

sine cera

a DiverseCity Writing Series Anthology

Two Old Guys
From Brooklyn

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This edition of *sine cera* was compiled and edited by
DiverseCity Writing Series Coordinator, Jeremy Remy.

sine cera: Two Old Guys From Brooklyn

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cover: **Two Old Guys From Brooklyn**
by Alex Remy

Alex Remy is an award winning artist who lives in Salt Lake City. She can be contacted for commission at <http://alexremy.com>.

Introduction

Everyone Can Write!

We, at the Community Writing Center, believe that writing has the power to unite communities and build bridges over social chasms such as economic disparity and racial intolerance. Because of this belief, we have created the DiverseCity Writing Series, which provides a way to develop writing communities and to disperse the thoughts and emotions of people whose stories may otherwise remain untold.

—DiverseCity Writing Series Mission Statement

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 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 group 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 writing group 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 Community Writing Center Group

The Environmental Writing Group

(at the Main Library)

The Literacy Action Center Groups

The Poetry Group

(at Barnes & Noble in Sugarhouse)

The Sam Weller's Group

The Utah Pride Group

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

sine cera: Two Old Guys From Brooklyn

Preface

There's something about writing that draws people together. Sure, it may sound romantic to find a little pond in Massachusetts, hide from the world for a couple of years, and write a series of short stories... or a manifesto. But, the truth of the matter is, nobody writes alone—and tax collectors will inevitably find you.

Writing is an expression of ideas, memories, dreams and experiences. And what are we if not a collection of these things? So we express ourselves, for whatever reason, and present the world with a piece from our collection. Different people get the chance to see these pieces at different times: some help along the way, some experience them along with us, and some must wait until the work is complete. In time, communities are built around our words—intentionally or not.

Over the past six months, writers in the DiverseCity Writing Series have composed many pieces that might have otherwise been left unheard. In this volume, you will find selections of their completed work: letters to those we love and those we struggle to understand, stories of our children (both human and the furrier variety), tales to enlighten and entertain, snapshots of life (some more unusual than others), and thoughts on aging, our bodies and ourselves.

I invite you to join this community, and welcome you to share the experiences in this collection: *sine cera: Two Old Guys From Brooklyn*.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JEREMY'.

Jeremy Remy
DiverseCity Writing Series Coordinator
SLCC Community Writing Center

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Dave Bastian, JoLyn Brixey, Marylee Clarke, Randy Eggert, Katharine English, Pace Gardner, Melissa Helquist, Vondell Jones, Colyn Kilmer, Joseph Lindberg, Cyndi Lloyd, Olivia Moreton, Steve Pastorino, and Hunter Wolf.

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Attack!

by JoLyn Brixey

JoLyn Brixey has always enjoyed writing and reading a variety of books. She is happily married, the mother of two sons, two cats and a dog.

There are three things I do to protect myself from an unexpected assault before I enter my basement. First, I turn on the hall light so that I can see everything in the hallway. This way I can hopefully detect any movement towards me before... well, before it is too

late. Second, I look left to right and around corners, trying to spot my attacker.

Last, if I haven't forgotten before I descend the stairs, I take off my fuzzy blue slippers and leave them behind the door.

Wearing my fuzzy blue slippers can be dangerous while in the basement. I can wear them upstairs, because Lucy, my dog, is less than interested in them. She prefers to sniff my bare toes or my knees to see if I have been randomly petting other dogs behind her back. Since these

are my favorite, warmest slippers, I wear them just about anywhere I want to wear them except in the basement. No, I cannot wear them where the attacker dwells. To do so is foolhardy.

Who is this attacker, you might be thinking. How could I allow something so frightening to remain in my basement? Sigh... my attacker is one of my cats. Attack Cat and Sister Cat are littermates who belong to my 15-year-old son, Mister. Mister has raised these cats from kittens, and they adore him. Usually when Mister comes upstairs, he is covered with cat hair, evidence of the love he gets from these cats. Attack Cat and Sister Cat melt like butter when Mister pays them the slightest bit of attention.

He proudly wears
a sinister dark mask
on his furry face

Attack Cat is very different from Sister Cat. Although Sister Cat is the alpha cat, she is very delicate and dainty. Attack Cat is bigger, stronger, and in another life would have made a successful mouser on a farm. Sister Cat has white paws and a white necklace. Attack Cat has a random splotch of white on his grey back. He proudly wears a sinister dark mask on his furry face, which covers the top of his head like a Batman costume. Sister Cat sports grey dots on the backs of her tiny white hind legs that make her feet look like she is prancing in graceful high-heeled shoes. She rarely meows unless she is responding questioningly to the call of her name. Not Attack Cat. He has a raucous meow that is loud and annoying to all within earshot. When he meows, his nearly toothless mouth opens wide, showing the only teeth he has left—two large fangs on the top and two on the bottom.

I learned the hard way about the effect my fuzzy blue slippers have on Attack Cat. When I first got them, I went innocently into the basement to do my laundry.

The basement was dark.

The smell of the unscooped cat box filled the stairwell.

As I descended the stairs, something landed heavily on one of my feet and dug its claws into my instep. My


slipper was whisked off from my foot. When I flipped on the light, I

saw Attack Cat running away, my fuzzy blue

slipper held like a coveted prize in his mouth. I had been the victim of an unwelcome feline assault.

I quickly made chase to get my slipper back! Attack Cat darted away, dropping it in front of the TV in the family room. I saw his tail slip under the futon, and I bent to retrieve my stolen slipper. Seemingly out of nowhere he pounced, ripping the slipper out of my hands. He bounced joyfully on top of it, tossed it deftly in the air, and then landed on it, digging his back claws in and hanging on like a bull rider at a rodeo. I stumbled over to him, a lone slipper on the other foot.

“Give me back my slipper, you thieving beast!” I cried. Attack Cat narrowed his eyes at the challenge and declared victory without



**“Give me back my
slipper you thieving
beast!”**

making a sound. Only a cat owner can understand the look he gave me. I refused to cry Uncle and dived in to get the slipper for my bare foot's sake. My sudden movement startled Attack Cat back into his lair under the futon.

I made a few more foolish attempts to enter my basement with the slippers on, only to fight the long hard battle for my warm foot coverings over and over again. Finally, I learned that it was best to leave them upstairs where they would be safe from Attack Cat and ignored by the dog. I was no match for his attacks.

Attack Cat has a new ploy now. Finding "Fun with Slipper" removed from his life, he invented a new and more alarming game: The Light Switch Ambush. From his perch on a stool in the dark, he waits for an innocent hand to reach around the corner to turn on the family room light. When that hand comes, he is ready... Attack!

Quarrel

by David M. Hoza

David M. Hoza was born in Houston, Texas, got his consciousness in Austin, and moved to Park City, Utah after completing an English degree at the University of Houston. In the mid 1990's, he moved onto 40 acres and began a 10 year experience in living off the grid and intentional, conscious community. He has been playing music and writing songs since he was 16, and has been dedicated to poetry since 1997. His work has been published in Café Bellas Artes, Soul Fountain, and The Tribal Voice. You can also find him at hoza-mythoshiero.com. Dave invites reflections, shared work, and comments.

"I cannot live with you,"
—Emily Dickinson, #640

You know what I will say:
"Go then!"
And while I tumble from the well
down Timpanogan steeps
past the Mariposa, Groundsel and the Lupine,

Turn back
to what is You
and the mirror of You.
Authentic
You.

Not Me.
I came for the tea and the dialogue
and surely caught on the hiked up skirt
du jour,
neglecting the language
of choice
and of comfort
in the extinction of
all Other
than the desire to become
One.

A meeting of the Eyes,
A meeting of the Minds,
A meeting of...

I'll withdraw my projections.
They didn't do you justice anyway.

Boundaries were not sufficient.

"Wild Nature"
is not
"Your Thing."

And the hot and moving topic of the day
cannot be adequately nor inadequately

pinned and curiositized
by Me...
with me.

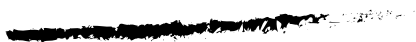
Nor can I earn, nor by grace
reserve a place

At the table of your attending ear,
and passionate expression.

Enjoy yourself.
May you be
happy, wealthy and wise,
having chosen
fulfillment
in all your relations.

Yours,
Truly.

Boom



by David M. Hoza

I like the body as the page
words of address skirting obvious meaning
eclectic inference piercing portrait of a...
needled in color 'neath the back of the skin;

panting to lyric
eschewing full function for fashion,
color, splash, wit and wisdom,
braids and trinkets and...Boom!

Relationships

by Maxine A. Drawn

Maxine A. Drawn has a loving husband, daughter, and granddaughter. She enjoys helping people in English and Spanish. She enjoys drawing and writing poetry. She likes learning new things.

A relationship consists of love, caring, understanding, honesty, support and respect. Being encouraged, appreciated, romantic and gentle with each touch and word you say to each other.

Having fun together on your wild adventures. Giving confidence to each other. Whispering gentle words that warm each other's hearts. Trusting in each other. Seeing each other's smiling face every morning and every night.

Doing things together as friends and as a couple helps your relationship by getting to know each other, understanding each other and knowing what each other likes and dislikes.

Communicating with each other on every level makes a relationship stronger. Knowing that you accept each other even though you have differences. Accepting any changes in your relationship and each other. Helping each other learn new things and grow together. Loving each other for what's on the inside as well as the outside.

People often take each other for granted and end relationships without working on them. Go into a relationship with an open mind. Have patience and understand each other. Be willing to work out problems and listen to each other.

The most important thing is to have communication in your relationship. Know what that person wants and needs. Your relationship is the most important thing. Never give up!

Lots of couples have problems in their relationships. They do not communicate with each other. Treat each other with respect and learn from mistakes.

If you take time to learn from your mistakes in your relationship, then everything will work out. You both will be able to help others, making your own life and the world a little easier to live in.

Mother

by Carolyn Curran

Carolyn T. Curran is a great grandmother who has written for her own pleasure for more than 50 years. She is eager to share her writing with others.

My Mother is 91 today. I stand in the supermarket looking at rows and rows of beautiful colored cards. Some from children, some for aunts and some for fathers. My eyes scan the cards from one end to the other.

I don't want the same old card: "I love you," "You were the best mother in the world," "I think about you all the time," same old platitudes.

I don't want her favorite flowers on them, I don't want fuzzy animals on them and I don't want funny ladies who look like the next-door neighbor.

I want a card big as a house. I don't want any doors or windows on it. I want it half black, I want tears streaming down the side, fire bushes all around the house.

I want her to know how I hurt when my brother came and he took her from me. I want her to see how empty I grew up in between him and my older sister.

I want her to feel the pain when she pushed me away. I want her to see the tears I hid for 60 years. I want her to feel the loneliness I felt when my sister always came first.

I want her just to feel the pain of loving her from the day they placed me in her arms.

I stood by the cards in the supermarket and a chill went all through me. I shook with shame as I picked a beautiful purple card with flowers, violets and read the equally lovely verses of love and thankfulness and deep devotion for a mother god had given me and had brought me up to forgive and forget and purchased the birthday card that would make my dear mother smile.

The Magicians

by Katharine English

Katharine English lives in Salt Lake City and is co-facilitator for the DWS/Utah Pride group.

You want me to write a page about my mother? Here, see my hand?
See the pen I hold? Watch closely, now. It seems as though I am
writing. But see how I've called her forth? How she fills the room?
How her blackness sucks up the light? Magic.

My mother's dark disappointments were wrapped around her like
a magician's cape. Her cloak swept open
and tricks flew out. In front of an
audience she sawed her children
in half again and again. They
rose, supposedly whole, to
hushed, disbelieving praise.
The daughter before her
could be made to disappear.
You don't think this is true?
"Come on to the stage and
sing," the illusionist invited. She
turned her daughter around and
around to prove her. "See, this girl
is real. I ask you, the audience, to come
up and touch her. She is real, is she not?" Murmurs of assent rose all
around, and the young girl heard it, held it, hoped it. She sang and
soared and swanned her neck. "Beautiful songstress!" the magician
crooned. Her daughter whirled in the praise, a funnel of fame. And
then, and then—"Of course, she's no Edith Piaf." With a flick of a
word, she collapsed the child to absence. In this way, the onlookers
clapping, the child collapsing, the magician took fame to herself.

I will tell you other tricks. Like the air the sorceress possesses,
always in a corner, curling down a pipe, stealthing on a stair—
nowhere is safe from her conjuring. "I heard what you said," she
snarls. But how? Because she sits on your tongue. "I know what you're
doing." But how? Because she slides between your fingers and knows

My mother's dark
disappointments
were wrapped
around her like a
cape

when you touch yourself. Nothing escapes her scorn. You feel her on your skin.

This, too: she can tell what's in your pocket; she knows your number; she can turn skin to blues and purples; she can tie her children together like a train of scarves, knot them in her fist; she can bring blood from every part.

I will tell you her darkest trick. She is dead but she returns. Not just in dreams, or stories, or prayers, as vision and remonstrance, though yes, those too. But believe this or not, though you can't see her, her children will tell you she rides on their backs like a great earth mountain, pregnant and moving, rising out of the skin (but of it), over the bone (but in it), a hunchback which cannot be severed, but must be borne. She rides heavy, pushes down, bends her children, still, down to the ground.

See my hand? See the pen I hold? Watch closely now. The children have inherited the cape, have learned new magic. They stand upright, pressing back.

The Watchman

by Pace Gardner

Pace Gardner is a former member of Mensa. He enjoys whittling, calypso music and making his own sausage. His sitcom, "Where's the Beef?" was recently optioned by Telemundo.

After repeated burglary attempts, the body was moved to another location. A far cry from the pomp of the dedication ceremony, what was left of the corpse was moved at night. The pieces were wrapped in a blanket and placed in the bed of a mule cart. By next midday, the cart had arrived and the former king was once again laid to rest.

Within days,
the first of the
happenings
began.

The Watchman arrived several days later. Transferred from his previous internment, he arrived at the site without attendants and personally unloaded his three gilded trunks. After being shown his accommodations, he was read a brief statement from a dilapidated scroll of parchment and abruptly left alone.

Within days, the first of the

happenings began.

It was reported to the local magistrate by two young brothers. Much to their surprise, they witnessed a man casually strolling in white waistcoat and crimson breeches on the outer limits of their farm. From such a distance as not to be clearly identified, the man sauntered into the underbrush and quickly disappeared.

The second incident occurred on St. John's Eve. The midsummer's heat had driven the annual banquet out of the dank town hall and onto the packed sod of the square. All able members of the village had been in attendance, sweating over trifle and kedgerie until well after dusk. Following the feast and into the next morning, several farmers reported to the magistrate of lost chickens and sheep. The incident went

uninvestigated. The village was accustomed to missing livestock and it was written off to wolves or one of the other threatening animals of the day.

No one in the town had been informed of the Watchman or his charge. Unfortunately for the villagers, they were the only township within a week's trek of his duty, and as the year dragged on, the residents began to garner more of his unique attention.

The next items to go missing were laundry. Cleaned and hung on lines to dry, an abundance of petticoats, darned socks and dressing gowns had vanished. A prominent local family accused another less prominent family of the crime. A disagreement between the clans had previously created a rift, which was tidily filled with the denunciations of larceny.


The village magistrate, and ranking member of the accused clan, sought to quickly silence the rumors.

He instead attributed the crime to a mischievous Bard who had performed in the village the night before. His explanation, coupled with a small sum of sceats, seemingly quieted the situation.

The final happening occurred in late winter. Unusually warm for that time of year, a young handmaiden had been picking the first dandelions of the season for her midday meal. No cry had been heard, but her cap and bucket were found abandoned on the heath. A scrap of fine embroidered linen had also been found, tangled on a thistle, apparently torn from the cuff of the Watchmen. Identified as foreign, a followership was arranged to scour the nearby woods.

Word of the incident traveled quickly from the village and royal emissaries were dispatched from the Court. The assumed nature of the incident had followed closely with the original reason for the Watchman's internment. Yet in this occasion, his actions had now fallen beyond the subversive control of his family.

With the emissaries in tow, the cottage and tomb were soon found. The single room contained the Watchman, dressed for dinner and leisurely smoking a clay pipe. He had set tableware for two near a



**Word of the
incident traveled
quickly from the
village**

small cooking fire, above which swung a tarnished copper cauldron. Wafting from the cauldron was the delicious aroma of carrots, parsnips and the joint meat of the handmaiden.

The followership continued further, into the tomb. As their flickering torches produced strange limelight on the damp walls of the cave, an odd scene was illuminated. Where the sovereign's corpse had been laid, there now stood a mock throne, assembled of crude sticks and draped with tattered white cloth. The monarch's remains had been substituted for an eclectic pile of animal bones, topped at their apex with the deteriorated skull of a sow. The skull was mockingly crowned with a tiara of dried mistletoe.

The Watchman was unwilling to provide any explanations. He preferred instead to offer generous ladles of stew to the members of the party.

The monarch's bones were never found.

Who's Knocking on the Door?

by Art Reeves

Art Reeves' life hasn't been a normal life—it's been hard, but fun too. He has done his best in everything he's had to do. Art has had a good life.

Back in 1972, I was nineteen. I was mining for Tungsten with two friends, Kevin and John. Kevin's dad was starting a new mining company but was hardly ever around. We were mining 25 miles north of Wendover in a very remote area.

The three of us were living in a trailer and we had been there about a month. One night, it was so dark you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. We were playing cards and listening to Black Sabbath on the stereo.

Kevin looked up and said, "Shall we call the Devil?" John said anxiously "Do we dare?"

I said, "Let's try it."

Keep in mind, we had been there a month and no one else had come around. We continued to play cards and about 15 minutes had passed since we called the Devil. Then came a knock at the door.

We all stopped breathing. "You answer the door," said Kevin.

"No, you answer the door," John screamed.

We waited several seconds and decided to all open the door.

We were relieved to find a man and a woman standing at the door. The couple had run out of gas about 2 miles from the trailer.

We were happy to give them a ride to their car and 5 gallons of gas.

"I won't ever call the Devil again," John said.

"It makes you wonder, doesn't it?" Kevin replied.

I was relieved.

Ralph

by Betty Carter

Betty Carter enjoys reading books.

My husband and I came from Flagstaff to live in Utah. We found an apartment at 4500 South State Street. One day I went to the store to get a newspaper for us to find a job. We called the number and a lady asked us to come and meet her and Ralph at his house. The next day we moved in with Ralph and went to work. We went back to our apartment that night to get our clothes.

**The lady told us
he did not come to
work.**

The next day, we took care of him all day and all night. My husband stayed up all night. Ralph would ring the bell for help. I stayed up all day with Ralph Lemaster. We had to give him medicine everyday.

I got up in the morning and cooked his breakfast. He would have one egg and a piece of toast, prune juice and a cup of coffee. We would go Sunday to a café to eat breakfast.

He would have blueberry waffles and one piece of bacon and a cup of coffee. I would have one piece of bacon and a pancake and a glass of milk. Later we went to his friend's house to visit him. The next day, I cleaned the house and did the washing for us. Then I cooked dinner.

Two weeks later my husband went out for a walk and found a job in the morning cutting lawns and planting flowers. That night, Ralph and I went over to pick up my husband. The lady told us he did not come to work. We told her we brought him that morning. She said, "He did not come to work."

Ralph would go to bed at 5:00 p.m. and wake up at 6:00 a.m. When I got up, Ralph was up and asked me if I had seen my husband. I told him that I had not seen him. So we went to the closet and my

husband's clothes were gone. All the money was gone from my room. Ralph was mad and he called his niece to come over to the house because my check was gone, too. When she came over to the house, she had her husband and her son with her. They noticed that the saw and other tools were gone. The son yelled upstairs to his mother, me, and Ralph to come down the stairs. We asked him what was wrong. He told us all the tools were gone.

He went down the street to a pawnshop and found his uncle's tools. Then he called Ralph and we went down to the pawnshop to get the tools. The man asked Ralph if these were his tools and he told him they were his.

I never saw my husband again. I divorced him that year.

His niece took me down to the social security office to take my name—Meyers—off the old check and put my new name—Carter—on the new check. Ralph's niece and husband changed the locks on the house.

I took care of him from 1986 to 1989. Then we had to put him in a nursing home because I could not take care of him any more. He died on February 20, 1992.

Sarah

by Tommy Bird

Tommy Bird is almost seventy-five years old and still holding on. He's been there, done that and has the scars to prove it. He has also sold 9 stories so far.

I sat alone in the back of the small, exclusive suburban church and watched in the way an outsider watches. I had no part in the proceedings even though my heart would be buried with her. The unctuous, self-important preacher extolled the virtues of a woman he had never met in an orator's voice devoid of sincerity. My own thoughts ranged back over the past as I cried inside for what might have been had we been given the chance. Again I asked why I was there. Of course, I already knew the answer. I had come to say goodbye and acknowledge she was lost to me again, this time to death. It was almost more than I could bear. We had been cheated out of so much.

Charlie, her husband, sat in the front pew not bothering to hide his non-grief. He seemed almost bored with the whole proceeding. Beside him sat a young woman who could only be Sarah's daughter, she looked so much like her mother. Numbly I kept staring at her through the rest of the droning service. The last amen sounded and I got up to leave quietly.

I walked back outside, blinked my eyes and waited for them to adjust to the bright sunlight. It seemed so wrong the sun shone brightly and the birds sang sweet happy songs on this day of such great sadness for me. I resented the ordinariness of it all. To me it would have been more fitting for the day to be gloomy with dark clouds hanging heavy in the sky while no birds sang as the world mourned her passing. Instead, the world didn't even notice she was gone, dead, now always and forever out of reach.

"I win and you lose" a sneering voice said behind me. "She was still mine at the end." Charlie Potts, the not too sorrowful, newly made widower gloated at his imagined "winning." His nasal rasping voice grated on me as he added, "You think I didn't know about the two of you? Hell boy, I had her watched almost from the time her

daddy told her to marry me. You never did anything I could catch you at or you wouldn't be standing here right now, I promise you."

"Charles, you are a fool," I told him contemptuously. "You never understood anything about Sarah or what she meant to me. Now you never will." I turned away and started down the steps. I wanted to get away from this glittering empty house of non-worship where no God had ever dwelled and back into my own quiet world of near anonymity. I fought back the tears welling up in my eyes because I was damned if I'd let him see them or any other sign of the depth of my feelings.

"Don't you turn your back on me!" he screeched as I continued down the steps, to get away from him. It would be a sacrilege to permit this arrogant fool to goad me into a fight on the church steps right after her funeral services were done. He yelled foul names at my back and I kept walking away from him.

Oh how I wanted to take my fist and punish him for the pain he had caused us with his acquisitive greed. I walked away and did not turn back.

I walked the whole four miles back to my house. My eyes burned, throat ached, and the hurt inside refused to go away. It was so hard to accept she was gone forever. My mind refused to accept it, that she was gone. The disbelieving voice inside shouted, "No! It's not true, it can't be." Self-torture over the might-have-beens of this world was never my way to cope.

Peg, my old terrier walked stiffly out of the yard to greet me as I approached. I scooped her up in my arms and told her sadly, "She's gone, old girl, Sarah is gone."

Peg let out a "woof" and struggled to get down when she heard Sarah's name. I sat her back down on the sidewalk and watched as she looked for our Sarah. Finally she whined disappointed and followed me toward the house. I tiredly opened the door and entered the house to sit in my old recliner. Now I wept; now that no man could see me in my sorrow the tears came in great racking sobs. Peg whimpered

**The disbelieving
voice inside shouted,
"No! It's not true, it
can't be."**

her sympathy as she tried to comfort me. Finally the tears slowed, then stopped.

I remembered how it had been those twenty-some years ago when I held her close and vowed, “Sarah May, I love you so much I’m going to explode.”

She hugged hard and whispered, “Me too. Let’s go back inside before we get foolish.” We had engaged in a little petting and quit after one near mishap. We both vowed to wait for marriage, *our marriage*, because we wanted things done “just right.”

“About now, I’m ready to get foolish as hell,” I told her. She laughed and dragged me back inside so we could dance another slow dance together. It was the night of the senior prom and we guys all wore our dress suits and the girls were turned out in their formal best or party dresses. It was a magical night for the both of us, sadly our last for all too many years.

A week later Sarah tearfully rushed up to me in the school hallway and sobbed, “I have to marry Charlie Potts. If I don’t Daddy will go to jail.” She clung to me for whatever comfort she might get from me.

“What?” I exclaimed, not understanding. “What are you talking about? What jail?” Numbly I stood right there in the hallway, holding her tight against me, trying to make sense of what she had just said. Charlie Potts was, without a doubt, the most unpopular person in the whole school.

“Charlie’s father says that Daddy stole thousands of dollars from the bank and that he can prove it.” She looked up at me and sobbed, “What am I going to do?”

“Let’s run away right now. If we elope they can’t make you marry anybody else,” I told her desperately.

“But then Daddy will be arrested and go to jail. I have to do what Daddy says. I don’t want him to go to prison; he’s my father.”

Slowly the whole sad tale came out. It was all about hospital bills. Her mother had a brain tumor that appeared suddenly and seemed to grow larger almost by the hour. It was malignant. Either she must undergo an operation or she would certainly die. There was little hope, even if she had the operation. They performed the surgery and she died as expected while still on the operating table. It had all been so very expensive. The insurance was not enough and their savings were so little. More money had been needed, so Sarah’s father stole it and got caught.

We cut classes for the rest of the day and walked aimlessly, seeking solace in each other's nearness. We ended up at her house and the inevitable happened. It was the only time we made love to each other. Finally we got dressed and I blindly walked home. Sarah lay on her bed sobbing. A week later she married Charlie and became the reluctant wife of Charlie Potts. They moved to New York City, leaving me and her father behind.

Two years later I married a nice girl who became less nice with time and after ten years of childless bickering she left me for another man and I remained unmarried. I worked at my father's old job and in turn became the foreman after he retired. My life became my work. Then it all changed.

Sarah and Charlie suddenly returned to take over his father's bank after the old man died. It was by sheer chance we met at the Library as we did. I had just selected a book of Poe's short stories and bumped into someone behind me. I turned to apologize and we both exclaimed at the same time, "Oh my God!" I felt a thrill in my stomach.

We laughed and I said, "Oh Sarah, you are every bit as beautiful as that last afternoon we spent together. You are a little older, but even more beautiful than I remember you. You look so good!" My heart pounded and I had trouble breathing. Every one of the old feelings of love was still there inside me. I never realized how much I missed her until I saw her again. "Oh God, how I have missed you."

"And I you. You were never far from my thoughts all those years I was living in Manhattan. Oh, my dear, I see you and it seems like only yesterday, or last week and not..." she paused a moment, "well over twenty years. Has it really been that long?"

"Yes," I told her, "It has and every one of them peeled away just now." We stood there, looking into each other's eyes, saying nonsensical things, reveling in the newly rekindled feelings we shared with each other.

"Please," I begged her, "could we go somewhere for coffee and a pastry and catch up on all the lost days since I saw you last?"

She hesitated a moment before she nodded yes. We spent that perfect Saturday afternoon together, reveling in each other's presence, laughing and sharing our thoughts.

Solemnly she said, "My dear, I have a confession to make."

I touched her lips and said, "Hush, confess later. Enjoy the moment."

Every Saturday after that, we met at the library and shared pastries and coffee and rekindled the love we had for each other. Then all too soon she told me, "I had decided to leave him as you asked and come live with you. Oh God, it's too late. I'm going to die, soon. The doctor told me yesterday I have leukemia. Cancer runs in my family. I go into the hospital this evening.

"Please come visit me tomorrow, I have something to tell you, something very important. I should have told you before and kept putting it off. She turned away from me and walked out of my life again. Numbly I watched her stumble slightly as she slowly got into a taxi and rode away. In the morning she was gone. Our last meeting was never to be.

**She made a sour
face as she
referred to *him*.**

Suddenly old Peg let out a low "woof," bringing me back out of my reverie. There came a knock at the door, and then Peg whined. Slowly I opened the door. A great jolting shock ran through me. For a moment I thought I was looking at Sarah May. She had her mother's honey blond hair and that classically sculpted face I so loved. "Yes?" I asked her cautiously.

She handed me a sheet of paper. "Mother gave me this before she went to the hospital. You had better read it." She smiled her embarrassment and said, "It seems that you and not *him*," she made a face and continued, "are my father." She made a sour face as she referred to *him*. "It's all there in the letter." In shock I stepped back for my daughter to enter.

That night my newly found daughter left late to return to her apartment. She left Sarah's letter with me. I placed it on the nightstand by my bed where I could touch it and smile a happy foolish smile. *Sorry, Charlie*, I sent the thought toward him as I drifted off to sleep. *It looks like Sarah May and I had more of each other than either you or I ever realized.*

I was still smiling as I finally drifted off to sleep.

David

by Peggy Dean

Peggy Dean likes writing stories, reading books and going to movies.

I was divorced in 1997. We moved to the Dominguez Apartment Building. I went to work for Scully's Restaurant. I had worked for Scully's for four years, when a man named David came to work for the restaurant. We become friends.

One afternoon, I made a call asking to speak to Kelly, the owner of the restaurant. He was not available. David, my friend, said to me, "What is wrong?"

I replied, "The manager of my apartment building is going to evict both me and my daughter if I don't pay her \$139.00."

David asked me to come to Scully's and he would give me the money. I met him at the ZCMI Mall. David gave me the money.

David gave me his telephone number and asked me to call him. I gave him my address and he came over to visit me that weekend. We talked and talked. David wrapped his arms around me. I never felt safe before as I had at that moment.

The Black Stallion

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.

One Friday, I went to a race to see horses run. I liked it.

After the race, I went to the horse auction to see what kind of horses they had. I saw a black stallion with a white spot on his forehead. I bid on the horse. I found out the horse was two years old. I paid two thousand dollars for the horse.

I told him,
"The horse
is not for sale."

I trained the horse to be a racehorse. It took me two months to train it. After I trained it, I hired a jockey from Salt Lake City, Utah.

We took the horse to California to try him out on a big track. We wanted to know how he would react to the track and the other horses. He came in third place.

My jockey and I worked with my horse to be a first-place winner. We took him to Vernal, Utah. We ran him on that track for six months to break him in so he could run with other horses. After six months, my jockey said, "He is ready to ride with the other horses."

We put him on the money track. During his first race, he started out in tenth place. Then my jockey brought him up into third place for a while. With six laps left to go, my jockey took the horse to the front of the pack. For the next two laps, they took it easy. Then they won the race! The race was worth twenty thousand dollars.

After the race, this guy came over and asked me if I wanted to sell my horse. I told him, "No!" He offered me sixty thousand for the horse but I told him, "The horse is not for sale." I took the horse back home.

The next race was on October 22 in Florida. I asked my jockey, "Do you think we could come in fourth place?"

He said, "We shouldn't have no problem." So we took the horse to Florida for the race.

There were twenty-seven laps in the race. The jockey and I decided to cruise the horse easy. The black stallion started out in second place. When six laps were left, the jockey pushed the horse to the front and held him there. During the race, my horse held the front for the last five laps. Then my horse tripped and got hurt. We took the race at twelfth place.

Now I don't know if I want to put him up for sale or put him down.

Selections from: Tales of a Sophisticated Traveler

by Raymond 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.

Chicken Feathers

I stirred to see
some chicken
feathers just inches
from my face.

Our family in tandem with our neighbor's family had been on the trail for almost a week and finally headed back home. Our intent at the end of the day was to stay in a motel in Stanley, Idaho. With no reservations and arriving at dusk to read the posted sign declaring a population of 19, the town was too small to support a motel. After a short rest, we crowded our families into the two station wagons and headed south for Sun Valley.

By the time we got to the small town of Hailey, it was late and dark. The kids were asleep on one another and I wasn't sure whether I was awake or not. The full moon showed some cars parked down by the trees which must have been next to a small river or stream. I had had enough, and pulled off the road into the parking area. The neighbors were right with us. We didn't look for any camp guides, or seek any help. We were tired! Without preparing a tent, I rolled out the sleeping bags and in a short time we were all sound asleep.

Between five or six in the morning, a crack of light hit my eyes. I stirred to see some chicken feathers just inches from my face. I tried to resist waking up, but the circumstances suggested I should. I sat up in my sleeping bag, rubbed my eyes and learned I had stopped the

car in the middle of the community garbage dump, and rolled out the sleeping apparel. The cars in the moonlight were all salvage jobs on the far end of the rubbish.

Your Rear End is Beeping

My wife and our oldest granddaughter were traveling in the east. Our last shopping spree before we came home, I discovered an intriguing wallet. If your credit card was missing, the wallet would beep when you put it in your pocket. Being a forgetful guy and in need of a new money carrier, I purchased the leather apparition and, the night before we were to come home, unloaded my money and important cards and papers into their new home.

The walk from the car rental place to the baggage drop was a considerable distance. I started with two of the heaviest bags and made the trek as fast as I could. I heard my wife and granddaughter's laughter and turned to see what was happening. They were nearly convulsive in their mirth and not able to speak. In my annoyance, I dropped the bags and went back to find out what was happening.

I had retired and had not yet purchased the hearing aids I now own. When I finally arrived close enough to have a reasonable conversation I learned that the alarm in the wallet was not working as it was designed to work and, as I hurried with the bags, my rear end was beeping like with a back up signal to warn others of danger.

I Don't Think I Would Be Welcome

The commercial airliner was brought to a stop near the terminal in Sacramento, California and the pilot's husky voice informed the passengers, "There will be a forty-five minute layover. If you wish to stretch your legs, please take your boarding pass with you."

I was exhausted from long hours of work in San Francisco and elected to stay on the plane. The pilot walked back to the passenger area and asked me, "Don't you want to get off?"

I looked around and was surprised to see that I was the only passenger left aboard.

"No, I don't think so," I replied, "but if I need to so you can get off, I'll be happy to do so."

"No," he said, "I think I will stay on."

I wasn't convinced he didn't want to get off, so I persisted, "Are you sure you don't want to get off?"

"I better not, I don't think I would be welcome."

"What do you mean?" I asked incredulously.

"I make this flight every week and ordinarily we have a blind man who flies the route. Last week he wanted to stay on the plane, but asked me if I would give his dog a little exercise. When the passengers saw me walking through the terminal with a seeing-eye dog, there was a scramble at the ticket counter to change flights. I don't think the airport wants me there for awhile."

Baseball and Pedal to the Metal

I was on a business trip by automobile during the World Series. My Giants were playing some American league team, which I do not remember. I was driving across the desert and forgot to watch the gas

gauge. I noticed in time to become very worried I might not make it to the next filling station. I was lucky to see in the distance a town that was too small to have a gas station, only two or three old shacks. Lucky me! There was a gas station. I pulled in just as the baseball game was getting hot. I turned the engine off, but left the key on and the radio going so I could hear what was happening while I filled the tank.

I pulled in just
as the baseball
game was
getting hot.

I ran to the counter and paid my bill, and hurried back to the car just as Bonds hit a home run. It tied the game and I started the engine and took off down the road. About twenty seconds later, I heard a clanking sound following the car. I looked in the rear view mirror and the gas pump hose was following me home.

Sure enough! I forgot to put the pump handle back on the pump. It pulled the rubber hose right off the pump. I probably was lucky a spark didn't cause a major problem. I sheepishly took the equipment back to the station and let them have my credit card number. A great baseball game can do that to you!

Two Old Guys From Brooklyn

by Tim Smith

Tim Smith is a once-retired firefighter/paramedic residing in the Sandy area for the past 30 years, though forever proud of his Hoosier heritage.

They met for the first time just that night, these two old guys from Brooklyn, even though they spent their formative years in the same burrough of New York not so many years apart. It seemed as if they had known one another their entire lives judging from the way they bantered back and forth and instantly bonded. You could say it was a spontaneous mutual admiration thing going on with them and why not; both being extremely accomplished geezers in their chosen professions. Though both have spent a lifetime pursuing sports activities, one as a coach and the other as a writer, their paths have never crossed until now.

what a joy it
was to watch Frank
Layden and Roger
Kahn become
acquainted

So what a joy it was to watch Frank Layden and Roger Kahn become acquainted and one would imagine become fast and lasting friends for what is remaining of their incredibly diverse lives. As Frank so eloquently introduced Roger Kahn to the appreciative audience at the library auditorium one could only feel the genuine respect and comraderie that instantly had taken hold between the two of them. The coach acknowledged his wife, Barbara, sitting in the audience and related how she had grown up in the shadow of Ebbets Field which was the New York home of the Brooklyn Dodgers, the focal point of Roger Kahn's classic novel "The Boys of Summer." As testament to the classic status of this book one need look no further than the fact that it is now enjoying its eighty-fifth printing, and as one library patron was overheard to exclaim, place Roger Kahn in the lofty league of literary elite.

As generous an introduction as he gave, Frank really outdid himself

when he and Barbara presented Roger with an autographed print of Dodger legend Duke Snider hitting away at Ebbets Field. And then it was time for the featured speaker to take the stage and regale the appreciative crowd with stories of his illustrious career covering not just baseball, but boxing, racial integration, true friendship, Robert Frost, and devastating personal loss. Sometimes it was with the help of notes and a bundle of papers he brought onstage with him to make certain of the facts from so many pieces written over so many years. Other times his memory was all that was needed to put each of us in the best box seat in the house and marvel at the history this author has lived and written about over so many years of reporting for newspapers, magazines, and in his own books, of which there are many.

Mr. Kahn immediately connected with the audience with his story of early twentieth century fighter Jack Dempsey and how he found himself on the working end of a shovel in Salt Lake after losing a fight in New York. After a whirlwind courtship and marriage to a local “girl of the evening” and nursing some broken ribs back to health, Jack Dempsey found himself in San Francisco where he began the quest for the world boxing championship he held for many years. This tale was followed by Roger’s meeting and evolving friendship with Jackie Robinson, the first African-American to play major league baseball. It was all there, too; the racism demonstrated by many of the opposing players of the day as well as the fans and the concession made by Jackie Robinson in order to play professional baseball for the Brooklyn Dodgers. There was also the incredible story of PeeWee Reese who became one of Jackie’s lifelong friends after growing up in an intolerantly bigoted environment in Louisville, Kentucky. And then there was the one about hitting against a pitcher named Robert Frost; yes, the poet Robert Frost, in a pickup baseball game among a bunch of writers. That image alone was more than compensation for spending the evening listening to Roger Kahn.

But as much as I enjoyed hearing all of the incredible history that Mr. Kahn has lived and related through his prolific writings, for me the evening was just as much about two old guys from Brooklyn connecting and conversing like the good friends they may have been meant to be all along. What an incredible run they have both had in the always competitive, usually entertaining, sometimes dysfunctional world of professional sports, and what a legacy they both will leave behind when their run up the court or run around the bases is complete. They both have enriched our lives with their words and wit and have personified their chosen field to serve as mentors to those who follow them.

They Forgot To Tell Me

by Bonnie Lindsey

Back in 1977 I had open heart surgery to repair my heart. When they opened my heart, they found that they had to replace my mitral valve with a pigskin valve. The pigskin valves have to be replaced every eight years.

Exactly eight years later, in 1985, I started to get sick again. We knew that it was time for open heart surgery again.

So back in the hospital we went. I had two choices. Through medical science, they had come out with a metal valve. That metal valve would last a lifetime. With the metal valve, though, there were certain conditions and limitations which are: no motorcycles, no snow skiing, no water skiing, no jet skis, no boating, no rollerblading, no baseball, soccer, basketball, no ice skating, basically, no life.

So the reason I chose the metal valve is that I didn't have a life anyway!

With the metal valve, I would have to be on Coumadin, but, I would never have to have open heart surgery again—and I would rather not have open heart surgery again.

When you are on Coumadin, you have to be very careful so that you don't get bruises, because bruising causes blood clots which can lead to death. So to get the metal valve, I had to give up boating, waterskiing and motorcycle rides.

So I ask you—what would you choose?

Well, I did not want to have open heart surgery again, so we went ahead and put in the metal valve.

I came out of the surgery with no problems except that in semi-intensive care I got an infection around the valve. I had to stay in the hospital until the infection was under control. After two weeks, the infection was not doing very well. So I had to stay in the hospital for another week. I was so tired of being in the hospital and the food there was just horrible.

It seemed like the longer I was in the hospital, the more tired I was and the hungrier I got. There was never any rest in there. They say, "Rest and get well." But if you've ever been in the hospital, you know you don't get rest there because they keep coming at you. They

wake you up: “We need to weigh you. We need blood. We need your blood pressure. Take your pills. Take your sleeping pills.”

I ask you, when you are asleep, they wake you up. So why would you need sleeping pills? Then they would say, “Thank you, get some rest.”

A few hours would go by. You’d get to sleep again and—there they come again. More blood. Or they need to weigh me. It never stops. So there is no rest in there.

Finally, my back was sore and I was tired and hungry and I wanted out. I wanted to go home so I could be with my little girl. I talked to my doctor and I asked him if I could just take antibiotics at home. He told me that I could, but there was a catch. The doctor said that I couldn’t do antibiotics by pills, because the pills weren’t strong enough. I would have to learn how to do IVs by myself before I could go home. So I learned. And I went home. I had a nurse come by once a week to make sure the IVs were in right and doing good. I was getting better because the food was better at home, I could get rest, and I had my baby with me.

Then one night as I was trying to fall asleep, I started to hear this ticking noise. It was so loud I couldn’t go to sleep. So I talked to my doctor. He laughed. He told me what I was hearing was my own heartbeat. I said, “What? What do you mean?” He told me that I would have to take sleeping pills so that I could sleep, because the ticking sound would never go away.

This is the fun I have with people who don’t know that I have had open heart surgery. When people were around me and it was quiet, they would start looking round and I would start laughing and I would say, “What are you looking for?” They would answer, “Where’s the clock?” And I would say, “There is no clock in here.” And they would say, “What is the ticking sound?” I would laugh and say, “It’s my heart.”

They would ask, “What do you mean? Your heart?” So I told them that I had open heart surgery and had a metal valve put into my heart which ticks when it beats—all day and night for the rest of my life. Trust me, it’s obnoxious—but it’s a fun thing to watch peoples’ faces.

P.S. The ticking sound also gets louder when I open my mouth.

Rediscovery

by Carolyn Curran

I thought the 5 and 10 cent stores were all gone, but today I wandered into the old neighborhood to pick up that last sale on Christmas paper. As I strolled through the store, with rag mops, toilet plungers, bright red lipstick, cheap candy, dangle earrings and smelly soaps, I knew they were alive and well.

I could take my paper and leave, but something drew me to one aisle after another. I looked at all the sales and at last I came upon the lunch counter at the end of the store. I thought for sure it would be gone, but I could smell the hamburgers on the grill, the fries in the wire baskets and the homemade apple pie sitting on the counter. The smell pulled me toward the counter and a small round stool where I sat down next to an old lady with a hundred year old fur coat and a hat to match. She was wearing red lipstick and cheap white pearls. On the other side of me was a not so old man, who was smoking one cigarette after another.

I sat and watched the old lady who seemed to know no one. She kept rearranging her pearls over and over as she smoked and sipped her coffee as if in the presence of royalty.

How sad I felt. Had she no family to go to lunch with? Or no grandchildren to shop for? As my mind wandered, the not so old man caught my eye. He sat very still. He was well dressed and he too was drinking his coffee but seemed in another place and another time. Bright days, working days, days filled with joy and family who had left him alone in the 5 and 10 cent store. They had left him sitting beside an equally not so old woman who was grateful to take her Christmas paper and go home. She tried to forget the old 5 and 10 cent store she had wandered into today.

Counting her blessings and glad she had family to go home to, she tucked her Christmas paper under her arm and went home. Once again, she was trying to forget the 5 and 10 store she had wandered into this cold winter day.

When I Grow Old

by Carolyn Curran

When I grow old—

I will teach my grandchildren how to blow huge bubbles with
three sticks of gum.

When I grow old—

I will tell my girls what nasty teens they were.

When I grow old—

I shall stir my ice cream until it becomes porridge.

When I grow old—

I will stick my gum under the seats in the movies.

When I grow old—

I will put pin curlers in my hair.

When I grow old—

I will kiss my boys in public.

When I grow old—

I will go without a bra.

When I grow old—

I will pick the neighbor's tulips in the spring.

When I grow old—

I will fall asleep in church.

When I grow old—

I won't dust for days and I will leave the dishes in the sink.

When I grow old—

I'll wear red lipstick.

When I grow old—

I will put my head on my husband's shoulder and smell his
cologne and ask him to stop me from growing old.

Dans un Quartier de la Bastille

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.

In a neighborhood of the Bastille,
There is a third-floor flat with wooden window shutters
That open and close above the street,
A dark stairwell with stone steps worn into concave hollows,
And a broken fountain with a gargoyle sitting dry and dusty in a
corner of the ground floor landing.

Outside, parked cars are jammed bumper to bumper
On both sides of narrow Rue Keller.
Middle-aged men converse over coffee or beer
Behind the plate glass window of the gay bar
With the rainbow flag hanging above the entry,
And an ancient Asian woman presides over a tiny convenience
market near the dingy laundromat.

At the foot of the street, customers queue up on the wet sidewalk
Before the small patisserie
Where the pretty clerk conducts a brisk trade
In morning baguettes and croissants
And spills the change from each order into a saucer beside the cash
register.

In a grimy alcove of an office building on the Rue de la Rocquette
A couple of bums make their home with a moldy mattress and some
ratty quilts
And decorate the area with empty wine bottles and styrofoam food
cartons.

The shaft of the Colonne de Juillet rises into the sky in the center of
the Place de la Bastille,

While the great wheel of traffic rotates ceaselessly around it,
And customers sit at small tables in the sidewalk cafes surrounded by
plastic sheeting that shields them from the winter rain.
Near the entrance to the Metro a vendor dispenses newspapers and
magazines from a sodden kiosk,
While a young woman with unkempt hair and black combat boots
sits on the cold floor just inside the tunnel
And strums a guitar—badly—anticipating the tossing of coins into
the open instrument case beside her.

My Life

by Martha Carter

Martha Carter likes to read books.

I am going to start with January 1999 when my mother and I moved to Tempe, Arizona, to live for a while. My mother and I took the Greyhound Bus to Tempe, Arizona. When my mother and I got to Tempe, Arizona, we found a place to stay. We called the Apache Hotel. It was the first hotel with a vacancy when I went through the phone book. We asked the lady at the Greyhound Station how to get to the hotel. She told us to take a bus. We got on the bus and went to the Apache Hotel. We paid for a room with a kitchen in it. We stayed there for a long time.

In February, Chris and his roommate moved into the Apache Hotel. I made friends with Chris and his roommate. We were friends until March.

One day in March, Chris asked me to go to the movies with him. I told my mother that Chris and I were going to the movies. I would be back late. This was our first date. We dated each other until June, when we got a place in a different hotel. We stayed at that hotel until September 1st.

We left Arizona on September 2nd and moved to California. We stayed with his parents until October 2000, when we got a place of our own. Chris got a job at one of the laundromats in California as a janitor. In November 2000, I started going to the First Baptist Church of Oakhurst, California. I made lots of friends there. In June 2001, Chris and I got a job doing laundry for the kids at a summer camp. In June 2002, we did the summer camp laundry again.

One day in June, my sister called me and told me that my Uncle Don had died. I told my sister I did not have the money to come back

**One day in June,
my sister called me
and told me that my
Uncle Don had
died.**

for his funeral. I was very upset because I could not say goodbye to him. That Sunday, I was very upset because I could not go back to Salt Lake City, Utah, for my uncle's funeral. I went to church and talked to the pastor and all my friends to help me with the death.

In August 2002, I called my mom and told her I would be moving to Salt Lake City, Utah. The reason I wanted to leave California and move back to Salt Lake was because my boyfriend and I were having problems. On August 27, 2002, I came back to Utah. I told my mother and sister I was going to stay in a hotel until my mother and sister got me an apartment. I had an apartment on September 1st, 2002.

I wasn't doing anything in California about my high school diploma, so when I came back here my mom helped me get involved in it. In 2002, my mother, sister, and I went to Horizonte School until 2005. In January 2003, my mother got me involved in the Literacy Action Center.

I had left Utah in 1999 after the state took my three children into custody. When I got back in 2002, Helen would not let me see my kids because the state told her that I could not see my kids. It took from August 2005 until September 14, 2006, for Helen to let me see my kids again. Now I can see them every time I want and I can call them every time I want, too.

In September 2006, I got on housing and moved into the apartment on Helm Avenue. On February 17, 2007, Dale and I started going out with each other. I lived with him from February 17 to June 17 until the manager told him I could not stay with him because my name was not on his lease. I moved back to my apartment on Helm Avenue, but I still stayed with him on Fridays, Saturdays, and Mondays.

My Six Angels

by Marylee C. Clarke

Marylee C. Clarke wants:

1. to be a better Grandmother and friend to her Grandchildren and family,
2. to be able to read in front of people, and
3. to be kinder.

There are three special angels, my Auntie Baurbra and my two cousins. I called them to see how I could help them through their hard time because Uncle Viri was passing away at home with his loving family.

When I was calling to check on Uncle Viri's family, Auntie Baurbra had to go to a health appointment.

Auntie Baurbra, I'm sorry you are sick and having to go through your three surgeries now. Please remember the Doctors say, "No pain, no gain." Please, Auntie, don't let the pain overcome your common sense. Take your medicine. Do your exercises. Call the people that love you to keep your spirits up. Call your niece—I love you! I love you all very much. Your daughters understand God gave them the best parents, and their children the best grandparents, he could ever give and love.

It's awful for a death to happen for family to become closer. Auntie Baurbra and I talk a lot longer on the phone than we did before. I love our talks. But I, too, miss Uncle Viri. He's in heaven with Grandpapa and the other angels doing what God needs his angels to do.

Auntie Baurbra, I'm so proud to know another family member that can really give and show her feelings and not be a phoney baloney about them! That is such a gift.

It's awful for a death to happen for family to become closer.

I have always tried to be an honest and loving person. Even now, it doesn't look that way to my daughter but I still love her very, very much. When her bad time passes, I hope she will get my eight-year-old granddaughter Ayla and my seventeen-year-old grandson Gerald back into her life. They are both my angels. If our family doesn't come back together, I pray they know God and I love them and are there for them. God is good. If it doesn't happen, it isn't God's or my fault.

My sixth angel is a very special aunt, but she doesn't want to be written about or her name mentioned. Sometimes, I think we all feel like we don't fit in the family. She's one of them. (I know I don't feel like I fit in the family.)

I know you, the readers, don't know who this hidden angel is. I hope and pray she won't be offended. She calls me "my Florence Nightingale." My aunt is one of my angels because, when I first came here and times were beyond hard, she went out of her way to give me rides to the store and the hospital, hugs, and her shoulder to cry on. She would let me scream in her car where my daughter, sister, and Grandpapa wouldn't hear me if they woke up. Do you remember this, my special hidden angel?

I would like to thank all six of my special angels for being a part of my life, making my life a lot more special. This is an extra hard time for me right now. Thanks to my Jimmie, his family, and my true friends, counselors, doctors, and God, I will make it through this with lots of love to give and lots of love from others.

The Diversity in My Family

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.

The judgmental eye of the Latter Day Saints religion reigns down on my family. Such an eye holds those in contempt—those who don't practice the religion, those who drink and smoke, those who have pre-marital sex, and those who are gay. One family member in particular feels that wrathful eye more so than the others of us.

Meet Mike, “Howdy ya’ll. Out here trying to keep America moving” That’s his greeting to the message on his voicemail. Mike’s a contracted, professional truck driver. He’s also my brother, the best person I know.

Mike is an outdoorsman—he loves camping and grizzly bears, hiking and target shooting, and being away from the city. He’s an old-fashioned kind of cowboy always friendly and polite, helping stranded folks in broken down cars; he wears flannel shirts with Native American designs and Wrangler jeans with black cowboy boots; and he prefers listening to older country music like Merle Haggard and Waylon Jennings. He is a pleasure to converse with, and his chuckle, like a rippling creek—or rather, “crik” as he would call it—gathers you into its flow.

I didn’t discover these things about my brother until later in life. As children, we didn’t know each other too well. Seven years separate Mike and me in age, and he had more of a relationship with our younger siblings who are much closer to his age.

Not until 1994 did Mike and I begin our true brother and sister relationship. It kindled with a couple of phone calls I received from him while living in Washington and he in Utah.

his chuckle, like
a rippling creek
...gathers you into
its flow

The first time Mike called me, he had done so because he thought I was the only one that would listen to him. Recently, he told me, “I knew you would listen to me because you’re not wrapped up in religion, you’ve lived away from home, and have experienced other people and cultures.” He thought me to be more open-minded than some of our other family members.

When I think back to that phone call my stomach knots up all over again. My brother was desperate that day. I heard the frustration and anger in his voice. As he sobbed, I heard his pain—that ceaseless, deep-wrenching pain felt within the soul. “Mike, what’s wrong?”

“I’m having a hard time. Cyndi, I want to kill myself.”

I remember I thought to myself, Oh my hell, oh my hell, he’s in crisis. I’m not there! What am I going to do?

“Mike, why do you want to kill yourself?” I asked him. That’s when Mike told me his secret, something he had known since between first and second grade.

He spoke through gritted teeth, “I want to die because I’m gay!”

I had no idea about my brother being gay and had a hard time believing it. At first, I know I was in denial. My denial stemmed from the fact that Mike doesn’t look gay—at least not like the gay friends I had in high school or even my gay ex-brother-in-law. Mike isn’t feminine at all. He’s a cowboy.

Why does my brother want to die? I wondered. I couldn’t understand because I didn’t think there was anything wrong with being gay.

I asked Mike what brought all of this on. He told me that Mom had found out about his being gay, after one of our sisters found pornography in his room. Mom had asked about it and wanted to know why he had “those magazines.” He had answered her, “I like looking at the male physique.” Next, Mom had wanted to know if Mike found women attractive. Mike had replied, “Yes, but they’re not stimulating; men are stimulating. Mom, I’m gay.”

I knew what our mother’s next question would be. I could hear her asking Mike, “Well, how do you know?” Of course, Mike confirmed this, and he had answered saying he’s known since grade school. Then Mom had asked him if this was a choice? He had replied, “No. Why would one choose to live like this—to choose to have their life threatened, to be beaten?” Mother had persisted, telling Mike this was his choice, that heavenly father hadn’t created him like this. She told him to repent and come back to the church.

Mike had posed an important question to her, “Why do I want to belong to an organization that hates people like me?” Mother had

not answered, appeasing him instead by telling him that everyone at church thinks he's a fine young man.

That day my brother called me, he had two thoughts that really put the idea of suicide into his mind. Before he left Mom's house to call me, he had gone to her for comfort, but she broke out the religious tactics again—repent and come back to the church.

On the phone, Mike told me, "I feel like I'm the spawn of Satan. If homosexuality is against the book, then I'm against God. And if that's the case, then why should I live? I can't change. It's not a phase."

Oh no, here it is, I thought, the indoctrination. "Mike, you need to put that junk out of your mind. You're not the spawn of the devil, and I know you're not against God. I want you to live—you're my brother and I love you. You no longer go to church, so you don't have to follow their rules."

Such religious doctrines have created much chaos in our family. When our one sister announced her engagement in 1997, her and her husband-to-be were hesitant about Mike being around their boys once they had them. Mike responded, "You all look at me like I'm a purple alien. Just because I'm gay. You think I'll rub off on you or something. Your faith says it's wrong for me to be who I am."

Whenever Mike has been drinking, this particular sister won't allow him to play with her two sons. It sounds crazy, but I think she worries that Mike will molest her boys. Now, we're talking about my brother, the one who was ready to kill our father when he found out that his dad had molested his sisters! Just because Mike's gay doesn't mean he's a pedophile.

Religion was thrown in Mike's face again in 2003. At that time, he was involved with someone and our youngest sister and mother thought this guy wasn't right for him. Our youngest sister told him, "Mike, imagine the happiness you have right now, but ten times fold if you were doing all that was right." She further told him that being gay was all in his head just like when she had been depressed, and that he was the only one who could change that status. My brother told me, "It is times like this that I want to die."

Mike has tried talking to our two youngest sisters and to Mom about his feelings and his relationships. Such conversations seem to backfire because the LDS religion is introduced every time. Mike feels they don't care to hear about his relationships.

Even to this day, suicide seeps into my brother's mind. Yes, I worry, but I have to hold on—I have to have faith in what he agreed to 13 years ago, toward the end of that telephone conversation, when I had asked myself what I could do to help him.

First, I told him that he could call me any time of day or night. I would be there for him. I would listen and do whatever I could to help.

Then I asked him, "Mike, I need you to promise me something. I need you to promise me that you won't kill yourself. Will you make me this promise?"

"Okay."

"Mike, I need you to say the words to me. I know that you honor your word."

"I promise I won't kill myself," he said.

The best brother I could ever wish for is keeping his promise, for which I am extremely grateful. A few years ago, Mike told me that I am his angel, and that whenever he hears Willie Nelson's song, "Angels Flying to Close to the Ground," he always thinks of me and of the day I helped him save himself.

Recently, I asked Mike if he's ever afraid—afraid that he'll be the target of gay bashing, of a hate crime. I told him that I worry about something happening to him, ever since the lynching of Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming. He told me, "No, I'm not afraid. I want to open people's minds."

Mike, my other brother, and I feel like the "outsiders" in our family. We feel unaccepted because of who we are and what we believe or don't

believe. I realize Mike is looking for people to accept diversity—not just homosexuality. I think acceptance of diversity must begin within the family, become part of the schools and churches, and spread outward into our communities. I believe diversity is a good thing, and I think it is at its best when it's allowed to thrive. My brothers and I hold out on this idea, hoping that one day it will happen in our family.

**Why does my
brother
want to die? I
wondered.**

A Proselytizer in Las Vegas

by David Bastian

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

The Church. The True Church. God's Truest Church in God's Favorite Country. It didn't send its elders out into the world looking like slobs. No! The Church dressed their boys in somber suits and crisp dress shirts that showed the world that they meant business and that they took their roles as missionaries serious. Elder Holcombe's suit was the same one he had worn the day he left on his mission, the same one he had worn everyday since, the same suit he would wear for the rest of his efforts as an elder: a white, short-sleeved dress shirt, dark blue slacks, and a jacket to match.

Holcombe pulled on his pants, tucked in his shirt, and then took his yellow and red striped tie from the hook it hung on. It was the first real tie he had ever owned, the first tie that wasn't a clip-on. His father had bought it for him when he turned twelve. "You're a man now," Brother Holcombe had said when he had presented it to his son, "It's time for a real tie."

Elder Holcombe cinched the tie around his neck, and then pulled on his jacket. Into his breast pocket he clipped the black name badge with etched, white letters that read, "Elder Holcombe," and right below that, "Missionary for The Church."

At that moment, Holcombe's gaze turned away from his image in the mirror to the window at his left shoulder just as a light flicked on in his next-door neighbor's house below him. His breath caught in his throat as his eyes caught a quick flash of auburn hair before it disappeared from his view.

A flash of auburn hair in the morning is rare, but not impossible. Roughly two percent of the population has some form of red hair. Adding color from a bottle, the chances of seeing that particular hue on a next-door neighbor's head is better than unlikely. But this auburn hair wasn't just some random glimpse of that color. Elder Holcombe knew the body that auburn hair was attached to, and he found himself caught in a daydream sparked by the sight.

He imagined the hot water of his neighbor's shower, running down her hair and cascading in tiny rivers over her ample breasts. He imagined soapsuds just covering her wonderful and round rear end.

Daydreaming about wonderful rear ends and ample breasts was against the mission rules, even if those beautiful sights were covered in soapsuds, so Elder Holcombe tried to snap himself out of it. He was a Missionary for The Church for crying out loud! This fact came with duties and those duties didn't include fantasizing about his next-door neighbor, no matter how rare her hair color or how attractive he found her. He was a missionary for The Church and that meant he didn't dilly-dally, he didn't waste time, and he especially didn't think about naked, curvy bodies. In an effort to squelch his reverie, he imagined her early excursion was not to the shower at all, but instead to the bathroom sink to get a glass of water. It did no good. The image of her drinking from a glass at her sink was still a really sexy one for his mind's eye.

**They were
three minutes late
getting out the
door, and that was
unacceptable.**

"Are you staring at the neighbor's house again?" his companion called out from the kitchen. "No," Holcombe lied. He heard Elder Moore snort in disgust. "I don't think I need to remind you of rule number five, always center your mind on your mission. I've always thought that fantasizing about girls was outside the bounds of

that rule," Moore said, and Holcombe mocked his words to his reflection in the mirror. Moore was right, however. It was rule number five that addressed this issue, not to mention rule number thirty-three, seventy-seven, seventy-eight, seventy-nine, and eighty.

Holcombe caught his companion give a quick glance at his watch and he knew the corners of Elder Moore's mouth were turning down into a frown. He didn't need to be told where that frown was coming from, he knew what Moore was thinking; the look on his face said it all. They were three minutes late getting out the door, and that was unacceptable. While his companion struggled with their sticky lock, Holcombe gazed at their neighbor's house once again. No light was coming from it now, no sign of any movement from inside either.

Maybe she had gone back to bed. Holcombe thought of her tall, shapely body sleeping inside that house he was not allowed to enter. Ever.

Holcombe returned to his forbidden fantasy for an instant of bliss. He imagined the way her silk pajamas must cling to her curves, the way her auburn hair would fall across her pillow, and the way her lips surely looked as she slept. Then he was pulled from his daydream by the click of the lock and his own shame. The two elders walked down the short flight of stairs to begin their day.

Beyond the missionaries' front door was The Work, beyond it was The Field; a field the Elders' leaders assured them, was ripe for harvest. From house to house, neighborhood to neighborhood, the missionaries' day had them knocking on doors that seldom answered in their relentless search for some Las Vegasite who felt something was missing from his or her life. They walked the pavement as a duo, never apart, never out of those suits, prepared for the moment when one of those Vegasians would open their door and let them in. They walked the streets and neighborhoods, and they stuck out like a neon sign in the desert, dressed in so much clothing as the temperature climbed to triple digits and the asphalt turned soft and squishy.

Walk, walk, walk. Knock, knock, knock. Walk, walk, walk. Being a missionary was rough work. Much harder than middle school, much more daunting than high school, and twice as terrifying as the prospect of college. Being a missionary was, without a doubt, the most difficult thing Elder Holcombe had ever done. And he had only been doing it for two weeks.

Maybe he woke a few minutes later than he should, maybe too often he skipped his morning prayer, maybe he gazed too long at his auburn haired neighbor's house or imagined her naked now and then, but he was giving the whole thing a go.

He was spending his days walking the streets. He was spending his days knocking on doors. Heaps of doors knocked, heaps of neighborhoods walked, heaps of hours spent in the service of The Lord. It all wiped him out but he was doing this whole mission thing. It was a means to an end, he would remind himself, even if it was a mean means to that end.

Evie's Story

by Chanel Earl

Chanel Earl likes soda and personality tests. Her favorite candy is green and she hopes someday to be the first ballerina on the moon.

Evie sat back into the tall weeds and stared up at the yellow leaves of the cottonwood trees. A beam of sunlight lit up the grass next to her where she had avoided placing her head. She could see the light coming through the trees, and although the tiny insects cut their way through the beam with ease, she knew that if it reached her face it would slice into her, like liquid gold.

**Big trees meant
old trees, and
old trees meant
magic trees.**

She sat up, searching the area for its hidden mysteries. The trees were ancient giants that—for a nine year old—stood quite a distance from home. They shot up from the horizon violently and irresistibly, the biggest trees that Evie had ever seen. Big trees meant old trees, and old trees meant magic trees.

She walked slowly around the line of sandstone that lay, half buried, in the center of the trees. Balancing carefully, she jumped from stone to stone, swinging her hands to keep from falling to the soft, grassy earth below. The farmhouse that once stood there had vanished over a hundred years ago, along with the people that built it.

As she circled the foundation Evie quietly sang her favorite song, “Lullaby and good night, lovely Evie sleep tight.” She could never remember all of the words, because they were always changing. Every time her mother had sung her to sleep the words had been different.

“With roses hmm hmm hmm, I love you good night.” She explored the foundation with delight, looking for a sign. “Go to sleep, hmm.” She turned back to the trees, looking for fruit, but found none, only flickering leaves.

"It has to be here," she thought, scattering the cradle-song from her mind.

In Sunday School last week, she had learned about the tree of life.

"If Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit," she remembered, "they would have lived forever."

"Forever," Evie thought, "forever, forever." The idea kept running through her head, "If someone eats the fruit of the oldest tree," she thought, "the tree that God made very first, before anyone was even on the earth, they would live forever."

She looked up at the trees again. Some of the leaves were still green, but most had already turned gold, a few had fallen to the ground where, below them, a million other leaves, from a hundred other autumns, had already turned to dust. These were the oldest trees she had ever seen. She couldn't even wrap her arms around the small-est of them. But as hard as she looked, no fruit.

"Evie," her father called from the long white porch that wrapped itself so gracefully around their country farmhouse. "Evie, come home."

She took one last look around the grove. "Where are you, fruit?" she asked, "Show yourself!"

"E-e-e-vie-e-e," her father called again, this time with a tone of worry in his voice, "come home!"

"I'm coming," she called back, as she left her garden, running down the gradual slope toward home. The air parted as she swept quickly through it, scattering pollen and grasshoppers across the landscape.

"I was beginning to think you had left us," Evie's father said as she came panting in. "I thought maybe you had headed off for Florida again, to find that fountain of eternal youth."

Evie looked at her father playfully as they entered the kitchen. "It's there," she re-minded him. "The Indians told some explorers about it way back before there was even America. And if you'd let me go, I'd be back already with some of the water."

"I'm sorry," he said, "I just can't let you go without the proper protection. There could be crocodiles or even real dragons guarding the fountain. You know, to make sure only the pure in heart reach it."

"I'd take my chances that they would let me pass, and if they wouldn't, I'd battle 'em all. I'd battle a thousand dragons to get to that fountain."

He sighed, and said heavily, "I know you would, but I don't know if it would help. I mean, the water would be refreshing after

battling all those dragons, but I imagine...” Evie listened closely, she always listened when people talked about what they were imagining. “I imagine that it wouldn’t really stop death, just maybe give us the strength to accept it. It happens to everybody Evie, it’s like growing up.”

A rare silence entered the room as Evie tried to figure out what that had to do with imagination. “Well,” she said finally, “maybe I don’t think growing up is such a great idea either.”

Evie’s father handed her the T.V. tray he had been preparing. Chicken broth, sal-tines and rice pudding filled up the white china dishes. The family’s best silver had been placed next to the soup on a cream linen napkin; a beautiful white china bud vase carried a deep red rose.

Evie picked up the tray ceremoniously and carried it down the long hallway into her parents’ room.

“Mom,” she spoke softly, “Mom, wake up, I’ve brought you dinner.”

Her mother tried to smile as Evie fed her a spoon-ful of chicken broth.

Evie’s mother lay in a large, white bed, breathing heavily. She opened her eyes slowly, smiling a faint and exhausted smile. Although Evie’s parents had chosen the brightest room in the house for their own, thick black curtains lined windows at the far end of the room, shielding its occupants from the invasive light.

Evie never got near the gray machine standing in the corner. It’s constant hum-ming noise irritated her. As her mother sat up, Evie could see her thin arms, covered with tiny puncture wounds that would never heal. A fresh needle was inserted at the wrist, held in place with clear, yellowish tape.

“Hi sweetie,” she said, straining to make the words come out. Evie could smell the medicine her mother had been forced to take earlier that day. It smelled like the stuff she used to clean the bathroom. “Light? Please...”

It was all she could say. Evie walked slowly over to the bed and set the tray down on her mother’s lap, taking extra caution not to spill. She then moved quietly over to the window and parted the drapes a few inches.

“Daddy made you rice pudding,” Evie said, “because he knows it’s your fav’rit. And yesterday I picked that rose for you when we were over at the Millers. I hope you like it.” She paused, waiting for a response. Her mother tried to smile as Evie fed her a spoon-ful of chicken broth.

“When we were at the Millers I talked to Kate,” Evie continued. “Kate’s the older one, who’s already in high school, and she said that in her health class they were learn-ing about some scientists who had these mice. And normally they only live three years or maybe a little less even, but the scientists did something to make it so the cells of the mice don’t act normal, they don’t divide and they’re always renewed or something. So they live to be like thirty or thirty-nine years old, the mice I mean, not the scientists.”


Evie was excited now and she smiled, eyes filled with hope.

“Don’t you see?” she said. “Don’t you see what this means? We could talk to these scientists and they could help you. They could make you live, like, years longer. And we could go up to the trees together next time, and you can eat hamburgers, and at night you can tuck me in and sing to me like you used to.”

Evie’s mother stopped nibbling at her saltines, trying not to get crumbs on her new cotton sheets. “I love you Evie,” she whispered, and, using all her energy she added, “but I’m... too tired... talking...”

Evie backed out of the room. She continued down the hallway, passing her father. She ran around the corner and up the steep stairs until she reached her own dark room—her sanctuary. She slammed the door and fell onto her bed, quietly sobbing.

“God,” she cried into her pillow, “Jesus, angels, please, help my mother. She’s tired!” Evie’s sobs didn’t soften; they grew. Her pillow collected the tears and saved them, as if for some mystical purpose, some elixir of life. “Please, please, please God, don’t take my mother away, heal her, heal her like in the stories. I need her, please, please, please.”



**She tried to
breathe, to control
the sobs, to open
her eyes.**

She tried to breathe, to control the sobs, to open her eyes. She prayed for peace or magic or some ancient priesthood or snake oil or anything. "Please," she continued, "save her."

She heard a knock at the door.

"Evie," her father said. "Evie can I come in?"

He cracked the door and peeked in, waiting for a sign of consent.

"Yeah," she said, wiping away her tears as she continued to cry.

He sat down next to his daughter. He didn't speak, but tried first to breathe, closing his eyes and opening them. He wrapped his strong arms around her, still unable to speak.

Evie climbed onto her father's lap. "Lullaby and good night, thy mother's delight," she sang, breaking the silence, "Bright angels beside my darling abide."

Evie's father swallowed hard before singing along. His soft baritone cracked and his eyes watered. "They will guard thee at rest, thou shalt wake on my breast. They will guard thee at rest, thou shalt wake on my breast."

Evie thought for a second and then, after giving her dad a hug, left the room. She walked out onto the porch, and stopped. She looked west at the giant trees that were once going to save her. "Where's mother's fruit?" she thought, as she faced the sun.

She remembered what her mother had told her last summer, before she was sick. They had sat on that same porch on a summer evening, eating ice cream. Her mother had worn a printed floral dress, and her dark hair had hung freely. "Don't look into the sun Evie," she had said between huge bites of a chocolate sundae. "If you look at it too long it will hurt your eyes. You could even go blind."

Today she stared into it, her eyes wide. The bright molten disc shone on the horizon, red, yellow, orange. The clouds burned; the air hummed. The great cottonwoods were on fire, eaten up by the feverish sun. She kept staring, looking into it, past it. She cried. As the light flowed into her aching eyes she tried to look through it. She looked past it, for what was behind it: cool, dark space, Shangri-La, Heaven.

The sun set, the moon rose.

My Trip to England

by Kate Cushing

Kate Cushing is writing a song and drawing pictures for it. Her friends played basketball together; she used to play softball.

My mom, dad, and I, along with some friends of our family went on Deseret bookstore trip to England in July 2007. We were part of a tour group of 60 people.

It rained most of the time on our trip, but that didn't stop us from going places, though we were always rushing. We went to some film locations used in the Harry Potter films. One location in London was the train station where Harry Potter caught the train to Hogwarts at Gate 9 $\frac{3}{4}$. Later we saw the new movie, "Harry Potter: The Order of the Phoenix." We also saw the play, "The Sound of Music."

We visited a lot of castles. We went to Buckingham Palace and saw the changing of the guard. We saw Hampton Court, but it rained so hard we couldn't go out to see tennis courts or the maze. We also went to Glouster Castle and to Warwick Castle where I had my picture taken with a guard.

My mom and I, along with others in our tour group play acted Henry 5. I played percussion.

It rained so much that the park at Stratford Upon Avon got flooded. I saw some ducks in the river, but from all the rain the river overflowed.

I got to see England where my brother served his mission a long time ago.

My Trip to Mexico

by Jessica May Casselman

Jessica May Casselman liked her trip to Mexico—it was very fun. She'd like to go back again. She also likes to talk in front of groups.

The day before our trip to Mexico I was excited. I had all my things packed and ready to go. I went shopping with my family to get food for the drive down. I made sure I got Cheesits for the trip. After all the running around, I fell asleep.

The next day, we were on the road at 6:00 AM. My mom, stepdad, and I were in a truck. My brother and his family (my brother, Khai, his girlfriend, Aryann, and my little nephew, Khai) were in a car. The drive down was very long and I kept falling asleep. Wow! I was amazed that after 36 hours I was with my family in Mexico.

While we were down there, we stayed in a big two-bedroom trailer on my mom and my stepdad's property. The property had many trees, including lime trees. We had running water and sewer. We had gating on all the windows and doors so people couldn't get in. We had a washing machine, but we dried our clothes outside on the metal fence.

We did many things in Mexico. We went to the beach. We ate tacos at a Mexican restaurant. We ate ice cream as we window shopped at little stores at an outdoor mall. We shopped at the hardware store to fix our leaky toilet.

One day, my parents went back to my mom's favorite store—the hardware store—to replace our front door. We had to replace it because my mom had slammed the door very hard and the door had fallen off its hinges. (Or maybe she just wanted another chance to go shopping at her favorite store!)

The best part of our trip to Mexico was being with my nephew Khai, who cried and cried for McDonald's. So we drove all the way downtown for a cheeseburger.

An American Junkie's Memoir, Volume 3

by Jonathan Long

Jonathan Long is currently a student at the University of Utah, in his Junior year, pursuing a career as a journalist. He has been working as a mentor for the DiverseCity Writing Series Poetry Group since August.

When the needle hit my vein for the first time I screamed in uninhibited pain. I knew that life would never again be the same as the outline of the door I was staring at become fuzzy and abstract. I felt the rush of blood seduce my mind into feeling unattached and I became familiar with the sensation of floating away, my eyelids became heavy and tears welled inside my eyes. The chair in which I sat seemed to dissolve underneath my body and I felt an uncontrollable sense of fear, anger, and betrayal claw across my chest as my heart constricted into a knot.

As I looked up to my mother, I knew instantly our relationship had changed. I felt betrayed that she could willingly submit her son to such agonizing pain. Only years later did I understand that it was just part of life, getting shots in doctor's offices. That's what they do. But for a long time after, I remember feeling wary and untrusting of my mother. Not because she had willingly submitted me to the madwoman wielding a needle that had to be at least 12 inches long and injecting into my body some foreign substance, but because of the aftermath.

After it was over I remember flinching away from her as she stiffly reached out to try and comfort me. Not even aware of the child minded horror I had built up about the ordeal. I remember the look of pain that flashed across her face for the briefest moments, when she realized that she had no idea how to show any comfort to my

I remember
the look of pain
that flashed across
her face

suffering, and I vividly remember as she turned away. I remember not understanding why she had left me so vulnerable, she was supposed to be my mother, my protector, my security and after that moment she failed me in some way forever.

"I am so sorry that he is such a handful, sometimes I don't know what to do with him," she said.

These were my mother's words, trying to offer up some sort of excuse for what apparently was my appalling and unforgivable behavior to the nurse who had just administered the shot and looked panic stricken after her half hour battle with me; whether it was because she couldn't believe how I had acted or how my mother acted I never could tell.

"Oh, don't worry," said the nurse, looking as if she could not get out of the room fast enough.

As the nurse quickly gathered her equipment in efforts to evacuate the room as fast as possible, my mother offered up a contrasted smile of embarrassment and apology. I sat there in my chair, holding my cotton ball bandaged arm and head held low as my mother turned on me once the nurse evacuated the room.

"I can not believe how awfully you behaved. You embarrassed me to no end, I was mortified. Little boys do not act that way, little boys do not cry and scream about a shot. Get your coat, we're leaving."

My step-father, who had been waiting in the lobby, looked furious as we entered the room. He grabbed me by the arm, sternly marching me out of the doctor's office just as fast as he could. Once in the hallway he slapped me across my right cheek. My mother just looked on stiff nosed and apparently ashamed, while dragging my little brother in tow.

"I could hear you yelling all the way in the waiting room, what the hell is the matter with you," he said in a quivering voice of rage, kept humble only because of the public hallway we were in.

I knew I was in for it. I knew there was no excuse good enough at that point, or what seemed in my young mind, ever possibly given up for my irrational fear. But it wasn't irrational to me. I was scared of that giant needle and that these strange people were going to put strange things inside my body. I didn't understand in my young mind that it was ultimately and supposedly for my own good. I just knew I was scared and did not want that damn needle anywhere near me.

"Get in the car," my step-father coldly said, "I don't want to hear a sound from you on the way home. You have completely embarrassed

this family in front of all those people.”

Who cares, I thought, what does it matter what they think. How come it doesn't matter how I feel, why am I wrong for being scared? I was still scared too, because I didn't know how mad the old man would still be by the time we got home, scared that there was more to come even after the backhand to my cheek in the hallway outside the doctor's office.

I wasn't sorry though; I didn't think that I had done anything wrong. I remember feeling at that moment that I didn't even know who these strange people were in the front seat of the car. I felt betrayed and very, very alone. I never once said anything on the way home; I never even made a noise. Although occasionally a lone tear would leak out of my eye as I listened to them discuss what they should do with me.

“I just don't know what to do with him; he just keeps acting out more and more,” my mother said to my step-father, and then turning on me, “What is wrong with you? How can you act like that and embarrass us like that. Don't you feel embarrassed by the way you acted in there? WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH YOU?”

She turned back around, and the rest of the ride home was doused in angry silence and my newly born defiance and loathing for these strangers in the front seat. I told myself I couldn't trust any one from here on out, that what I thought and felt were mine and mine alone. I would never again need someone to protect me.

When we got home, just as I feared, the old man had a couple more slaps in store for me so as to remind me that what I did was wrong, to remind me that what those strange people in the doctor's office thought was more important to my parents than their son. I took my punishment with a stiff upper lip and never uttered a sound.

“Now you're a tough guy, huh,” said the old man, “but you're scared of a little needle. You acted like a little girl in that office.”

After it was over, I voluntarily went to bed. I didn't want any part of that family, so I determinedly strode down the hallway, turning around to see my little brother watching me from the hallway. I slowly shut the door on his curious look, thinking to my self that from here on out, I would be a man.

America



by Jonathan Long

(A poem inspired by Allen Ginsberg)

America when will you repent for the lies of your youth

America when will you salvage a once great definition of yourself that
is still written in your text books of history.

America you sold your youths' souls for minimum wage benefit and
high rise profile and told your poor they could do no better.

America your fabled streets of paved gold of 19th century myth have
been remodeled into mini malls, franchised fast food, and payday
loan centers crowned with Costcos and Wal-mart capitals, built in
testament to the hundred dollar bill, "our lord and savior."

America you are the land of high priced gas and forgotten ideals.

America you are the land of consumer demand and bankrupt
morality.

America you are in a state of disrepair,

I can no longer abide in you America,

your America of today.

An America of Homeland Security and terror alert levels,

An America of warrantless wire taps and semi-automatic armed
airport security,

cleverly guised under a false sense of safety.

America you are a country in debt and I am your piggy bank.

America you let corrupt politicians and multi-national corporations
dictate your policy, justice, and economy.

America when will you awaken from this wakeless dream you have
subjected me to.

When will you be worthy of your million man immigrant army that
founded this country.

America, my mother, my brother, my teacher, my home,

I am disillusioned with you,

with you and your war mongering administration,

with your obsessive need to be petroleum dependent, while your land
and people wither in decay.

America are you aware that your streets are drenched in blood.
High school students murder inside education, 33 dead in violence
yesterday in your university halls of higher education.

America your children are sick. They have become the killers of the
streets and the suit and tie guys in succession of your staff.

America I love you, but can not stand you at times. You are my home,
yet I feel smothered in your confines. You have taught me all I know,
yet I know nothing and am mistrustful from your deceptive ways.

America you rot with decay in city streets and majestic mountains.
America you fester with infection of profiteering and war waging.

America you have lost your compassion and heart for caring.
America you have replaced independence and justice with closed
minds and corruption.

America you are sick, your future is uncertain, and your wells are
poisoned with unrestrained pollution.

Where have you gone land of liberty, land of the free, and home of the
brave?

Where is the America I knew as a boy? Where is that swelling pride
I once felt on your Fourth of July? America why have you gone
missing?

Can't you remember?

No America, I will not apologize for my actions.

Will you?

I will not apologize for my thoughts.

Will you?

I will not apologize for my words.

Will you?

America you are unwell,
and I wish you would get better.

Diary of a Bulimic

by Christine Wink

Christine Wink enjoys writing flash fiction, poetry and anecdotes. She has two cats, *Italics* & *Ampersand*; in their spare time they fight over the remote. Her other hobbies include opening and closing the refrigerator door, trying to find out what that switch on the bedroom wall goes to (the one that doesn't turn anything on/off or affect the nearby outlet); sometimes they just look out the window and watch the world go by.

Step 1. Admitted that we were powerless—that our lives had become unmanageable

If you look up the word bulimia in the dictionary you will find the first definition reads: *An eating disorder, common especially among young women of normal or nearly normal weight, that is characterized by episodic binge eating and followed by feelings of guilt, depression, and self-condemnation. It is often associated with measures taken to prevent weight gain, such as self-induced vomiting, the use of laxatives, dieting, or fasting.*

Stereotypically bulimics are thin petite girls, full of grace and beauty. I am a bulimic and I can tell you that definitely doesn't describe me. Of course anyone suffering from bulimia might say he or she is overweight, but in my case it's true. I am 5'5", weigh 145 lbs, waddle when I walk and in my early teen years took great pride in having perfect teeth. I now have four cavities and my wisdom teeth have rotted. It's difficult to prevent when you're purging at least once a week. I binge and purge on a regular basis. I am full of doubt and woe. People tell me to love myself, take better care of myself, eat healthy and exercise. They must be oblivious to the phenomena of craving. I crave food when I have eaten a full meal or nothing at all. I crave food

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when I am happy, when I am sad, when I am drunk, when I am sober; the list goes on and on. People talk about self-control, acupuncture, hypnotherapy etc. I have tried them all and none of them have had a lasting effect.

I feel weak and tired most of the time. It sounds strange to say this but I'm a perfectionist. I know how contradictory to reality that sounds, but it's true. I want everything to be perfect, the part in my hair, the picture hanging on the wall, and so on. But when things get dodgy as they often do, I can't be bothered. I can't bear the weight of the world on my shoulders. I shrug it off by indulging in food, alcohol, drugs, TV—you name it; I'm addicted to it. I want an escape and haven't got the stomach for offing myself, or I'd choose that out.

Step 2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity

I spoke to Jessica today. She's aware of my situation and advised me to pray. It's not that I don't believe in prayer. As I explained to her, it's a matter of feeling much like the cowardly lion when he approached the Wizard of Oz, to ask him for some courage. "Imagine going to the principal's office, of your own accord, and confessing all your misdeeds," I explained. "I hate to break it to you, but I think he already knows," she replied. I laughed out loud for the first time in weeks. She said, "It's good to see you smile again and hear you laughing." From there I went to the grocery to pick up a few staples; milk, eggs, ice cream—snigger chortle. As I perused the shelves and drifted from one dept to another every high calorie item seemed to scream my name.

Normally I don't notice the music playing overhead but I distinctly recall the lyrics: *You gotta talk to the One who made you, talk to the One who understands, talk to the One who gave you all the light in your eyes*, I put down the package of Oreo cookies and ran to the car. Rain pelted my windshield and I began to pray. My words accompanied by my tears flowed unabated, followed by a sense of peace. Upon arriving home I mechanically reached for a bottle of water pills, in the cabinet above the stove. If you're a believer, you may recognize the force that stopped me in my tracks and calmed the uneasiness in my soul, causing me to shut up the cabinet door without having retrieved any of its contents. If you're not, you can chalk it up to inner strength, positive physiological effects of crying etc.

Breaking



by David M. Hoza

“Breaking, like the Waves at Malibu”
—Joni Mitchell

Letting go
of ‘people’ as they funnel through
your life,

Departing as if Love
somehow addressed
the urgency to go,

And poured its energy
into haste.

Everybody goes,
they go to fight,
they go to war,

They go on to others,
they go on
to living endless days
in the wonder and pleasure
of others...

And I join hands
with fear and impatience,
loneliness and yearning

Seeking an elementary
square dance,

Listening
to the chatter,
frustrated wishes,

Dismayed statements
over lost
women friends,

Sexuality,
and more sexuality

Attached to colors,
looks, faces,

To body shapes
and styles;

To reveals, to friendliness
to all the things that say
nothing of friendship,

So shifty and
uncertain,

While sex
in runway turns
forceful and assertive, lusty and attractive.

Whether the beautiful
parametrics of friendship apply,
or not.

Grandpa Vern aka My Bill Gates

by Kenneth Koldewyn

Kenneth Koldewyn is usually blonde, his favorite color is orange and he likes swimsuits from France. Most of his time is spent sipping coffee and imagining the amazing things he could accomplish if he were athletic. You can learn more about Ken and other useless information at his personal blog, snapshotofken.com.

One of my earliest memories I have of Grandpa Vern is catching him skinny-dipping with Grandma in the hot tub at their old house. I feel like it's important to begin this story with what I refer to as "Wild Grandpa" because for years following that incident I believed that Grandma and Grandpa took baths in their hot tub and thought, "How cool would that be?" It would be too time consuming to recount all the times I fantasized about having my own hot tub and beach mural in my basement.

Writing about Grandpa is hard because there are so many good things to talk about. I picture everyone in the Koldewyn family staring at a blank computer screen, pounding their fists into the air because they can't decide if they should write about how Grandpa's homegrown Sweet Corn tasted similar to total bliss, that his nose was always behind a camera, or how seemingly unnatural it was for Grandpa to know more about computers than some college students in their twenties.

That last computer part was considerably important to me, because I consider Grandpa to be the sole reason I ever became interested, arguably obsessed, with computers. It's hard to say whether or not that statement would be considered a compliment; to be responsible for yet one more member of the Geek Squad. But I figure it's better than holding someone responsible for my good looks or athletic ability.

When Grandpa upgraded to a new Packard Bell system, equipped with Windows 95, multi-tasking, and a free Wheezer music video, he gave my family his old system and introduced me to the world of point-and-click solitaire, the command line and Windows 3.11. This system was rad: It had about four gigabytes of hard drive space, a plate-sized floppy drive and a fourteen kilobyte per second fax/

modem that, at the time, seemed capable of hacking into the United States Military Defense System.

I think back on these moments and I still feel an incredible amount of joy from that time in my life. Before Grandpa's computer, I could only stare at shiny screen savers in the electronics department at RC Willey and hope that some day, I could stare at one of those monitors from my own bedroom and perhaps create a masterpiece of digital art using Microsoft Paint. With Grandpa's computer, all of that became a reality and once I discovered America Online and keywords I thought were the World Wide Web, my virtual-reality seemed limitless.

After the computer, visiting Grandpa became like visiting the future. I remember daydreaming about things like Windows 98 and the many programs Grandpa was using to edit photos and create

entire landscaped maps of the sprinkling system at the local golf course. All of this was amazing to me and visiting with Grandpa and his computer became somewhat like starring in a Mission Impossible movie with Tom Cruise; everything seemed high tech and impossibly possible.

Later on our roles would eventually change, and Grandpa would begin to ask me questions about the computer. I would normally

never let anyone in on this, but most of the questions he asked I didn't know the answers to; this isn't all that surprising considering how often I confuse the north with the south. But we'd sit down together anyway, troubleshooting through hoops of trial and error; which is not at all unlike putting together pieces of a puzzle. Some of the very basic computer commands and functions I learned in those moments, and luckily, I never inadvertently re-formatted his hard-drive or took it apart to see whether or not it would still power on afterwards.

It's strange to think about this now because computers have become such an enormous part of my life. I feel so proud that Grandpa played such a large role in this part of my life, even though before now I don't think I ever considered how large of an impact he

**There's a thin line
between my life
with computers and
homelessness.**

actually had. I shudder to think what my life would be like had I not been introduced to disk operating systems or phrases from the green pixilated version of Wheel of Fortune. There's a thin line between my life with computers and homelessness.

Even now, as I'm typing this, I feel a very personal connection with this computer and the things I learned at Grandpa's. It's not just the drag-and-drop, photo editing, or word-processing, but the very experience of learning new things with such a great man. Education has been such a chore to me, perhaps because it is so much a singular activity, but computer technology has continued to dominate my attention. I like to think that those moments with Grandpa are partly, if not wholly, the reason for that interest and slight obsession with graphical user interfaces.

To list everything that Grandpa has done to inspire me, from his gardening skills to the delicate and precious way he treated his wife would be an impossible monumental task. I fear the extinction of forests if those things were ever put to paper, so I'll simply leave it at this, with just one word that often isn't said enough.

Thanks Grandpa.

Friends— This Is What Friends are About

by Jimmie L. Freeman, Jr.

Jimmie L. Freeman, Jr. likes to write stories and read books. He likes to do math and collect Godzilla movies. He likes to watch the Superbowl game on TV.

Harry and Joey are good friends who work together at Kennecott. Harry invites Joey to the Superbowl. They go in Harry's car. Harry buys tickets for the front row.

At the game, Joey buys a football cup for each of them. He also buys a jumbo burger for himself and for Harry. They each have nachos.

They cheer for different teams. Harry cheers for the Denver Broncos. Joey wants the Dallas Cowboys to win.

The Dallas Cowboys win 46-22 so Joey is happy. It takes 25 minutes to walk to the car. As they walk to the car, they stop to get some more drinks. They meet some other friends from their neighborhood. They stop and talk about the ball game. The friends tease each other about the game. That's what friends are about.

My Little Bird

by Carolyn Curran

Thirty... Thirty-one... Thirty-two... Thirty-three.

No, No, Let me feel the long gold strands flip through my fingers as I
braid one over another.

Let me see the light blue eyes look up at me as I tie the lovely ribbons
at the ends.

Come let me lay your braids on your young shoulders as I smell the
sweetness that rises from your head.

Thirty-three, no, no.

Let me tie the bow on your new dress and button the back that small
fingers cannot reach.

Let me buckle the slender black patent-leather shoes that shine as you
dance around the room.

Thirty-three, no, no.

Let me watch you as you sit cross-legged in the window seat reading.
Let me peek into your room as you sleep with your eyes half-open in
anticipation of the new day.

Thirty-three, no, no. Not you.

Come stay young with me.

Hold my hand. Hold tight.

We shall never grow old. Our hearts, our souls, our minds shall soar
like birds and never grow old.

But shall stay young forever more.

Thirty-three. Fifty-nine. One-thousand.

No. No. Not us.

One Flirtatious Night

by Deborah Young

Deborah Young is glad that she met Bob on that fortuitous night. Bob has been a constant source of joy in her life for the past thirty years.

Birthdays. Anniversaries. Holidays. Many possibilities, many opportunities to celebrate! My most special occasion is a date that is meant only for my husband and I. The occasion? The anniversary of our first meeting. My husband has the date etched into his memory. Every year he brings me a single red rose and a card on that special date.

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I, however, don't remember the date. I only remember the day—the Saturday before Easter in 1977. Because Easter changes dates every year, I can never remember when we really met. Was it in March or April? The date catches me off guard every year. Whereas, I always have a special place in my heart (and memory) for the eve of Easter—even if it isn't the actual, correct date.

Our meeting was not destined. The circumstances were trite, at best. Three Maine college women wanted to demonstrate to two college women from New York that Maine did have interesting, polite, exemplary men, that “women would die for.” Don't get me wrong, we did have men on our campus. The ratio, however, was one man for every five women. Most of these men, or at least the ones with whom we shared our dormitories, were rude with crude habits. So, we took these two women for a weekend to my brother's dormitory at the largest university in Maine.

My brother secured an empty dorm room for our visit. Our itinerary was simple—talk Friday evening. Sleep Saturday morning. (We were college students. What else were we going to do with a free morning?) Tour the campus. Grab lunch at the student union. Do


some homework. (We were serious students with GPAs to maintain.) Spend the evening dining and dancing at a local college hangout. Sunday morning, sleep, eat, and then drive back to our campus.

What everyone failed to figure out was: where would these exemplary men come from? Let me point out that my brother had several friends. I had expected those friends to be present, but it was Easter weekend. Even though this was only a two-day weekend, his friends had traveled to the southern end of the state to visit their families for Easter. Hence, the available dorm room. Duh!?! None of us had considered the impact of the “holiday” when we made these arrangements.

On Friday night, we sat on the floor of my brother’s dorm room talking and telling stories. Attracted by the noise and the shock of seeing women in my brother’s room through his open doorway, Bob wandered in to listen to our funny tales. Everyone talked and laughed for hours. The evening went as planned. (Bob later confessed that he only knew my brother as a passing acquaintance. Because he was tired of studying, Bob had been wandering the halls looking for a diversion. Seeing the women in my brother’s room, he had to check them out.)

By noon on Saturday, two of the Maine college women had driven on to their homes in northern Maine to visit their families for Easter, leaving me with the two college women from New York. I was left to find exemplary men for these women to meet. Bob was our only candidate from Friday evening. No further conquests were made during Saturday (but, it wasn’t because I didn’t try).

That night, the flirtation began. I wasn’t interested in flirtation, however, I had a mission. The college hangout was rather empty. I was desperate. As such, I kept pushing Bob and my brother in the direction of my two friends, encouraging them to dance. Even so, Bob danced with me. Due to space constraints at our booth, at one point, Bob and I sat on some steps near our table nervously talking, ignoring the three other people in our group. The only dialogue that



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stands out in my mind these many years later was about foreign travel in our youth. In consequent years, Bob reported that he had worked hard that night to make a good impression.

When we finally went back to the dorm, Bob and I stopped in the hallway to talk—postponing the end of our evening. While Bob may tell a different story, all I remember is that we stood talking by the window at the far end of the hallway all night long. Several men were quite surprised to find us standing there—talking—when they emerged from their rooms early Sunday morning to attend an Easter sunrise service. I blushed and we separated, with promises of seeing each other before my noon departure. Perhaps, this fortuitous night foreshadowed our future relationship.

Friends For Life

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.

When I was seven years old I met a really nice boy named Tim. He was a little bit older than me: he was eight. All that summertime after we met, we went to the zoo and had pictures taken of us together. Then my family and I moved.

Many years later I asked my mom whatever happened to Tim. I never forgot him. When I moved to Salt Lake City, I asked, "Mom, do you have Tim's parents' phone number?"

"Yes, Tiffany, I do," she said so I called Tim and asked him to a dance. He met me at the group home and we went out together. Years later, in October 2005, he came to UCP. I wondered who the handsome man was and he wondered who the gorgeous woman was: that would be me! His mom asked me if my name was Tiffany Carver. I was very surprised and told her yes. Then she and I talked while Tim took a tour of UCP. When he finished the tour I was able to talk to him. It felt really good but strange talking with Tim. I asked him "Tim, what have you been up to?"

"I have been reading Harry Potter books," he said. A couple of weeks before Halloween, he started working at UCP. He had often wondered whatever happened to me. He kept it inside and never told his parents.

He asked me out on a date that following December. We went to see the play "Beauty and the Beast" and I still have the ticket stub. Our second date was going to the movie "The Lion, The Witch and the

He asked me
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Wardrobe.” We started going to movies afterwards. We also went to the Literacy Action annual dinner together.

We were soon going steady after that, for a year. We never fight or argue. I feel like a regular person. I don’t think of Tim as someone in a wheelchair. When he has problems, he can talk to me just like I can talk to him. Now I am engaged this year and I loved it when he proposed. It was nighttime and we were outside my apartment with the stars above. He opened a box and asked “Tiffany, do you know how much I love you?”

I said, “Yes!”

“Will you marry me?” he asked. He couldn’t put the ring on my finger and he asked our bus driver for help.

I proposed to him, too. I put on my princess crown at work and went into the conference room. I said to Tim “Bow to your princess” and he did. I said, “Do you know how much I love you?” He said yes and then I asked him if he would marry me. He said yes. Now we have our golden rings and they are a set. I really love him a lot and I know he is my kindred spirit. I can’t wait until next year when we get married.

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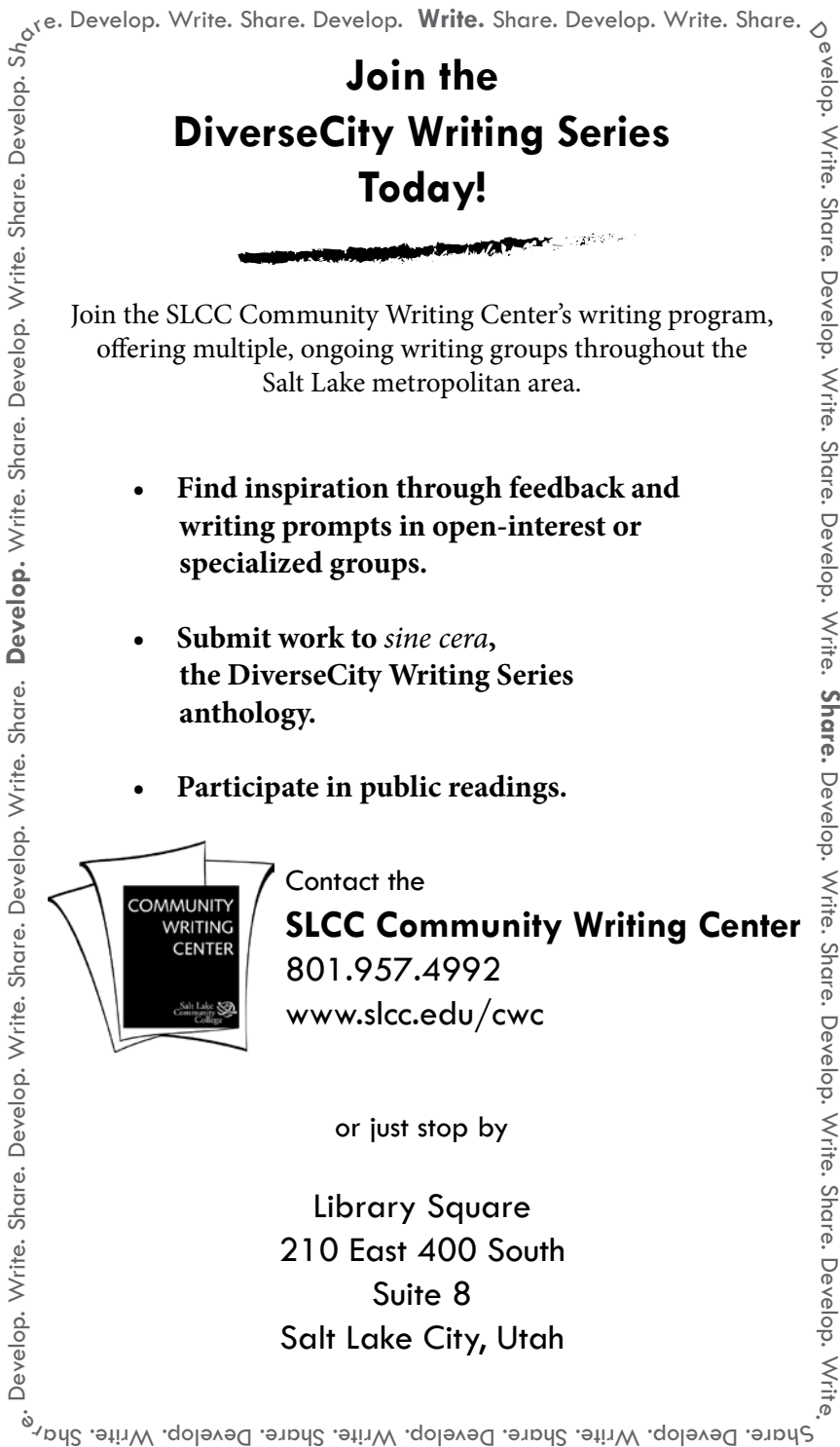
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