had done even before I finished doing it. Sadly to say, I had to make sure I was a good little girl. I didn't have any choice! My mom knew everything!

Sometimes it felt like I was living with Santa Claus. "He sees you when you're sleeping... He knows when you're awake... He knows if you've been bad or good... so be good for goodness sake!" That tune was quickly becoming my childhood theme song. Swap the HE with a SHE and it was about my mom.

One day I bravely asked the question I had been wondering about for weeks.

"Mommy, how come you know everything? How come you know what I am doing, even when you aren't looking at me?"

She looked at me for a few seconds, smiled a bit and then said sternly, "Because I have eyes in the back of my head!"

I gasped with wonder. "Really? Can I see?"

"No. But just remember that I do!"

I waited one day until she was busy washing our dirty dishes. I crept up quietly behind her and stared at the back of her head. Finally, seeing nothing, I stuck my tongue out and made the ugliest face I could muster.

She continued washing the dishes, humming a little tune until....

"Stop that right now and go play with your sister!"

And so I did.

# The Jump

by Cyndi Lloyd

Cyndi Lloyd is a DiverseCity Writing Series mentor for the Literacy Action Center. She is pursuing a degree in English at SLCC, and is a dog lover besides a book lover.

Death nearly took me when I was five.  
You were there, my five-year-old cohort.  
You watched when others only saw.

Remember, we were standing  
at the top of a twelve-foot ramp?  
You asked me if I wanted to jump.

I asked you the same in kind.  
You agreed, but only if I  
plunged first.

I slid between the railing bars  
and gathered my strength and jumped  
off  
the  
ledge, like Wonder Woman.

I felt the air all around me,  
felt the air brush up through my hair.

I never saw the ground coming.  
Instead of hitting gray, I landed on green.

There must have been a moment or two that I didn't breathe.  
Had I blacked out?  
Then a jolt, coursed through my body,  
and my eyes flew open.  
I gasped for air as though I had been holding my breath under water.

A man, at my side, looked down at me.  
*Where's Mom?* I wondered.  
He told me I would be fine.  
I cried, not understanding what had happened.  
Mom arrived, her face wet with tears,  
and I knew I had frightened her.

The man told Mom I was fine—  
“She just had the wind knocked out of her.  
Thank goodness she missed that cement.”

My mom turned and ran away.  
*Mom, don't leave me! Where are you going?*  
I couldn't speak.  
Frightened, I looked at the man leaning over me—  
a stranger.  
People flocked to me—the little lamb—  
and helped me to my feet.  
It didn't feel like I stood.  
I couldn't feel anything,  
except the stinging sensation in my eyes.

Through blurred vision,  
I saw mother come at me  
pushing the stroller—she had gone to get my baby brother,  
whom she had left in her panic.

You never jumped that day.  
I'm glad you didn't.

# Young Childhood

by Martha Carter

Martha Carter likes to read books.

When we were living in Wilton Arkansas, there was not even a grocery store or a store to buy clothes. My mother and daddy had to go to Texarkana to go grocery shopping. One day my mother and daddy were going to take us kids to Kmart to buy school clothes. My sister Nancy asked if her friend Helen could come with us to Kmart. Daddy said, "Yes, but you will have to ask her parents to see if she can go with us." So Nancy went back in the house and called Helen's parents. Helen's parents said, "Yes."

My daddy said  
he'd stay in the car  
until we got done.

So we went and got into the car with our parents. Daddy drove us up to Helen's house to get her. Her parents told her that she had to obey Nancy's parents and do what they told her to do. So Helen got in the car and daddy drove off to Kmart.

We got to Kmart's parking lot and parked. We got out of the car and went into Kmart. My parents said we could go look around and we did. My mother got a shopping cart to carry the clothes in the shopping cart. My daddy said he'd stay in the car until we got done. My mother took the stuff she was buying to the cash register. She put things on the counter and the cashier rang the stuff up and told her how much it was going to be. My mother paid her.

We were waiting for her to get done. Peggy and I went out of there first. Then Nancy, Mary, and Helen were coming out when the security alarm went off. One of the workers said, "I need to talk to you three girls." My mother yelled out of the door to my daddy to come in. Daddy came in. Daddy told Peggy and me to stay in

the car. So we did. “We’ll be back out as soon as we take care of the problem.” We thought, “What could be the problem?”

So we sat and sat. When we saw everyone coming we waited for them from the car. My daddy said, “Everyone get in the car and don’t say a word.” Daddy was driving back to Wilton Arkansas.

So Peggy and I asked my mother what had happened. She said, “Nancy, Mary, and Helen have been shoplifting. They had their purses full of makeup.” When we got home my daddy sent Nancy and Mary to their rooms and called Helen’s parents and told her what Helen had done at Kmart. Helen’s parents asked my daddy to bring Helen home. My daddy told Nancy and Mary not to come out of their room until he got back. When daddy came back from taking Helen home he told Nancy and Mary to come into the front room. He said that on his way back from Helen’s house he decided what Nancy and Mary’s punishment would be. He said, “Nancy and Mary, you will be grounded for one week. You will have to come straight home from school and you will not be able to play with your friends. That’s the end of it.” Peggy and I got to play with our friends. Nancy and Mary were mad because they thought it wasn’t fair. Daddy said that it was not us that shoplifted so it was fair.

# My Story

by Tiffany Carver

Tiffany Carver likes to read in front of people. She also likes to write stories for anybody who likes to read them.

I was born in Canoga Park, California. When I was six days old, I was adopted. My mom waited for a phone call from a lawyer about adopting me. The first time he called, he told my real mom that my birth mom didn't want me to move into a Mormon home. My mom and dad went to a Utah/ BYU game with friends while they were waiting for the adoption to go through. My two brothers had a babysitter while my parents went to the game. Later that day, the lawyer called and the babysitter told him that my parents were not home. My brothers couldn't go to sleep because they were so excited because they were going to get a baby sister. When my mom got home, she called that night. The lawyer said yes, you can adopt that girl. He told my birth mom that I would be taken very good care of.

Later that day,  
the lawyer called...

My mom packed that same night and the next morning left Salt Lake to come to take me home. She described herself to the lawyer's wife and what she was wearing because the lawyer's wife was going to take me to the airport to meet my Mom. She was wearing an orange coat, a heavy, long coat since it was February. When she went to California, it was warm and she didn't need the coat anymore but she had to keep it on because that was how the woman would know who she was. She was too hot! When she got me, she had to go to a special room to feed me and change me. When all that was done, she waited for the plane to take us back to Utah. The air stewardess put a seat down next to her to make a bed for me

and my Mom wrapped me in a yellow and white checkered blanket. When we got to the airport in Salt Lake City, she knelt down for my brothers to be able to see me. For the first few months of my life, we lived in Murray, Utah. The adoption was so quick that Mom and Dad did not even have time to buy me a crib, clothes, or anything. For the first few days that I was home, they worked on my room and some friends gave them a small baby bassinette that they would put by my dad. My dad would hold my hand all night long.

I only said “hi” and “bye” until I was three years old. I guess I was craving a hamburger and I said “burger” to my dad. He said “no” but I asked him again. Then my dad took me to get the burger.

My mom read in the newspaper about something called patterning. It helped people with cerebral palsy to walk. Patterning is a form of physical therapy. The first time we went it seemed like it would help me. Someone would

move my head back and forth at the same time that two people

moved my arms and two people would move my legs. One arm went behind

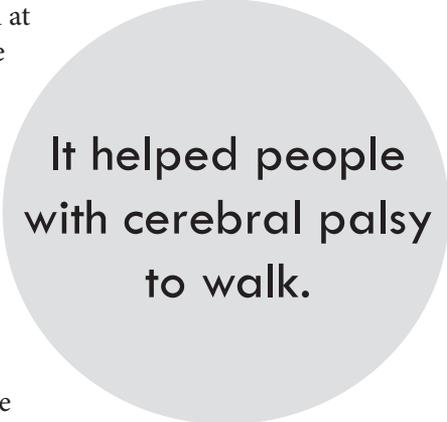
me to the middle of my back while the other arm went in front of me, with my hand being laid out

flat on the table in front of me. One leg was kept straight and one leg was bent while the

legs were moved up and down. The movements were supposed to be like I was

crawling or walking. This was done four times a day, every day at my home. The patterners would bring their children with them and the kids would play with my toys. It made me feel so frustrated to watch them. One of the people that was helping me realized how frustrated I was and talked to my mom. She told her that maybe if they could give me a prize when I did well, I would focus on that instead of the kids around me. It worked.

My mom and I went back every two months for this patterning. How did we make money to do this? Everyone in our church and neighborhood collected cans and the money from turning them in was given to us so we could go more. Some lady put an article in the newspaper about “trash for Tiffany.” I handed this lady a can



**It helped people  
with cerebral palsy  
to walk.**

and they took a picture of it and put it in the paper, so that helped us also.

My dad found an article in the newspaper about a training school in American Fork. I thought I was the only one in a wheelchair but no! My mom and dad went to visit an aunt in Arizona while I stayed at the school. One girl told me that my parents would not come back to me to pick me up. I believed her and felt very sad. My parents did come back and I went home with them. I told my dad I met a friend there. "Can I go there again?" I asked my mom and she called the school and asked if there was room for me.

When I was seventeen I went up into the mountains for a camping trip. When I got there, they took some people for a walk. Someone went out into the street and whoever had a hold of my chair let go. My chair and I rolled off the road and went down the hillside. I went through bushes and hit a tree. So I went to the hospital. The doctor found glass in my face, and a rock in my cheek: my left nostril was torn off and my forehead was cut open. My left cheek was also cut open. I had to have plastic surgery in Orem. My mom got so sick at the thought of the accident that she couldn't come see me at the hospital. She didn't want to see my face in that condition, so my one brother and father came.

After that, I moved out of American Fork and the school there and I went to GroupHome run by U.C.P., which stands for United Cerebral Palsy. They help people that have cerebral palsy to help themselves get dressed and in assisted living. They also help by coming with us as we go out into the community. They help people to learn to cook and go shopping. We go out with their help to go have fun. We learn how to get ready to move into our own apartments.

I have had a great life but I can't wait until I cross another bridge in my future when I get married.

# Heroes

by Christine R. Lee

Christine R. Lee has been a participant of the Diverse Writing Series since 2003. She is presently a co-facilitator for the Utah Pride group. Christine enjoys writing flash fiction and poetry. You can visit her web log at: [www.myspace.com/chrys\\_ann1971](http://www.myspace.com/chrys_ann1971)

My earliest childhood memories take me back to a 50 acre farm in Marion County, OH. We had cows for milking, chickens laying and a rooster to serenade Mom each morning.

I remember walking to the end of our gravel driveway with Dad and watching as he planted a wooden post in the ground. The sign attached read, RUSSELL'S AUTO WRECKING. Dad bought used cars and fixed them up. I felt like a nurse assisting an operation as he called for this tool or that one; I'd ask, "You mean the one with a long handle or sharp teeth?"

After oats Mom and I would play sword fight, using tooth picks. She could conjure up brightly colored play dough using only flour, salt, water and food coloring. She and I would pick berries together, resulting in her famous jams. One particular morning as I bent down to gather strawberries my eye caught sight of a viper, its glass-like eyes looking back at me. I froze. Mom called to me, "Chris, move!" My eldest brother stood beside her now, in full view of my fear and trepidation. He acted swiftly; gripping the snake's tail he spun it around and around over his head like a lasso, before sending it flying through the air without a parachute. In my mind's eye David had slung Goliath.

Similarly, Dad became a lifesaver when curiosity nearly smothered a kitten that had managed to get its head inside one of Mom's canning jars, and then couldn't wriggle out. He cleverly smashed the glass.

# Heroes of War

by Dan Christensen

Writing—especially re-writing—helps Dan Christensen peel away layers of feelings: with children leaving home, his parents deaths, family keeps popping up. Dan is also busy as a set designer and actor in the theatre.

My father called after we attended a meeting on Veterans' Day.

He began the conversation by reiterating how I could be a successful man. Similar calls had come through the years, each inspiring feelings that I had disappointed him—and the vague, formidable establishment he spoke for. Inwardly, I became anxious and defensive. Outwardly, my usual response was to confess failings and make half-hearted promises to improve. This time I interrupted him. "Dad, not everything you've done works for me! What if I just can't—?"

There was a pause on the line.

My father broke the silence. "I know what you mean. Today, when people started giving tributes about servicemen, I felt uncomfortable. I always do." His voice, low and hesitant, found its way beyond the shell of "shoulds" surrounding former communication. "I don't know. I don't deserve the same honor."

His revelation shocked me! Didn't my father's experience in World War II read like a hero's tale? The quiet family man who carefully did things right, who learned combat but was spared almost certain death by the enemy's timely surrender, who surveyed atomic devastation first-hand, who applied his education to help restore war-torn soil, whose own symbolic victor's spoils included the Japanese sword still stowed with family treasures. "But why?" I sputtered. "You were in the Army."

"Because there were all those guys signing up—volunteering." I heard him exhale. "I did everything I could to avoid going." Now eighty years old, Dad described shame he had secretly carried since the end of the Depression. Patriotic fervor swept through the country, a contagion affecting young men from his hometown—and the women who supported them—to take up arms against

Europe and the Far East. He presumed something must have been wrong with him because he didn't catch it. "I didn't want to fight. I was afraid I guess."

Despite self-doubt, Dad finished college and proved to possess other instincts normal to a healthy young man. The summer of 1940, he fell in love with my mother. By the following winter, they had discussed marriage repeatedly but left actual plans among the uncertainties of war. Ironically, as soon as they knew a draft notice was imminent, the happy couple made their decision certain. A spur-of-the-moment union deferred Dad from immediate induction. But the war continued. Apparently so did Dad's feelings of dishonor.

Of course, it didn't help that his mother—perhaps compelled to vigilance by propriety—on impulse pronounced it marriage-for-the-wrong-reason (another secret that almost died). And, although my mother's mother schooled her tongue as the better part of valor, this new son-in-law's shielded status—compared to the vulnerability of her own offspring—glared with inequity: One son would suffer a broken neck in military service and another would languish forty-three months in the malaria-infected South Pacific before returning to marry and resume farming. Her sons, my mother's brothers, did not enjoy the exemption from active duty my father felt guilty about.

I reminded Dad of his personal wartime battle and tragic casualty. In 1942, my parents' first baby, Carole, was born with an advanced cancer that kept her awake writhing and crying in my parents' arms during most of her eight-month life. "You fought for Carole. You were needed at home."

Demand for a continuous stream of inductees eliminated earlier draft exemptions. In 1945, Dad was thirty, married, the father of two more children and working as a public servant when the dreaded call came. The war was raging; Dad said goodbye knowing his life would likely be lost in battle. But atom bombs

One son  
would suffer a  
broken neck...

dropped during his boot camp stint stateside meant he did not experience the front-line infantry combat he had been training for. He shipped out to Japan as part of US occupation and reconstruction witnessing war's effect on conquered culture, land and lives. Then, like many World War II veterans, Dad came home and rarely confronted emotions associated with military service.

And why would he? Bright new hope and stability were his for the taking: a growing family, opportunities for higher education, career advancement and prosperity. With the rest of the country, he inherited a seemingly unmistakable reaffirmation that good conquers evil. The world was back in balance. Shouldn't he be also?

But, half a century later, Dad perceived my ambiguity regarding society's expectations of its males. Perhaps urged by almost-forgotten empathy, he telephoned and again engaged in battle. He dared challenge a frontier; he crossed the boundary of his silence, conformity and my defensiveness. He initiated an act for freedom—in my opinion—comparable in courage to the invasion of nations.

# We Enjoyed the Trip, But...

by Paul L. Rosser

Paul Rosser likes to watch NASCAR. That's his favorite sport. He likes high school and college football and basketball. Paul is glad that he is back learning again.

I've been with West High School's basketball and football teams for twenty-one years. They went 9-11 for 2007-2008. The basketball team had to have a playoff with Cottonwood High School to get into the playoff. We played good at the playoffs. In the second half, we had the other team by eight points, and we lost by twenty points. The team we played was Snow Mountain, from St. George.

After the game, Bob Lyman, the coach, said to the team, "Do you want to ride home on the bus, or go home with your parents?" Most of the kids went home on the bus, some went home with their parents, and some went home with friends.

Around 9:00 p.m. we got a call, there was an accident. Two basketball players and one baseball player were in an accident. Isaiah, who is both a basketball and football player, got the worst of the players. He got four broken ribs. A West High cheerleader got killed. A friend of the girl who got killed, goes to Granger High School, was speeding and fighting, and driving, and that's what caused the accident.

West High was sad, and so was I.

# Saturday

by Dan Christensen

I didn't wear practical shoes  
although I knew I could make do  
walking on cleared concrete  
or across frozen snowpack  
on the hard, synthetic soles  
of the ones I chose.

My cousin must have dressed with the same thought  
because she took extra time to back her car around  
and into the lane behind the hearse.  
We were still parking while the pallbearers  
carried the casket and unpinned pink carnations.

I stood on stone cold lawn probably  
made bare by whoever set the folding chairs  
(and covered them with green fake fur).  
The grass sank a bit during the prayer;  
I shifted my weight from foot to foot.

There was a long silence after the Amen.  
Then I walked along an astro turf-covered plank  
beside the open grave. I wanted to locate  
names on stones: My great-uncle  
(whose wife lay in state today),  
and his son who died before I was born.  
The son's wife whose funeral I missed  
not many years ago and their son  
who committed suicide. Margaret didn't place  
a stone here for herself before she died.

After lunch I discovered mud  
on one of my shoes—  
just a little, on the edge.

# The Story of My Hair

by Christine R. Lee

I came into the world looking like the Gerber baby, later my hair grew into a full dark brown mane. I always had straight hair until I became a teenager and decided on a spiral perm. Mom claims my hair got curlier as I grew older; I still maintain the perm spawned my hair's extra body.

While in high school I wanted to color my hair, until one of Mom's suitors asked, "Why do that?" Then he added, "There are so few with chestnut brown hair as lovely as yours." I blushed and gave up the idea for a while.

Around age 30  
I noticed a few  
gray hairs...

Around age 30 I noticed a few gray hairs here and there. From time to time I've lightened my hair or gone red, but mostly I take the inexpensive and arduous method of tweezing each individual non-pigmented hair from my head.

Some believe hair and fingernails continue to grow proceeding death. In reality the human body shrinks in the absence of a life force. This process lends to the illusion of growth.

THE END

# Lesbian Barbie

by H. Rachelle Graham

Honey Rachelle Graham is a regular journalist and has submitted work to *The Salt Lake Tribune*. Honey has also worked for the *Daily Utah Chronicle*, *Daily Vanguard*, and the *West Valley News*. She has recently graduated from the UofU with a journalism degree.

Growing up in a body  
deemed distasteful  
is not easy

Then there is  
growing up in a soul  
deemed evil  
is also not easy

Knowing I am wrong  
desiring a body  
not opposite of my own  
I look in the mirror  
I do not see  
The light in my eyes  
Or the color in my cheeks  
I do not see a person  
Only an evil being  
In need of repentance  
From the men in black suits  
carrying the scriptures  
but these men do not understand  
I cannot change  
my body or my soul

For a while  
I had no label  
I did not understand  
I screamed in silence  
Could not even look  
At my haunting image in the mirror  
I searched daily for answers  
And hide in the shame with the other men and women  
in General Conference  
I never knew  
What I had was normal  
Not only as a lesbian  
But as a woman  
I am not an alien  
In need of a  
Barbie appearance  
I am a person  
That's all!

The Goddess made me the way I am  
Alien or not  
I have to stop acting  
And be  
Who I am  
Under the make-up  
and beneath the turned-down eyes

# Who Do You Think You Are?

by Betha Hudspeth

A mother of two daughters and a grandmother of four grandsons and six granddaughters, Betha Hudspeth likes to spend time with the family daily.

I'm a crew leader at the U of U with a full crew of six employees. In September, I was down to three employees. Jill, my assistant, and I took the three areas and her area. We worked together. It got rough at times. Some days were good and some days were not so bad as others. We got it done with the help of Bob, a part-timer on my crew. It was time for my vacation, but I could not leave Jill alone and I didn't think it was fair to her.

After one month had passed, my boss paged me to call the office. He told me that I would have a new part-time employee starting that Monday. I thanked him and hung the phone up. When I saw Jill, I let her know.

Monday morning, my boss brought my new employee Ted. I showed Ted where the Standards book was kept, how to look up his area, what the color codes meant, and how to match the days. Ted learned quickly. He worked so well that he cleaned two other areas besides his own. I showed him how to cover if I wasn't there.

Two months passed and I took a two-week vacation. I just stayed home for the two weeks. "Man did it feel good!"

The morning I returned Jill told me, "We have new part-timer. Me put him restricted area. He clean good. Very good. Miss nothing. Everything clean." Jill's English was a bit broken but she knew how to get her point across.

About 7 a.m. that morning, a gentleman in his sixties came into my office. I introduced myself and let him know that I was the crew leader. His name was Will. I reviewed the Standards and the area he was to clean. I reminded him that his area was restricted and that his standards had not been updated in a while. I walked over to his area and showed him where he could not go. I explained that it was color-coded red and he could not ever enter. If someone asked him to enter, he was to get me. He agreed. I let him get started with his work.

A few months had passed and I watched and checked his area daily. I had short conversations with him and he seemed to be a nice person. One day, I asked, "Will, do you have any plans for the weekend?"

He replied, "No."

I asked, "Would you like to come over for dinner and meet my family?" He agreed and we exchanged phone numbers.

That Saturday, I had my grandchildren over and they helped clean. About 2 p.m., Will called, "What should I bring for dessert?"

"Oh, cake, ice cream, pie. It doesn't matter," I said.

By 3 p.m., Will arrived with a long box filled with sugar donuts and a gallon of ice cream. Kids being kids, they jumped for joy and asked, "Can I have some ice cream? Can I have a donut?"

Will asked for spoons and bowls so he could start serving. That's when I stepped in and sent everyone out of the kitchen. I told Will, "In my house, they have to wait 'til after dinner."

Will said, "I'm sorry," Then he grabbed a donut and shoved half of it into his mouth as he walked toward my living room. I stepped in front of him before he reached the door, placed my hand on the dining room chair, and said, "Have a seat." I couldn't believe my eyes. I was shocked by his manners.

My youngest granddaughter, who is four years old, said, "Do you eat like that all the time?"

As he pushed the other half of the donut into his mouth, Will answered, "I just eat."

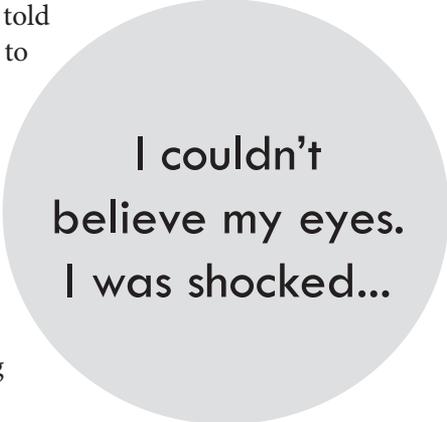
My granddaughter said, "Not like that. You're making a mess all over my grandmother's floor and we just cleaned."

Will said, "Kids make messes, too."

"Well, you need to know how to eat in other people's homes. That's rude!" my granddaughter said and walked out of the kitchen.

Will looked at me and said, "The kid speaks her mind."

I told him, "As a family, we expect them to have manners outside of the home." Then I asked Will to have a seat in the living



**I couldn't  
believe my eyes.  
I was shocked...**

room. I put a DVD in and talked to him from the kitchen as I finished putting the last pieces of chicken into the fryer.

I called my oldest granddaughter to get the younger siblings seated and fed. She set them at the table to eat. I called Will to come and get his plate.

He asked, "Aren't you going to eat?"

I said, "After the last piece of chicken is done."

My daughter said to me, "Go eat, mom. I'll take out the chicken."

I prepared my plate and went into the living room.

My second oldest granddaughter asked if she could watch the movie *Big Mama's House* as she ate. She promised she wouldn't make a mess.

I agreed. I told the other children to stay at the table. She sat next to Will. I sat in a chair watching the movie. When the movie was about over and I was finished eating, Will said to my granddaughter, "Haven't you sat next to me long enough? It's your grandmother's turn to sit next to me."

She replied, "This is my grandmother's home and she sits anywhere she likes. You are a guest. Thank you."

Will didn't know what to say and he continued eating.

After we all finished, I started cleaning the kitchen. Will asked if he could use the restroom.

I told him, "Through the bedroom. To your left."

On his way back from the restroom, he asked, "Do you sleep in that big bed alone? Do you need a warm body next to you, like tonight?"

My reply was, "Who the hell do you think you are saying something like that to me! Do you speak to every woman that way?"

Will said, "You don't hear me."

I said, "You don't hear me. You got the wrong sister here!"

Will just couldn't leave well enough alone. He said, "Where's my spot in the bed?"

I was glad everyone was outside. He had rubbed me the wrong way. He continued saying, "Any time you get lonely, give me a call."

Again, I said, "Who do you think you are?" For me, the evening had ended. I was burning up on the inside, but I politely asked him to leave and walked him to the door.

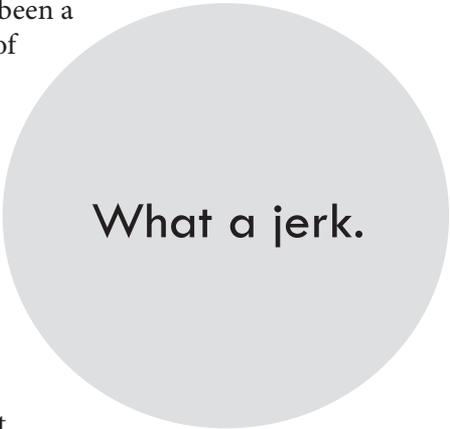
# The Parts Counter

by E.B. Homer

Homer works part time at the BMW Motorcycle Shop, and writes short articles for The Beehive Beemers Newsletter. His writing is about motorcycles and travel.

It's 4:05 pm Saturday. Five minutes past closing. The sales staff is pushing motorcycles in the front door; I'm waiting on a guy that's trying to decide which keychain he wants. Another customer stands impatiently behind the keychain shopper holding a t-shirt. It's been a busy day and I've had my fill of customers. We're all looking forward to the important things in life. Like getting home to our families and friends. A few employees are trying to leave for a dinner ride, but we have to take care of the last minute customers that planned their day around our 4:00 o' clock closing. It's important they get good service and the t-shirt they want before we leave.

Working in a motorcycle dealership can be hectic at times. Earlier in the day a disgruntled customer threatened to walk out on a sales deal because it was taking too long to get his credit approval. He wanted his new bike now, and like a kid in a candy store without any money, he refused to concede the slightest hint of understanding. Most banks are closed on Saturday afternoons and credit approval is slow on weekends. What a jerk. I'm sure he'll be back in the near future demanding a ten percent discount on everything in the store because of some perceived entitlement based on the fact that he bought a motorcycle here. Kind of like the customer in the morning that demanded I fix the zipper on his coat liner.



What a jerk.

“Just how old is this jacket?” I asked.

“What difference does it make? I’ve bought two motorcycles here. Doesn’t that count for anything?”

Well when it comes to a jacket with a blown zipper that’s over a year past the manufacturer’s warrantee the answer is no, but I can’t tell him that. That would be bad customer relations and poor service. I tell him, “I’ll check with the boss and see what I can do.”

He pushes the jacket at me as he turns toward the service bay and snaps “Fix it!”

The purchase of two motorcycles doesn’t establish a lifetime guarantee on all parts and accessories but some customers would never believe it. Why doesn’t he pay a tailor two dollars to install a new zipper-pull on the coat and leave us out of it? I push the jacket aside and turn my attention to the phone.

“You’re where? Rock Springs, Wyoming? Ok, What can I do for you? No. If you have cord sticking out both of your tires don’t ride it; it’s dangerous and it’s over a hundred miles to here, isn’t there a place in Rock Springs where you can buy two tires? Nothing in the size you need. Ok, so what do you want from us? We have a van; I think we can send someone to rescue you. Give me your phone number and I’ll see if we can send someone. It will be a while before I get back to you. Please be patient.” It’s not like we have someone standing around waiting to go rescue idiots.

The sales manager walks up to the counter and demands my attention. “I need you to order a copy of the MV Brutale service manual for a customer. Expedite it.” Ya. Like I have the slightest idea how to order and expedite a service manual for a motorcycle we don’t stock parts for. “I’ll get on it as soon as I can.” I tell him.

The phone is boiling. I’m wanted on three lines, and the sales manager hollers at me from across the room to take line two. Thanks for the help.

The customer on line one blurts out. “You know the screw that holds the air box to the frame just below the seat on the Triumph Sprint?”

“No.” I tell him cheerfully, “I’m not a Triumph guy, but I can look it up on the computer. Just give me a second to call up the program I need so I can find it. Can I put you on hold?” I take line two and transfer it to service. It’s a misdirected call. Line three wants to know if we stock Continental tires to fit his Goldwing. I tell him I’m busy and I’ll check our inventory and call him back. When I take his phone number I find out he’s in Connecticut. I wonder why they don’t have motorcycle tires there?

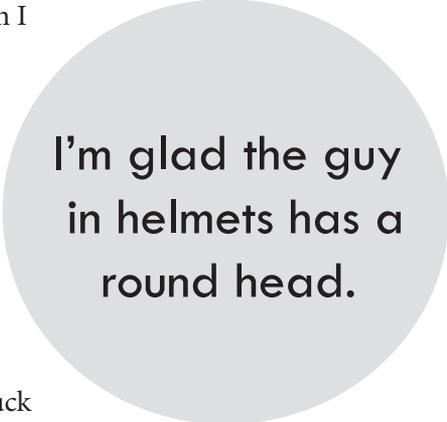
I hack into Triumph online. Management hasn't set me up with my own access codes. I pick up line one to see if I can "screw" the Triumph guy. Ten minutes later I find the screw. It's not in stock. I ask if he wants me to order it. The cost is \$1.90. "I'll get back to you," he says, and hangs up.

There's a buildup in the traffic pattern. Someone wants help in helmets. The sales manager wants special attention given to his lady friend in boots. There are two customers at the counter asking about their special order parts and why it's taking so long. They ordered them last week. What's so hard about understanding seven to ten working days?

I take line two. Perfect timing. It's the manufacturer's parts representative. The San Francisco dealership has all the parts we ordered last month, and explains why we have so many irate customers over the missing parts they've already paid for. When I transfer the call to the boss, I also tell him about the rescue request in Rock Springs. He says he'll send one of the shipping and receiving guys. I call the traveler and tell him help is on its way.

Richard Cranium comes back to see if I've fixed his coat's zipper. I tell him I didn't have any better luck with the zipper-pull than he did and to take it home with him. We'll call when we hear from the manufacturer. We don't have a lot of room to store his jacket at the moment. He can take better care of it than we can.

I divide my next hour between the guy in helmets and the lady in boots. After trying on every pair her size, she tells me she has a high instep and is hard to fit. I'm glad the guy in helmets has a round head. He settled on a moderately priced Shoei that will do the job if he ever has the misfortune to need it. I swipe his credit card to complete the sale. Of course I have to kick-start the Harley Davidson printer we keep under the counter for his invoice. The printer seems to be there as more of an irritant than an actual tool. (In case management reads this, you have four places in the



**I'm glad the guy  
in helmets has a  
round head.**

building where you do financial transactions, and if you haven't noticed I've given up asking you to make them efficient. We need reliable printers and credit card readers at each station.) The next two customers need invoice statements for their special order parts and the third customer leaves with his money in his pocket while I'm trying to print invoices. I wonder what he wanted.

In the service bay some guy with an insurance scam attitude refuses to let service handle a damage estimate and I reluctantly agree to look up the parts he wants when he starts making noise. "It's easy," he shouts. "All you have to do is look up the parts I want." Unable to convince him of anything in regards to claim procedures and the danger of hidden damage, I look up the parts and check with the boss to see if I can give him a copy of the pick list with the part numbers. The boss tells me I should follow procedures and

questions me on why I'm looking up the part numbers instead of referring him to service. Without

realizing it, I snap a sharp reply back about trying that and the customer's attitude. Later in the day the boss tells me I've been grumpy.

It's two hours past lunch before I get a break, and immediately after, I get a call from another stranded

traveler in Evanston needing grease for the spline gear on the

rear wheel of his R90/6. He's just changed

his back tire and doesn't know what kind of grease it calls for. He says he's very particular about what he uses on his 33-year old bike. He's owned it since it was new and refuses to use anything except the lubricants called for by the manufacturer. I take his number, and talk to one of our mechanics. The mechanic finds a tube of Sig 3000 grease we can overnight to him via FedEx. Nice try, it's Saturday afternoon; no pick-ups from FedEx or UPS. Post Office is closed too. I call the guy back and tell him what's happening. I don't tell him it's too late to send it with our driver that's going to Rock Springs. I figure he doesn't need to know about a near miss. He's ok with waiting until we can ship it on Tuesday. He has a comfortable place to stay until his lifetime supply of grease arrives.

Later in the day  
the boss tells me I've  
been grumpy.

The store's general manager stops by and asks how I did in sales today. I tell him a helmet, a few miscellaneous parts, and a tube of grease. He tells me I need to do a better job. "We can't run this place on just one helmet and a tube of grease." I couldn't agree more.

The sales manager hollers for me to take line two. When I pick up, a voice asks for one of the mechanics by name. I assume it's another misdirected call and I page the mechanic. The sales manager very quickly tells me the call was for me and gives me instructions on how to handle a call for someone else. He says the mechanic might be busy. "Like I'm not!?!?" I tell the sales manager when I pick up a phone and the person on the other end asks for a specific employee, I don't question them or second-guess them, I page whoever they are asking for and go about my own business. The sales manager scurries away to another phone to handle the call.

In the end I sell one last t-shirt. The other guy left without a keychain. For some reason I forgot all about the Goldwing guy in Connecticut wanting Continental tires. A quick look at the clock tells me I don't have time for the dinner ride. It will all start again Tuesday morning.

# Romance

by Von Jones

Von Jones is a DiverseCity Writing Series mentor for the DWS VA Group. He was forefront in the creation of this writing group, and is excited to assist in giving voice to veterans in Utah.

On his way to his third date with her, he stopped by the bank's ATM to withdraw his last forty dollars. He wanted to impress her by taking her to dinner at the Old Spaghetti Factory.

A printed receipt from a previous transaction at the ATM was hanging out of the slot.

He snatched the paper from the slit and—not looking at it—threw it on the car's passenger seat. He withdrew his cash and drove his used car to her house.

Always the gentleman, he opened the car door for her. She noticed the bank receipt and picked it up. She read the statement's balance: \$445,766.00.

By the time he came around to the driver's side, she decided she loved him. She told him she wanted to get married. He told her he lived like a pauper, from paycheck-to-paycheck. He confessed that each week, after he paid his meager expenses, he typically only had about \$40.00 left. She said she admired his frugality.

A month later, they were wed.

Two days after the wedding, his eyes bulged at breakfast. He fell face-forward into the sunny-side-up eggs.

The coroner failed to find evidence of the substance she used to poison her recently deceased husband. Perhaps, the good medical examiner was distracted when she wrapped her legs around his waist and whispered awful, delicious things in his ear.

She took the death certificate to the bank. She withdrew his last forty dollars, used it to pay for gasoline and cursed as she drove out of town.

# Manhattan Day Dreams

by John A. Boles

John Boles is retired. Coming from a technical field, he is cultivating his long neglected right-brain. A love of writing, the visual arts and hiking help.

Directing my eyes across the stream and up the steep wall of the ridge to the sky overhead, I take in the small wispy clouds turning pink in the late winter afternoon. The sun is disappearing behind the ridge. I relax on the third story balcony overlooking the ice-framed stream, waiting for snow. Sky and Fireman sprawl out on the redwood decking, placing their heads between their paws with noses just over the edge.

Tasting my cocktail, I take a small sip and let the frigid liquid glide over my tongue; then I do a slow swallow to feel its richness. It's a straight-up Manhattan, which glows reddish brown in the frosted glass veiling the red maraschino cherry. A toast to the coming snow.

The three of us are reflecting on our hike in the back country, up on the nugget sandstone cliffs, over slopes carpeted with sagebrush and mule's ear, through mountain mahogany, and juniper. We were trying to catch sight of a moose, an elk, or a deer; instead we saw a pair of eagles wheel high over our heads. Relaxing now, our bodies feel good from the hard workout of the steep trail. We always try hard to keep our retired selves in shape.

The agelessness of the red nugget sandstone ridge that rests firmly in the Jurassic age leads me to think about the origins of the cocktail that was first mixed over 130 years ago. Winston Churchill's mother and a long forgotten bartender, legend has

He fittingly became  
known as a Bourbon  
Democrat.

it, concocted the drink to celebrate the outcome of the New York Governor's election in 1874. The new governor was Samuel J. Tilden, a conservative democrat. Soon he was running for President. He fittingly became known as a Bourbon Democrat. He lost the presidential election of 1876 after winning the popular vote that turned into an electoral college crisis, a hint of the modern Bush and Gore contest.

Thank goodness I made the Manhattan with a splash or two of bitters. Bitters were once patent medicines, and served as digestifs. By using Ferent-Branca, I went back to a formula created in Italy in 1845. It is made from a recipe which includes myrrh, rhubarb, chamomile, cardamom, aloe, and saffron. These and many other herbs and spices make Ferent-Branca a dandy remedy for hangovers and similar ailments.

Manhattan daydreams turn to Hugh Everett and his fifty year old theory of parallel universes derived from quantum mechanics. In one of these universes, Gore won.

# Texas Hold 'Em

by Von Jones

My name is Walnut Tin. I'm a professional poker player.

The cowboy-hat-wearing, tobacco-chewing guy sitting across the table from me has the personality of a rusty nail. Talk about poker faces; Kermit the Frog couldn't make this guy laugh. I don't much blame him, though. We've been playing for nearly 30 hours. Four other players have already folded and the tobacco chewer is down seventeen thousand dollars to me. When he sees what I'm holding for this hand, he's not going to be any happier. To lighten the mood, I decide to tell a joke.

"A blond goes to a doctor and finds out she's pregnant.

"Are you sure it's mine?" she asks.

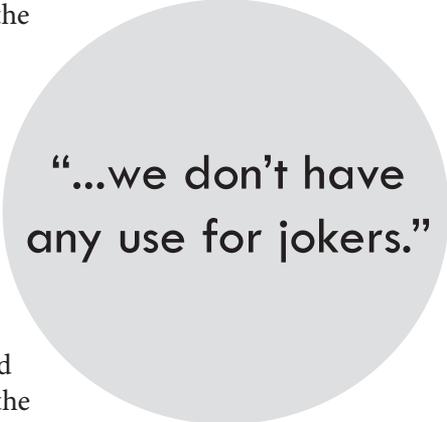
The poker-faced man doesn't crack a smile. The dealer, Miss Goldie, a blue-haired, senior citizen, rolls her eyes in disgust. Crusty and jaded, she is the antithesis of the proverbial sweet, little old lady.

"You know we're playing Texas Hold 'em rules," she admonishes. "That means we don't have any use for jokers."

I usually confine my gambling adventures to casinos or big-city environments. But, I wanted to play in a location where my reputation did not precede me. So, I invited myself to this private, high-stakes poker game in the middle of nowhere Texas. Talk about a cow town. It's the kind of place where you could rent a movie and buy cattle feed in the same store.

The current pot is at two thousand dollars.

"Give me the flop, Goldie," orders my stoic adversary. She deals: "six, queen, nine."



"...we don't have any use for jokers."

"I'm calling, and seeing you another thousand," the man challenges. He pushes another stack of plastic chips toward the center of the table.

I can't wait to wipe that self-righteous look off his face. I'm holding two queens.

"OK, let's double up." I push a stack of chips forward and the kitty jumps to four thousand dollars.

I tell Goldie to slide the "turn" card.

It's another six.

Poker is an intuitive game. When you play enough you develop a kind of inner-knowing. There is one more card to be dealt: the fifth card, the "river" card.

"Take us to the river, Goldie," I command.

The old lady hesitates, then flips the card.

It's a queen.

"It's time to show, Punk." My rival throws down two sixes which means he has four-of-a-kind.

"That's good. Real good," I acknowledge, "but it doesn't beat four queens."

My opponent gives me a snake-eyed stare before slowly turning his head and spewing out a long stream of brown tobacco juice that misses the spittoon and splats against the

wall.

"What did you say your name is?" he asks.

"Walnut Tin."

"Well, Mr. Rin Tin Tin, I got a joke for you."

"OK, let's hear it," I say, reaching for the pot. One of the thugs I dispatched from the game earlier pulls my chair back from the table and he isn't nice about it. Suddenly, I realize everyone in the room is hostile.

"Here's my joke," says the tobacco-chewing card player. "Why don't they play poker in the jungle?"

"How the hell do I know?" I reply.

"Because there's too many cheetahs," he says.

"Why don't they  
play poker in  
the jungle?"

“Hey, don’t set your hat on fire by trying to think too much. How am I cheating?”

“You say you’re from New Orleans. You city slickers come down here with your fancy sleight-of-hand. You think you can take us hicks to the cleaners.”

“What are you talking about?” The situation is turning ugly.

“I’m talking about how you can waltz in here and win every hand over a thousand dollars. Nobody’s that good. Nobody’s that lucky.

“Goldie didn’t deal you those two queens. You palmed those damned cards.”

“I just remembered I left the water running in the bathtub,” I counter sarcastically. “Enjoy your sour grapes. I’m out of here. You country cows don’t know genius when you see it.”

“We know a rat when we see one.”

I wake up in a ditch in an alfalfa field. I have a headache the size of Albuquerque. I am weak and bleeding and my right arm is so numb I can’t feel it.

Some cow poke on a tractor sees me and gets me to a hospital.

I look down at the bandaged nub where my right hand used to be. Before the third shot of morphine kicks in, I manage one lucid thought:

*It won’t take that long to perfect a left-handed palm.*

# The Evolution of Crudity

by Raymond G. Briscoe

Ray Briscoe was an Idaho farm boy who sought an education. He taught high school, became a college professor and worked for his church doing research. He is now retired and enjoys writing.

I was visiting at my daughter's home with my grandkids last spring. The granddaughters were college students and home for the weekend. Several of their attractive girl friends came to the home to renew relationships. It was mainly girl talk with grandpa listening in. The radio was on some pop station and not so quietly blaring out the tunes of the day.

44  
sine cera: Saturday

“How can you young ladies listen to that kind of crap...”

A vulgar song came on as I tried to concentrate on the conversation and listen to the tune at the same time. I couldn't take it any longer. “How can you young ladies listen to that kind of crap and remain decent young women?” They soothed the elderly guest with, “Oh, we pay no attention to it.

You should hear what we have to listen to in the halls at school.”

I was pleased with their answer. At the same time I was fully concerned about what is acceptable and unacceptable in the linguistic interactions we have with one another in our every day life. It was back to girl talk and I returned to be a polite listener.

This memory has caused me to reflect further about the evolution of our language from a cultural perspective. My son, a high school teacher, told me in the presence of his mother, “The principal really pissed me off.” I wondered immediately as the word gains familiarity, how soon I would hear the same word in someone's animated testimony in my faith's sacrament meeting.

Twenty five years ago I was teaching my first college class and

was reviewing the course syllabus with the students. After finishing with all the rules and grading procedure an attractive young lady raise her hand. “Yes,” I said, as I recognized her. “I guess this means you can have our ass anytime you want it,” she protested. I quickly replied, “I guess that is one way to put it.”

Let’s go back 60 years when I was a student in the eight grade in a small rural school in Idaho. Billy handed me a note with the instructions to pass it on to Ruth. The rules of the game at that age are to do what the note writer asks you to do. Waiting for the teacher to turn his back so I wouldn’t get caught, I took time to read the note. He had scribbled, “Jimmy wants to know whether you are pregnant or not?” I passed the note on wondering what it meant. It was obvious that Ruth didn’t like the question. My curiosity peaked, and at the next class break I went to the dictionary to learn what pregnant meant. I was in the eighth grade, for heaven’s sake. That was not a word most people ordinarily used in public in the 1940’s.

This is not an essay to just decry the changes in our language, but to wonder where we are headed? How far will this go and how fast can we expect to see the words of common talk become a part of regular everyday conversation?

I now go back 110 years. My father shared a memory he had of a conversation among the women who were preparing a meal for the threshing crew. Farmers could not individually afford a threshing machine. When grain harvest time came the farmers united together to bring in the crops. The women got together and cooked the meals. These were days of hard work, but so enjoyable for it allowed social interaction that built lasting relationships.

My daddy was just five years old in 1895, and he recalled how animated the other cooks were when his mother stated, “I think it is ridiculous that we women have to refer to a bull as a gentleman cow when we are in the presence of men.”

I reflect why I wrote this essay. Are my concerns that of an old codger that sees life slipping by, or am I a person concerned with decency and respect with reference to the use of our language? I am not sure that I can answer my own question.

# What It Used To Be Like As An Adult Who Could Not Read Well

by Terry Trigger

Terry Trigger enjoys reading more with a group. Deb pushes him to help him read more. And he's glad of it. The letters he writes help him to read better.

I'd like to tell you a little bit about what it's like to be an adult who struggled with reading. Like many adults who struggle with reading we think other people don't take us seriously. It took willpower to first open the door to reading. I was on the edge of surviving, and I didn't want people to know what I did and did not know.

I had many challenges. It was hard to grocery shop. I had to have someone else write the list. At the store I matched the words on the list with items on the shelves. In the doctor's office my wife had to help me fill out the forms. I could not pass a written driving test. I had to take an oral test. I also had to read something three or four times before I could understand what I was reading.

Reading used to be so hard that I didn't enjoy it at all, so I didn't want to read anything. Nevertheless, I wanted to learn better.

When I came to the class called Learn About Me there were people who were like me. In fact, some of them struggled more than I did. It made me feel better because I could help them. It also helped me to work with a tutor. I liked to work with the class too. I enjoyed being there with other adult learners.

I have been given awards for my reading and writing. That never happened to me before. It made me feel accomplished. Reading and writing are still hard for me, but not as hard as it used to be. I am working on my spelling to learn to read better and understand what I am reading about. Now, I feel more confident when I read and I know I will become a better reader.

# Expectations: Theirs & Mine

by Deborah Young

Deborah Young likes writing about other people, not herself. She enjoys painting pictures through words.

I belong to two writing groups sponsored by the Community Writing Center. Each group expects me to share my writing with them. Most members of these groups prefer hearing about and tend to write about their private, past moments. That's fine for them, but not for me.

There are three reasons why I am uneasy about their preferred writing genre. First, and probably the most important point, I remember very little about my past. I don't know why, but the numbers of memories I have from any part of my past are quite limited. As a teenager, I recognized that I could not remember incidents from my childhood. So, I practiced telling myself, "Remember this. I want to tell about this event later." Unfortunately, I never rehearsed the story events so that I would remember them. Sure enough, months later I rarely remembered any details at all. This memory failure has been a repeated theme throughout my existence. Secondly, I prefer not to reveal so much about my past for others to examine and judge. Growing up overseas was great for my self-development and widening my worldview, but lousy for understanding my American self-centered counterparts who rarely ventured outside of their local environments. Thirdly, writing for me is an intimate, personal exploration of the metacognitive aspects of my inner thoughts and feelings. Writing lets me sort through what I know and examine my responses in order to determine what I need to learn. Writing helps me set forth a plan of action.

Putting words on paper is not difficult for me. Writing something that I'm willing to share with others is the issue. Personal stories are what my group members expect to hear because these new writers relate best to them. Of the many writing genres, however, I am most comfortable with lists, journaling, vignettes, academic prose, and narrative reports.

Lists are my life's blood. I have so many people tugging at me for tasks to be done that I do not hold them in my mind well at all.

Therefore, lists are extremely important for me in the execution of tasks for home or work. If a task is not on my list, which by the way is easily four to five hundred items long at any given moment, then I probably will never do the task.

Journaling is important to me as a way of exploring my interactions with the world and developing plans for moving forward. I find journaling about administrative and teaching issues to be most beneficial. Journaling provides me with reflective time that is essential to keeping my peace of mind in somewhat noisy, chaotic workdays.

I write many newsy letters to family and friends in short vignettes about interesting discoveries and the incidents that I will not remember weeks later. Letter writing is a release for me. Writing about these everyday incidents lets me sort through the incidents' elements and reflect on what

I want to portray and which parts

I will reveal in order to stress whatever point I think the vignette is really about. I thought my mother was collecting these letters for me so that I would have my collection of memories later in life but she pitched them all two moves ago.

Academic prose and

narrative reports are the most intriguing genre for me. This is the area of writing that brings me the greatest

pleasure in exploring and crafting. This writing genre allows me to analyze and synthesize the data that I collect from the adult learners with whom I interact with on a daily basis. I see this genre as being less personal than the other genres listed above. I understand that the language used in any writing reveals something about the author, but I am much more comfortable doing it through this genre than sharing personal stories.

For me, writing influences what I know. Writing is an intellectual journey that requires the investigation and exploration of information from within and outside of myself to figure out what is going on. Writing changes who I am. Writing that does not allow me to grow and evolve is not worth spending time on. I have



**Lists are my  
life's blood.**

such a drive that all things need to be for real purposes and useful endeavors that I get impatient when my energy is expended on tasks that are meaningless to me.

The members of the two writing groups I am in are for beginning writers. The easiest genre for them to begin their journeys as writers is to tell stories about their past. At some point, however, I hope that they might reach out and incorporate other people's views into their writings, expand their thinking to move away from all the "I" statements followed by time-stamped sequences of events. My wish for them is to move up Bloom's taxonomy to other forms of examining and reporting their worlds.

# Unexpected Twist

by Joel Frazier

Light rest with darkness,  
and God blankets me with his breath.  
Time goes to sleep.  
Fingers of tiny stones softly touch me.  
My ship takes float and docks on a peaceful shore.  
I am blissfully lost in thought.  
Worries vanish away,  
and I have no thoughts for what tomorrow will bring me.  
After awhile my vision is shattered by an envious light  
accompanied with an unknown presence.  
Young man this is a private beach, you must leave

# Asteroid

by H. Rachele Graham

Some will shine  
Some will star  
Others live to nurture  
Others are born to dine  
All breathe  
All die  
But only the mere few  
Get hit by an asteroid  
And still get up off their feet.  
And try again  
once more  
They may not  
win the Nobel Prize  
Or earn a gold medal.  
They may not even  
become a parent  
Or a teacher  
They may not even  
Be able to hold a job  
They simply move  
After being near dead  
run over by the bulldozer of life  
And get up  
on their feet  
again and again  
No one may notice  
How much brighter  
they shine  
except the one starring  
back in the mirror

# Canyon Country

by John Sanders

John Sanders is a retired English teacher who still strives to understand the complexities of the English language and its rich potential for meaningful communication.

## I Tsegi

Under towering canyon walls  
Beside the sandy trail,  
Pale green slabs of prickly pear  
Bristle in random angles  
Amid the gray of sage.

## II Betatakin

This narrow strip of lush forest,  
Tucked into the head of the box canyon,  
Should be approached in one way only:  
“Here I ask people to walk in silence,”  
says our guide.

Without words, then, we enter the grove,  
Where aspen, box elder, and oak  
Engulf us in their green wood-smell,  
Ripe, earthy, redolent,  
Awakening senses pinched and withered  
By the pungent aridity of the pinyon and  
cedar forest above,  
But here aspens lift elegant white trunks  
And pale fluttering leaves  
Against red canyon walls.

### III Arches

A dome of sandstone  
Thrusts its rounded bulk  
Up out of the shallow, barren canyon.  
Across it, a dim trail  
Etched into the rock  
By the passage of countless feet  
Leads upward to a lofty tower of red  
stone.

And around its precipitous flanks,  
While below there curves  
An expanse of knobs and domes and  
Circular stone pits—  
Living sculpture of weather and time.  
And then around an ultimate corner of  
Rock  
It rises pink and luminous  
Upon the delicate rim of a vast bowl of  
stone—  
A great arch flowing in the final flare  
Of red light from the setting sun,  
And beyond it, dark mountains  
Upon the far horizon are held,  
Ranked and ordered, within its fiery arc.

# Sixty Times Around

by John A. Boles

Born golden glowing sphere,  
No shadow, no bag, brightness everywhere.  
With quickening pace,  
The shadow lengthens, the bag grows  
Projections the norm.

Around and around the sun,  
Sixty times around.  
Shadows cast dark,  
Reaching towards the east.  
Beckoning from the west.

A dozen factors,  
Babylonian reckoning.  
A measure of time,  
Relatively marching,  
In one single-minded direction.

Aspens quake in coolness,  
Yellow locks of gold.  
Moist, earthy, leafy scents,  
The stream flows, glistens, gurgles,  
Ever down the deepening canyon.

The white knight strides across the green,  
Facing the afternoon sun.  
He leads a white stallion.  
The stallion rolls deliciously,  
In the warm, loamy earth.

Rise the ebony steed.  
The black knight mounts.  
The shadow eaten,  
The projections blank  
The sun glows high in the west.

# The Watcher

by Christina Smith

The sun dawned red on the battle field below  
bodies rose like lumbering Goliaths  
twisted limbs wrapped 'round themselves  
denying the gaping maw within.

Mists flee before the ruddy light  
slithering, sneaking, sliding  
over and under, between and beside  
humps of withered flesh.

As fiery rays cut the horizon's edge  
piercing dewy, darkened ash below  
one with those I see, I stand.  
The Watcher.

# The Truth

by Christina Smith

Violently the clouds are parted  
and with terrible tearing and gnashing  
the hounds of Helios pursue the scattering night.

Divine splendor  
radiant and glaring  
the Truth is revealed.

Ugly.

Deformed.

Free.

Bound in horror at the slithering mass  
you turn your head  
fearing to look too closely.

Disgust.

What does it want?  
Will it attack?  
Why set it loose?

With pleading gaze it reaches out  
with unsure, shaking hands  
begging.

Begging for your touch  
your acceptance  
your love.

The Truth cannot help itself.  
Though captured, tied and hidden by hate  
Truth is eternal.

Darkness shall rule  
lending the world to lies  
until Helios' time has come again.  
And with voices raised in triumphant song,  
the hounds will banish the everlasting night.

# The Watchers

by Michael Whitworth,  
Aretha Nesmith and  
Ramona Maassen

Fire and ice. Good and evil. That little shard of sunlight that comes through the window and warms our souls. We are the watchers of life. We see change and don't usually approve. Our expectations are simple. We want a warm place to sleep, a meal ready to eat, and affection on demand. Our ears twitch when we hear something move. Our tails express our emotions. We are warriors, hunters and lovers. We move with grace and respect. Whether we have a home or not, we have our purposes. We protect against the smallest of things. We play and laugh. We sleep and eat. We are your friends. We watch.

But it wasn't always like this. No. Throughout the ages, throughout time, we evolved. We changed. We have even been blessed with magic and the ability to change form. We go by many names: Familiars, Friends, Pets, Family and sometimes annoyances. Be aware, we still watch. Question is, are you ready for us? We are ready for you. We have been for centuries.

There is Some Thing—a Change we have been expecting. Our thoughts among us are in agreement. We have seen signs and portents that point to a change that will affect all of us. The full moon comes nearer each cycle. The rains have flooded fields with frogs. Even our sun's colors change with each rising. Whether we will welcome or shun the change remains to be seen. Two things are obvious to us. We are watching and we have long prepared ourselves for whatever may come to pass. Know we are ready for you when the Time of Change comes.

*Who are we?*

# One Acid Rain Summer Night

by Marylee Clarke

Marylee Carla Clarke is a DiverseCity Writing Series mentor with the Literacy Action Center, a mom, a grandmother, and a tutor.

The summer has been very wet off and on. But this summer night it was extra hot and even the rain was warm. I took off my raincoat and sweater. It was still hot. The cotton blouse I had on seemed like a very heavy sweater. So I tied it up to my bra. And wet my tummy with the warm rain. I even wet my face  
I was so hot. The air seemed to be so thick. It wasn't a normal wet summer night. I folded my umbrella up. Getting all wet seemed to help.

Oh no, my eyes and my skin started to sting and burn. People and children were yelling and crying. Animals were yapping with pain too.

I ran under a bridge in the park. There were others there. I asked if there was a doctor in the group of us under the bridge. A very shallow voice came out of the crowd.

"Yes, yes, I'm a doctor." The crying and the yelling got farther and farther away.

"Who said that?" I asked.

"I did," said Joe. "I'm a doctor of animals."

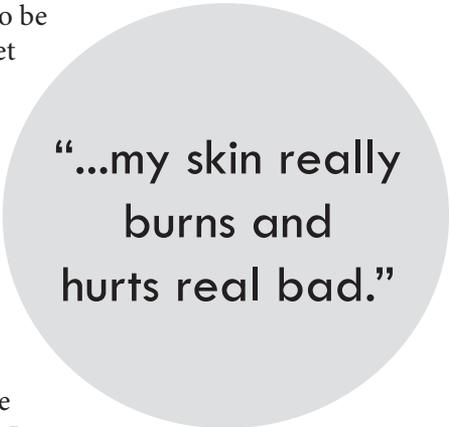
"Oh," I said, "I guess you can't help us people then can you?"

"Well," Joe said, "it depends if you have fleas and you need stitches." Ha ha, try to make things light.

"Well, I don't have fleas and I don't need stitches. I don't think. But my skin really burns and hurts real bad."

"I know," Joe said. "Do you see any mud?"

"Yes we are standing in lots of mud. Can't you see the mud?"



"...my skin really  
burns and  
hurts real bad."

“No, I can’t”

I hear a bird cry and looked up and now I can’t see. But try the mud. The Indians used mud and lots of things for cures. The bad rain can’t hurt the mud. It cools the blisters I have now.

On the news, Joe said he heard the ozone has opened and now the rain has some sort of acid in it. It was very scary under the bridge. People piled on top of each other and animals too. Lots of dead people and people so gone you couldn’t help them if they would let you.

But Joe and I lived and waited for help. That is why my story is named “One Acid Rain Summer Night!”

Joe and I got well. From the acid in the rain from the ozone. We helped others.

# Untitled

by Dave Bastian

Dave Bastian is a woodworker, beer brewer, and environmental activist.

in the shadows of cheese box butte  
in my little two man tent  
we were three  
in the shadows  
three faking sleep  
as two of us  
held  
oh (pause) boy  
you say and i wonder  
what you mean  
and i wonder where you  
are  
in your head  
for i say  
this has been so long  
so long since  
i've felt a warm touch  
of human skin  
on my face and hands  
and feet  
and while your lips  
are so close  
i can feel your warm breath  
i wonder where is your heart  
and surely you  
can feel mine beating  
sure we all can  
everyone in the shadows of  
cheese box butte  
can feel my heart  
beating...

# Who Are You?

by Raymond G. Briscoe

It is a decision that each person has to make for him or herself. For some, they are the end product of Darwinian metamorphosis of ancient cell production raised finally to a thoughtful producing human being. On the other side of the scale are those who consider themselves the sons or daughter of a loving God. Whatever a person's belief, we are all here on this earth living with all the joys and perils life has to offer. We are in the life experience together so let us make the most of it.

When you learn  
how to love, you  
become love.

How should we go about it? Should we just go through the motions in our relationships with others or should we get serious about who we are? I believe love is an energy, those who use it are much happier than those who choose not to use it, or do not know how to use it. Our movies and TV programs sell love as a sexual adventure or an emotion that just happens. It is much more than that. Love

should be considered a state of being not a feeling.

We usually measure a person's success by their achievements. In our country one of the first questions we ask our potential new friend when we meet a new acquaintance is, "What do you do for a living?" We believe it gives us a social measuring stick of a person's worth.

We work to get good grades, we try to excel in the world of sports, we work hard to rise in the corporation or company. We try to become a part of social groups; which, we believe, gives our life meaning. This was a pathway of my own life. I thought if I do something or other, I will surely be a good or valuable person. Get a college degree. Get a higher degree. Get a Ph.D. Get elected to

office. Become a person others see as a knowing and powerful guy. It doesn't bring the results desired! Happiness does not work that way.

Love will never be defined in comparison to anyone. Love has no relationship to judgment. The hardest person in the world to love is yourself. Why? Because you know yourself better than any other person could possibly imagine. Yes, it is still possible to lie to yourself and believe the lies. Still, when that happens; and in some degree I think it happens to everyone, you shortchange yourself. When you live a life that allows you to look in the mirror and like what you see, then you are able to truly love others.

In every interaction with people, with animals, with things, bring love into the interaction.

All it takes is a decision and willingness to let it happen. When you learn how to love, you become love. It is who you are. Giving is the true measurement of living, not seeing how much you can get.

I agree with Mother Teresa who stated, "It is not how much you do, but how much love you put into it that matters."

If there is a God and you want to be like him or her, I believe you must learn to love. Choose to love because it is a privilege. When you make love an opportunity rather than a goal with a purpose, then you love without a thought about gaining gratification or a reward. Love then becomes unselfish love. Its purpose is the true expression of who you are and indeed it is what you have become or perhaps what you have been all along. You may learn that you really are love. It may be possible to find out if it is a true expression of who you really are. Why not try it and see?

# I AM

by Christine R. Lee

Christine R. Lee has been a participant of the Diverse Writing Series since 2003. She is presently a co-facilitator for the Utah Pride group, Christine enjoys writing flash fiction and poetry. You can visit her web log at: [www.myspace.com/chrys\\_ann1971](http://www.myspace.com/chrys_ann1971)

I am the savior of the world. I descended below all things. I suffered both body and spirit in the garden of Gethsemane so much that even I, the greatest of all, trembled because of pain and prayed for ministering angels to accompany me while my earthly disciples slept without the gate.

64  
sine cera: Saturday

...no man taketh  
my life from me,  
but I lay it down of  
myself.

To this end was I born,  
for this purpose came I  
into the world, to redeem  
the souls of mankind.

The flesh on my back,  
bruised, broken and torn  
by a whip called the cat of  
nine tails - presses against the  
wooden stake I am nailed to as I  
push up with all my might so that I can

take another breath.

The teachers of the law and the elders taunt me saying, "He saved others, but he can't save himself!"

Even now they do not understand that no man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my father.

One of my fellows taunts me further, "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" Rebuking him, the other says, "Don't you fear God, since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then with pleading in his voice, "Jesus,

remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

I answer him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in the world of spirits.”

Taking in my mother and John I say, “My lady, behold thy son!” And unto John, “Behold thy mother!”

It is the sixth hour, and darkness is coming over the whole land.

Mortal man cannot conceive of the pains I am suffering as I utter these words, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” For it is not the weight of the cross, born by Simon on my behalf, that has brought me low, nor the excruciating pain and anguish I felt as they nailed my wrists with metal spikes. I am brought into an inescapable abyss by the sins of mankind, not only those living now or the ones who have come before but all those who will be born.

Like a mother in her time of labor I know there will be an end to my suffering, and a new life born in and through me for all those who shall take upon them the name of Christ and try my works to do. Mine is the one true and everlasting sacrifice. Old things will become new; the animals I declared unclean are made clean. The promises of the old law will not be lost, but are being fulfilled in me.

The curtain of the temple, woven so tightly four horses pulling in all directions could not rip the fabric, is now torn in two. I cry unto my father and your father, “It is finished; the debt is paid in full. Into thy hands I commit my spirit.”

# Elder Holcombe

by Dave Bastian

Larry Holcombe didn't want to go on a mission. Larry Holcombe never wanted to go on a mission. He hadn't since he was six and his Aunt Jean had told him that he would have to leave his blanket behind when he went to serve The Lord. Larry loved that blanket with all his heart, and he couldn't imagine doing anything that didn't involve that ratty, blue piece of cloth. If he couldn't bring his blanket, his six year-old self declared, he wasn't going to go. Aunt Jean was incredulous. "Of course you want to go on a mission," she told the six-year-old Larry, "It will be the best two years of your life."

That was the statement that every adult hauled out when the talk turned to a mission and in Larry's world, the talk turned to a mission all the time. The best two years of your life, they would say, whether they served those two years or not. Those two mission years are viewed as a sacred and formative period, the very forge that refines a young boy into a man and shapes a screwball young kid into a good, God Fearing Christian. In the mind of the authority figures in Larry's life, there was no way those two years could not be the best he would ever experience. "How could they not be?" they would declare. "How could a young man not enjoy leaving home at nineteen, walking the streets of a strange city, and calling the lost souls of that city to repentance?" The best two years indeed.

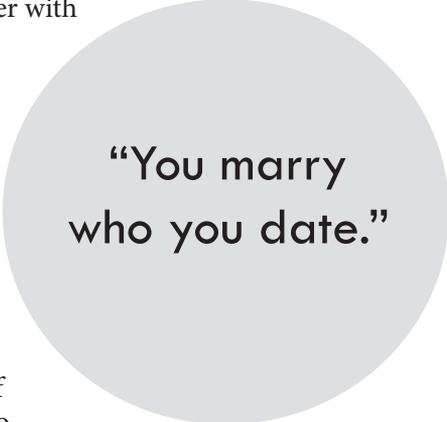
So how did Larry Holcombe, a young man with no interest in those two best years, become Elder Holcombe, a missionary for The Church in Las Vegas, Nevada? What transformation took place in the heart of this boy to send him on this journey? What provoked this change? Sex, that was what. Sex and love, love and sex. Copulation, Fornication. Larry's had none of it unless you count masturbation and Larry didn't. Larry wanted sex; Larry wanted love. Love is friendship plus sex and Larry Holcombe had made a few female friends since the time that girls became something more than just gross. Larry had never had sex with any of those female friends, however.

Sex was something Larry Holcombe wanted, and he wanted it very much. He wanted sex, love, and all the emotional madness and passionate euphoria that go along with both. Time and hormones had replaced that devotion to his ratty, blue blanket with a desire for heart shaped bottoms and ample bosoms. Once those hormones kicked into high gear and damn near every woman he saw became unbearably attractive, Larry reconsidered the whole mission thing.

Some may find it odd that anyone would consider serving The Lord for two years as a missionary the path to an adult relationship with a woman, but for Larry and his fellow members of The Church, indeed it was. In the faith that Larry Holcombe had been raised with, one does not have intercourse outside of marriage, and one does not marry outside of the faith. That was just the way it was for a boy such as Larry. “You marry who you date,” Larry’s mom always told him so Larry had never even gone to a movie or dinner with any girl who didn’t spend her Sundays in the same building Larry did.

The only way Larry Holcombe was ever going to get laid was to get laid as a married man, and the only woman Larry could marry was a faithful and righteous woman, a woman who was a member of The Church. There was just no other option. That was what his faith demanded of him, that was what his family demanded of him, and that was what he had been told Jesus wanted from him. Larry couldn’t let Jesus down could he? Of course he couldn’t.

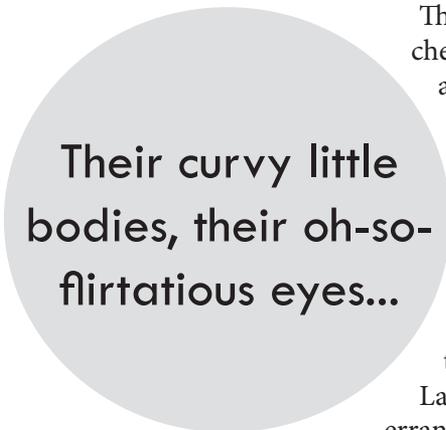
What faithful young woman would take Larry in the bonds of holy matrimony if Larry hadn’t served those best two years? Any handmaiden of the Lord worth her salt was only interested in a returned missionary who had completed his duty in an honorable manner. Who could blame her? If the boy in question was such a selfish little punk that he wouldn’t sacrifice two years of his life to God’s will than what kind of spiritual mate would he make? What sort of message would his lack of action send to their future children? And what would become of the souls that could be saved by only that young man?



“You marry  
who you date.”

Those good and steadfast women, those down right desirable women, they wanted a mate who had served his requisite two years of duty, and they weren't going to settle for anything less. Those were the women Larry Holcombe had to marry, and those were the circumstances he had to marry them in. That was just the way it had to be.

The idea of marrying outside the bounds of his faith, thereby skipping a duty he wasn't interested in was a thought that the mind of Larry Holcombe was forbidden from even contemplating. From the moment he was born, he had been primed to only consider his fellow religious peers as potential partners. Be it on the playground or in marriage, if they didn't go to the same church Larry did, they just weren't quite up to snuff. Larry was urged from that young and early age to keep no companions unequal to him in morals, values, or personal conviction.



Their curvy little  
bodies, their oh-so-  
flirtatious eyes...

That didn't stop him from checking out those wild girls along with every other sexy creature that shook and wiggled her way down the halls of Columbus High School, however. The wild women, the unholy women, every cute little thing that traipsed about in tight shirts and tighter jeans, Larry couldn't help but cast an errant eye in their direction.

Their curvy little bodies, their oh-so-flirtatious eyes, those girls drove Larry mad with their alluring ways. They haunted his mind and imagination as he sat in his desk in math class. While he should have been working on algebra equations and preparing for upcoming exams, Larry would instead daydream about what it would be like to touch the curves he saw underneath their blue jeans and feel the what made the mounds in those pink sweaters so round.

Larry's eyes would follow the sway of Suzy Arnold's hips as she walked down the carpeted hall between their fourth and fifth period classes, and he would imagine that sway unencumbered by denim. He would gaze at the two round, beautiful breasts that so wonderfully filled Wendy Brockbank's cheerleading uniform,

and he would dream of those breasts bouncing in his bedroom as she did her cheer routines for only him. He would try not to notice Lilly Pepper's huge, green eyes as they flirted with Brandon Bernard, and he would conjure up fantastic scenarios about how her eyes would bat and wink at him and not that angular-jawed football player.

Sex, intercourse, copulation, fornication: powerful motivators in the mind of a young man, powerful enough to convince this reluctant servant to sacrifice those two years to The Lord's Will, powerful enough to get Larry Holcombe on a mission. Some served God for riches, some served God for glory, but surely all would agree: serving God for sex and love was a nobler pursuit than either.





readings from:

*sine cera*

a DiverseCity Writing Series anthology

Saturday

JoLyn Brixey  
Cyndi Lloyd  
Martha Carter  
Tiffany Carver  
Christine R. Lee  
Dan Christensen  
Paul L. Rosser  
Dan Christensen  
H. Rachelle Graham  
Betha Hudspeth  
E.B. Homer  
Von Jones

John A. Boles  
Raymond G. Briscoe  
Terry Trigger  
Deborah Young  
Joel Frazier  
John Sanders  
Christina Smith  
Michael Whitworth  
Aretha Nesmith  
Ramona Maassen  
Marylee Clarke  
Dave Bastian



# *Tips for readers:*

You have 3 minutes  
(about 1 - 1 1/4 page)

Hold your paper low  
(about chest level)  
to avoid covering your mouth

Every few sentences  
look up at the audience

Read slowly.  
(The speed is just right for listeners  
when it sounds too slow for readers)

Have fun!