

*sine cera*

a DiverseCity Writing Series anthology

Small Talk  
with a  
Winter Sky

Volume 8

June 2010

*sine cera* is published by the SLCC Community Writing Center  
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This edition of *sine cera* was compiled and edited by  
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with assistance from Tiffany Rousculp, .

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## Introduction

### Everyone Can Write!

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

In the summer of 2003, the DiverseCity Writing Series expanded to offer multiple, on-going writing groups. Volunteers were trained in collaborative writing strategies and became mentors for a variety of open-interest and specialized writing groups.

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

Over the past several 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 Community Writing Center Group

Columbus Library Group

The Environmental Writing Group

(at the Main Library)

The LGBTQ Group

The King's English Group

The Literacy Action Center Groups

Palinca

The St. Mark's Tower Group

The Veterans' Affairs Group

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

*sine cera:*

*Small Talk with a Winter Sky*

# Acknowledgements

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**Tyler Asman, Dave Bastian, Meg Burke, Chelsea Bush, Jennifer deTapia, Fran Crookstan, Randy Egger, Andrea Garland, Katrina Gunning, Jeremy Hansen, Peggy Kadir, Cyndi Llyod, Joyce Luttrell, Greg Near, Mary Phillips, Jessy Poole, Melissa Rasmussen, Jim Rosinus, Michael Scott, Ken Simin, Drew Stofflet, Peter Timmons, John Wilkes, Douglass Woodland, and Deb Young.**

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

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# Table of Contents

**Introduction** 4

**Acknowledgements** 6

---

**Volume 8:** **June 2010**

---

Preface to Volume 8	Rachel Meads-Jardine	14
Small Talk with a Winter Sky	Mary Garrity	17
A Time in History 18	Joyce Lutrell	
Ancestral Rock	Chanel Earl	20
Our Troubled Evolution	John Hicks	22
Communicating with an Alien	John Boles	23
Looking Forward	John Boles	24
The Ticking of Time	Deborah Young	25
My Fishing Trip	Albert E. Smith	26
The “X”	Hal Davis	27
Salt Lake City Blues	Gregor Gable	31
Acceptance	Winnie Mae Walker	32
Natalie	Dave Bastian	33
Ride, Ride, Ride	Elvin Gage	35
Dream Girls	Richard G. Scharine	36
One of My Lovers	Cyndi Lloyd	42



Sunday Dinner	Larry Chaston	44
My Sister	Larry Chaston	45
My Exciting Trip to Texas	Julie A. Liljenquist	46
My Brother's Nice Dogs	Kate Cushing	47
Watershed	Randy Eggert	48
The Old Apple Tree	Becky Wilson	51
Cherry Stones	Mimi Broadhead	52
Butterfly Messengers	Tiffany Carver	55
Reading & Writing	Paul L. Rosser	56
The Magic Flute	Joyce Luttrell	57
The Dead, and the Blind	Misty Evans	64
Wayworn Winnie	Winnie Mae Walker	74
Stashing My Stuff	Winnie Mae Walker	76

---

## **Volume 7 Number 2:**

## **June 2009**

---

Preface to Volume 7 Number 2	Jeremy Remy	80
Cities	C. Chambers	82
Directions	C. Chambers	82
The Purpose of Things	Alia Rose Thiel	83
Hot Air	James Mone	85
Clothesline	Richard G. Scharine	86

Bad Words	Randy Eggert	91
Boys' Basketball Championship	Paul L. Rosser	97
My Brother's Dog	Ervan Peterson	98
A Dog's Life	John Boles	99
Black Dogs	Winnie Mae Walker	100
My Cat, Bitsy	Albert E. Smith	100
Pick a Color, Any Color	Ramona Maassen	101
Dear Rachel Ann	Julie A. Liljenquist	103
Dad was a Cowboy	Kyle J. Luke	105
On Cedar Mountain	Kyle J. Luke	106
Hair	Michael Scott	108
Just Like That	Warren D. Price	110
Too Many Wrong Mistakes	E.B. Homer	111
Lesson Learned	Warren D. Price	116
Cooking Disasters 101	Rose A. Petersen	117
Cornbread and Beans	Hal Davis	119
Coffee Time Rag	C. Chambers	120
Gaudi	C. Chambers	120
The Funny Dinner	Kate Cushing	121
Teapot	Winnie Mae Walker	122
My Vacation	Von Jones	123

The Flat	Hal Davis	126
Letter from CM Longwood	James H. Rosinus	127
Pretentions of Wealth	Rose A. Petersen	129
I Am the Caregiver, the Mother and the Rock	Ramona Maassen	130
A Great American	Elvin Gage	131
The Thief on the Cross	Dan Christensen	133
The Walk	C. Chambers	134
Poems	C. Chambers	134
The Old Beauties	Cyndi Lloyd	135
Plastic	Joyce E. Luttrell	136
Charlie's Bash	Dave Bastian	137
Fear	Ramona Maassen	149
The Dying Man	Von Jones	150
Falling Into Love, Right On Your Back	Maria Spradling	152
I Will Think of You	Alia Rose Thiel	153
What I Like To Do	Becky Wilson	155
What I Learned This Year	Annette Weed	156
<hr/>		
<b>Author Bios</b>		158



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with a  
Winter Sky

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June 2010



## Preface

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

—DiverseCity Writing Series Mission Statement

“The DiverseCity Writing Series bridges the Salt Lake community's diverse social, economic and educational backgrounds through writing, collaboration and dialogue.” The emptiness of a blank page can be both daunting and liberating. Without boundaries we are free to move and explore the outer edges of space, however, navigating this expansiveness can overwhelm the mind and stiffen the fingers. As chicken scratch and doodles turn to words and images they transform the space on the page and contextualize change. Change to the document, change in the writer, and if it is shared change in the audience.

When viewed by others these symbols create awareness of others; these intimate glimpses of humanity remind us not of our difference but our similarity. It is in this space that we can walk the bridges that divide us. It is in this space that we can begin to find allies, form relationships and transform our realities.

Each year sine cera starts with blank pages waiting to be filled by the thoughts, ideas and stories both imagined and lived by members of the Salt Lake community. Word by word, page by page the Writers in this anthology speak to the emptiness of a blank page, they make Small Talk with a Winter Sky.

## *Signature*

# Small talk with a winter Sky

by Mary Garrity

The sky is pregnant with snow.  
In sloven luxury, she rests her  
belly on the housetops,  
making the horizon immediate.  
Oh my winter hills  
    blue and ice grey;  
you are remote today.  
The sky is birthing. Are you embarrassed for her?  
Well indeed I have worshiped winter long enough, so  
today I'll finger viney branches of the nearer frozen  
trees  
into a dream dress  
to wear against August.

## I've made a tower

I've made for myself a tower to live in.  
I hide in it.  
I dream in it.  
I putter and place in it.  
I stake my claim on this corner of solitude.  
These are my colors,  
my collections of crazy and crap.  
Respect it visitor,  
for shadows and shapes of me decorate it.  
Textures and tones of me  
have styled it.  
There are funny little jars and containers around  
so be careful, they hold memories .....  
and dreams are tucked in behind the cushions.  
I have wanted and wept in it.  
I have even grown up in it.  
I have made for myself a tower to live in.



# Welcome

by Peggy Kadir

Approaching our host's wide-open front door, we heard a voice inside shout, "Come right in. I'll be with you in a minute." So we entered. As we stood in the entry, a magnificent great hound came bounding up to us. Being a dog lover, I knelt down and threw my arms around its neck. Again a voice from an inner room could be heard, only this time it was saying, "Oh my god, the dog is loose!"

## A Warm Greeting

Anxious to see my cousin, whom we had driven to Fillmore to see, I quickly left the car and jumped over the irrigation ditch, where the wild mint grew. As I opened her iron gate and started down the bricked walkway, a muscular German Shepherd dog, with a glossy coat, rushed toward me. "What a lovely surprise," I thought, and dropped to my knees to hug him. At that moment, my cousin flew out her front door shouting, "Oh my god, he's bitten three people this week."

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

17

## RIBBONS OF LIGHT

At first they called them "Chards", those seven foot tall sculptures of colored glass hanging from the ceiling of Salt Lake's new Main Library. Then they renamed them "Ribbons of Light." Since Salt Lake is in an earthquake zone, and the library is a four story glass building, "Ribbons of Light" is a better name. It is both descriptive and less anxiety producing.

# AMERICA AWAKE: THE USBs ARE COMING!

By Richard Scharine

The old saying – “*It’s an ill wind that blows nobody some good*” – has its applications in the recession of the last two years. This downturn in the economy, which largely resulted from the attempt of the improvident classes to ascend to a lifestyle beyond their financial and intellectual potential, has also provided an involuntary curb to the greatest continuing threat, other than homosexuality to our American Way of Life. I refer, of course, to Illegal Immigration.

As Glenn Beck pointed out in his landmark 2006 cartoon, *The History of Illegal Immigration in a Couple of Minutes*, illegal immigration has been around since the invention of the immigrant. One of the earliest attempts to control foreign infiltration of the Continental United States was by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century statesman, Geronimo, whose laudable aims failed because of his refusal to learn English and that his plan to control the borders with paratroops was ahead of its time.

However, thanks to the recent financial collapse, the Census Bureau estimates that the illegal population in the U.S. will not grow this year for the first time in a decade. Thus the menace to True Americanism – as manifested in rising welfare costs, a collapsing education system, incarceration expenses, a pervasive drug culture, the socialization of health care, the bastardization of the English language, and sexual predators in contact with our women and children – has been, for the moment, stabilized.

Now, as a weary people turn their eyes to the East in hopes of a sign that *It’s Morning Again in America*, they see instead the looming evil of the greatest enemy of the Promise of the New World: Europe! Those jaded inhabitants of an Older Order of Humanity – cruel, anti-individualistic, atheist, united by the cold fanaticism possible only under secular humanism and operating according to *The Protocols of the Elders of Zurich* – have launched their latest human missile: the Unemployed Swiss Banker (USB).

Recently the European Union, that crippler of initiative and market vitality, passed legislation preventing banking executives

from receiving salaries of more than \$500,000 a year. In the wake of this disaster, paralleling the pogroms and potato famines of an earlier era, USBs have left their simple villages behind and packed themselves into the stagnant holds of Airbus A380s and Boeing 787 Dreamliners headed for America. This decision, insofar as they are able to articulate it in the French which is often the most comfortable of the four or five languages they speak, is understandable, if regrettable. The typical USB earns a tenth as much as his American counterpart, and according to the Center for Immigration Studies, numerous American corporations are willing to hire cheap, compliant labor from abroad. As one USB (who would not give his name) put it: “People here don’t know how to survive on a hundred thousand dollars a month, but we who know how to make do are able not only to live, but to send the occasional gross of gold bullion back to our families in the Old Country.” The loss of money made in the United States to the economy of another country is bad enough, but look at the human cost of the USB effect: a chauffeur laid off, a staff of gardeners dismissed, a third maid now only required for formal dinners, a barbecue chef doubling at a sushi luncheon – in short, the despoiling of the nation’s service sector.

We’re often told that USBs do the jobs that American bankers won’t. But look at the evidence from Wall Street in recent years and ask yourself this question: Is there really anything of which an American banker is not capable? The introduction of USBs simply increases the labor supply in the financial community, not only lowering wages, but diminishing society in ways immeasurable monetarily but no less real.

*We have to be careful about what people desperate for a job may do. This begins to affect the labor standards and wages of not just the immigrants, but the people who work with them.*--Migration Policy Institute (Washington, D.C)

Like many primitive peoples, the USB tribe is a fertile one. Immigrants have in the past, and will continue to produce children – “anchor babies,” as anthropologists call them, who are (technically) American citizens with access to the American education system. What happens to the young people, whose acceptance at the prestigious universities of America was previously grandfathered in by the achievements and gifts of the ancestors, when they find themselves robbed of their heritage by immigrant offspring solely on the basis of merit? Will they find themselves

shunted off to the backwaters of state colleges? Is that what you want for your children? It is *not* what I want for mine! And what of their leisure hours? Will their Saturdays be spent in the sacred pursuit of tailgating in the parking lot of the football stadium, or will the BCS champion be a soccer team (or *futbol*, as they call it in their desecration of the very word)? And what of the safety of your daughters? Remember that the USB and their spawn grew up speaking French (the language of lust), and we need only think back to the conduct of the French-speaking world in the late war to realize that our country is in as great a danger as our children.

The hearts of all Americans go out to their fellow countrymen in their time of need, but our nation and the belief in Personal Responsibility which is its hallmark did not become great by refusing to face its problems. As a great wartime president once said, "Bring it on!" In search of a solution we consulted the greatest minds on both sides of the political spectrum. Speaking from an undisclosed location on five television networks simultaneously, former Vice-President Dick Cheney said, "Let's just say that we have ways of discovering the banking intentions of those who threaten our citizenry and we will continue to confront that threat as long as there is a sloping surface and an unlimited water supply in America." Pundit Patrick Buchanan responded: "The answer is as obvious as it is inexpensive. All that is required is to build a ten-foot wall around Wall Street, using labor that can easily be found next to the *El Grande Taco* stand in Spanish Harlem." Richard Trumka, the President of the AFL-CIO, decried "the xenophobia of the Ruling Classes. This is a question, not of national rights, but of the right of *The Internationale*. As we go forward with our plan for the compulsory unionization of American bankers, the problem will disappear – as will the Swiss bankers, who will be sent to interview Jimmy Hoffa (if you know what I mean)." Former Chairman of the Federal Reserve Alan Greenspan weighed in with his opinion. "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan/ A stately pleasure-dome decree." Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner believes that it's not necessary to go that far. "With all due respect to a great economist like Chairman Greenspan, I think that the logical solution to any question of the Free Market is to throw government money at it. That's why I'm calling a meeting of the CEOs of all the major banks in the country, and asking them to supply me with the number of executives in their employ who are currently making over a half

million dollars a year. The Treasury will then produce sufficient monies to cover the gap for each executive from that half million (to be paid by the banks) to their present income level, with, of course, a clause to cover any future merited raises. We will not ask for the name, job description, or past achievements of any of these executives because we do not believe in government interference in private enterprise.”

\* \* \*

And so another challenge to the system which has made America what it is today has been met, and met successfully. We see – as we have seen in the past – that Capitalism contains within it the answer to any problem fermented in the fetid swamp of an alien culture. But we must be vigilant. Each day new heresies appear to seduce the gullible and morally weak among us. Yesterday it was the Mexican “wetback” laborer, today the Swiss “greenback” banker, and tomorrow? Who knows? Perhaps the Canadian “singleback” with this siren song of socialized health care intoning a death knell for Independent Health Insurance Companies throughout our great land!

BEWARE!

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

# A Sense of Reason

by Gerald Puckett

A well connected man better than I shall ever  
be said, “It rains on the just and the unjust,”  
thunderstorms belching thunder and lightening--  
Are not all tragedies unjust and justice rare?  
For me spiritual death would be to live under  
a shadow of doom and gloom, a negative  
syncopated spirit spitting fuss and puss; my  
numinous heart in search of redolent rendezvous  
with the Universe, a tap root reaching for healing  
waters, flowing from ethereal headwaters, I reason  
how could I see or feel the warmth of quasars, red  
and blue stars without illumination from a clear,  
gorgeous, dark Nubian night—twinkling on back-  
ground black!  
For what is a rose without thorns or the battered  
soul without long term love. So I whisper to  
everything that walks my way, just and unjust--  
let it rain—I love rain and rainbows that reach  
out and kiss the heart!!

# Deaf Child

by Steven A. Dame  
*\*when the dialog is in italics, it is being signed*

On my street was a sign that said, “Deaf Child.” It embarrassed me. When I told Nicole about it she said, “Get over it.” She said that about a lot of things.

One Sunday morning, I was in a really bad mood. I threw my bike against the curb. I pushed the sign as hard as I could. I wanted to make it collapse dead in the grass, so I’d never have to see it again. Ha! Little me. I couldn’t budge it. So I spit on it! I jerked my bike up – scraping my knee on the chain – and rode away in a huff.

I’m sure people might have seen me, but I didn’t care. It was my sign, and I could do with it what I pleased.

Mr. Henderson, an old man about 60, always watched me. He wore thick glasses and his gardening “uniform” – tan pants, shirt, and hat – as he watered his roses. Or trimmed them. Or – whatever!

His stare made me uncomfortable. His eyes went up and down on me, from head to toe. I didn’t dare flip him off, but I sure felt like it.

That morning, he had stared at me just a bit too long. I was so angry! When I got home, my boyfriend, Josh, was at the kitchen table, reading the sports page. Aunt Nicole was standing by the sink, scanning through real estate listings. She absent-mindedly sipped an iced tea.

*Well, he was looking at me again,* I signed.

She didn’t even acknowledge me. I jiggled her paper.

*Anna!* She swatted my hand away. Josh just sat there, his face buried in the newspaper.

*Listen you two!* I thumped the counter.

“Anna, we’re just enjoying a quiet – “

*I know, Sunday morning. I don’t like Sunday mornings.*

“Why don’t you try some orange juice. I made a –“

*Will anyone listen to me!* I thumped the counter louder.

Nicole grabbed my hand and made me stop. Josh put his paper down.

Nicole: "You just barge in here..."

Josh: "Oh, hi Anna, I didn't see you."

Me: *What is this about newspapers on Sunday morning? You don't even care about me.*

Nicole put the paper down. She gulped her tea. "Ok, what?"

I raised my arms furiously. *Neither of you care about me!* I spit on the floor.

"Why, you!"

She chased me. "Anna, Anna, how dare you!"

I ran to the couch, put my head between my knees, and acted like I was sobbing. She didn't buy it.

She held my head up, Pinching my neck as she did.

"Look at me. Look at me, you! That is *so* disrespectful, Anna."

Josh ambled in like nothing had happened. He sat in the green, overstuffed armchair. I ran and jumped on his lap. It was awkward signing when all I wanted to do was put my arms around him. *You'll protect me. You'll protect me, won't you Josh?*

He was embarrassed. I clung to his neck and wouldn't let go. He turned me around. I sat in his lap like a baby.

"Calm down, Anna. What's wrong?" he said. His words came out in a confused sputter.

I told them all about Mr. Henderson. I told them that he looked at me strange and his eyes were all over me whenever I rode by.

Nicole's eyes were fuming. She wanted to know the exact times and dates.

"I'm going to. I'm going to – *talk* to him!" Her hand was at her mouth. She was silent for a moment.

"No. I'm not going to talk to him." She nibbled her nails as she spoke.

She came to us. She made stabbing motions with her finger in Josh's face. She was so mad! "Josh, *you're* going to talk to him!"

So that's how it was. I have no idea what Josh said to that old man. But every time I rode by from then on, he put his head down and scuttled into his house, like a little bug.



# 10 Haiku poems

---

By Shirley Fifer

1

stretch out. Relax  
be comfortable  
contemplate

2

summer is hot  
even the sky is cooking  
hurry crisp autumn

3

floating in the sky  
among the bits of soft clouds  
10 floors high

4

getting up in the world  
I've just moved to the penthouse  
up in the sky the view is great

5

Barby is trim  
not me any more  
old age is no fun.

6

Except when you're writing  
that can make you sing  
and laugh. Create.

7

Life isn't over yet  
have some fun  
It'll fill your days it's a bet

8

enough gloom  
open your eyes to the sun  
OK wait for dawn

9

Lie on the grass under the tree  
The clouds float over you  
remember the past

10

Fall is here – the season  
not the equilibrium  
that can happen any season

# Feast of Zakaria

by Peggy Kadir

It was on a warm spring night, while standing on the banks of the Tigris River, that I first became aware of the feast day of Zachariah. The river was as black as the sky. In the distance, flickering lights drifted slowly towards us with the flow of the river. As they approached, I could see that each light was a burning candle, which had been affixed to a small piece of wood and set adrift upon the river. Bobbing and blinking they came singly, then in two and threes, until finally the river was aglow with hundreds of flickering flames.

“Each one bears a wish,” Naji, my husband, told me. “At the farthest bridge upriver, people gather. Each one will set a candle on a small wooden boat, make a wish, and place it on the water.” Mesmerized, I watched the twinkling lights move down-river, until the last one had given a final wink before rounding a bend and proceeding on its long journey to the Indian Ocean.

“What are the wishes?” I wondered, and “Will they come true?” As I watched the wordless prayers passing silently through the tranquil night, I, too, prayed that the wishes would be fulfilled.

During the years that followed, it became a tradition on Zachariah, for the extended family to congregate at the home of Naji’s father, the patriarch of the family. In the afternoon we gathered in the garden, sitting beneath the shade of orange, pear and date trees. On small tables in the middle of the garden were trays holding a candle for every member of the family. Each candle was held in its own unglazed ceramic pot. For the males, the pots had spouts. For the females the pots had no spouts. The oldest member had the largest candle, and the newest-born the smallest. Between the candles were placed small dishes of candies, nuts, and dried fruits. Sprigs of sweet-smelling privet decorated the trays and perfumed the air. After profuse greetings, as each new member arrived, we lit the candles and watched them burn down.

When evening approached, we had dinner. Feast days in

Baghdad meant feasts of food! Dolmas, kubbas and kebobs, as well as moussaka, stews, pilava, beryani, hummus, condiments and desserts. Eclectic meals they were, with local dishes as well as those from Persia, Turkey, India, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon.

When at least the meal was consumed and the stomach soothed with cups of black tea, a few of us left for the river. Here we joined others by the bridge, to send our own candlelit wishes on dark waters into the black night.

# GLUEY

by Dave Goodale

Nothing ever happened in the Lost Forest.

There were no seasons there. There was no cycle of day and night - the time of day was always “grey” under a carbonized sky.

The trees tangled together in broad impenetrable copses separated by a maze of grassy aisles. Everywhere was as flat as a vast tabletop; everyplace looked like everyplace else. It was sort of beautiful in a dark, minimalist way, but also dangerous because it was easy to get lost there.

Gluey trudged slowly along, his pale blobby form gleaming faintly in the dim light, thinking that he didn't like the Forest and he didn't want to wind up there permanently, an outcome that was looking rather likely. It wasn't the gloom that bothered him – he was from Monster Island, after all, and there were plenty of dark woodlands there. Gloom was fine with Gluey, but at least on the Island things were alive. This place was different.

He wasn't lost, exactly. True, he had been walking here for weeks and he had no idea of where he was, or how he might get back out. He would never remember all the turns he had taken. Once he tried to backtrack along his trail of crushed grass, but he found that the bent stems quickly sprang up and his track vanished after a few hundred feet.

However, he wasn't lost, quite. He did know one thing: that this was the way he had to go.

There was no wind, and no sound except for the swishing of his feet through the grass. His water and food were long gone. He knew he would never completely stop but without food he would just slow down until he was almost motionless. He looked at a nearby copse and studied the wall of dark low trees, spiny and iron hard. Long ago he had heard something about the Forest being endless. Perhaps it really was endless. He whined a little.

Gluey didn't know it, he was not alone. There were others in the Lost Forest and they weren't far away.

Zao Chan signaled and his army ceased its silent movement through the Forest.

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

29

His officers approached. Zao allowed himself the luxury of removing his helmet and glared out at the dark woodlands. He shook out his mass of spiky black hair.

“Pyugghhh!!!! This cursed place!”

His officers had no reply. Zao went on. “Perhaps someday I’ll put people here whom I wish to punish. Give your reports.”

“Status normal; no change, lord.” said his OO, or Operations Officer. The LO, or Logistics Officer, gave the same answer.

Zao nodded, sighed deeply. “This pause will be brief.”

He replaced his helmet, sat down in the grass, and leaned forward with his heavy arms over his knees. The officers withdrew. Sunk in his thoughts, Zao was immobile, and there was no other movement among the many armored forms of his army, spread out in the clearings between the trees.

He didn’t really need to consult his officers; the information systems in his armor told him everything he needed to know. He craved some kind of event, even the smallest, but the whole point of being here was that there were no events here; nothing ever happened in the Lost Forest. And he had to keep it that way.

He stared into the invisible distance and reached out a huge mailed hand, which he slowly closed into a fist. He murmured, “Glendorphin ... I don’t care if I have to tramp through a thousand worlds of stuff like this.”

Gluey could hardly believe it - there was movement in the Forest! In fact there was a lot of movement. He could tell that a large group was making its way toward him.

Awkwardly, because he did most things awkwardly, Gluey knelt, his great globular knees sinking into the grass. Then he went on all fours and lowered his watermelon head to bring one of his vaguely shaped ears to the ground.

Gluey had eyes and mouth and ears and the other attributes that we would think of as customary, though most of the time they were rather ill-formed and only somewhat functional. But if he had the time to concentrate, he could make them work very well. As he listened, his ear spread out on the ground, expanding like pancake batter on a griddle, surrounding the stalks of grass so that they penetrated his tissues like pins in a pincushion ... as his ear expanded he heard more and more clearly those who moved stealthily in his direction. They were still several hundred yards away at least. There were thousands of them. He could tell

that they moved on two legs, that they were large and heavy, and that one was bigger than all the rest. Gluey concentrated on that individual and began to get a sense for him.

He felt a mounting excitement. It had been a long, difficult, crazy-seeming journey to get to get here, and he was about to meet the individual who had caused it.

The real beginning of his journey was months ago, on Monster Island, when he smelled a faint thread of scent that carried a tinge of menace. This occurred during one of Glendorphin's visits to the island, and it was disturbing because Glendorphin was a good friend to the monsters, including Gluey. Some of the other monsters said that Glendorphin had acquired enemies, and Gluey guessed that the menacing thread of scent had something to do with those enemies.

He didn't mention it to any of the other monsters. For one thing, it wasn't easy for him to talk unless he concentrated for a long time, and often by the time he was ready to speak his listeners had lost interest. Also he knew it would be hard to explain what he was talking about. However he kept catching whiffs of the menacing scent and it bothered him. Finally he went to see Glendorphin about it.

Glendorphin was the only human who came to Monster Island. When he was there he lived in a tree, or rather beneath a tree. He was tall for a man, but small compared to Gluey, who was about nine feet tall. He stood in the doorway in the base of his giant Gzeeble-nut tree and listened carefully to Gluey's halting story.

Finally he said, "You can smell a menace? But it's not here on the Island?"

"No ... I don't think so. Somewhere else, I think. Far away maybe."

"Listen, Gluey ... I'm not sure what to make of this. I don't know how you can smell danger. Danger doesn't have an odor so far as I know. But you're right about one thing: I may have an enemy, and maybe that's what you're picking up somehow. But don't worry too much about me. I'm being careful. I've got some friends helping me."

"I'm sorry I bothered you; I'd better go now."

"Nonsense! I'm always glad to see you, old friend. Stay for dinner! The Gzeeble-nuts should be just about done." The aroma of roasting nuts was drifting from the doorway and Gluey was

persuaded.

They had a fine dinner and Gluey forgot about the thread of scent. It was always interesting to talk to Glendorphin, who didn't seem to mind about Gluey's slow manner of speech. Later, however, when Gluey was wandering on the beach, the thread was back. It was just the merest trace, the faintest suggestion of an aroma, yet it bothered Gluey. It carried a feeling of menace that was subtle but unmistakable when he concentrated on it. He couldn't shake the feeling that he had to do something about it.

He left the Island early the next morning.

No one knew of Gluey's decision. He didn't want to tell Glendorphin because the man was shocked when Gluey mentioned during dinner that he might try to follow the thread of scent.

"No! That would be very unwise, Gluey! If somehow this 'thread of scent' leads you to the enemy, that could be dangerous! Or, maybe it doesn't mean anything and you would just wander around and get lost. Please stay here! We might need you on the Island."

Gluey had a rough time of it.

He was in a small sailboat that he "borrowed" – though really he stole it because he didn't tell anyone that he was taking it. He thought maybe the boat was Glendorphin's. He had not been off the Island for a long time and he knew little of the world beyond. He couldn't seem to get the hang of the sails so he just used the oars, rowing tirelessly, fighting winds that often blew him far from his intended course.



# I've been there

by Joyce Luttrell

I was there in the beginning  
When the world was young,  
When there was nothing  
I was there, where I sang my song.

I was there when it was matter  
When the earth stood still,  
Then the grass did grow,  
I was there to get my fill.

I was there when the waters came  
I saw the earth filled to bloom  
I was there in marriage  
She the bride, I the groom.

I was there for the earth's first trees  
Whisper to the branches sweet tones  
To lift the leaves to the sun  
They would listen to my moans

I was there at the foot hills  
And traveled all the mountains  
Over the deserts and meadows  
I was there when pools were fountains.

I was there to see the first blooms  
To smell the first pure fragrance  
To see how perfect in every way  
God transformed the perfect balance

I was there, when it was young  
To feel every living thing on earth  
I've touched every tiny speck  
In tenderness, fury and in mirth

I was there, I am here still  
I've been there, every bit of the way  
To touch you when in need  
I was there, here I shall stay.

## The Farm

The walk down the road  
That leads to the farm  
Where life began for me  
With the trees and all its charm.

Large framed buildings  
With their huge windows,  
Double doors and high ceilings  
Wall paper with flowers and bows.

A grand veranda that reached  
Around the front of the door,  
With wicker chairs and sofa  
With a freshly scrubbed floor.

Smells from the kitchen  
Seemed to be heaven sent  
Apple pie and chicken baking  
Fit for king or any gent.

The old banister was a joy  
Children to use as a slide,  
The stairs seem to be a bore  
When you would rather ride.

The huge old tree out in front  
Stands like a guardian  
Grand protector of those within,  
With over hanging limbs.

The swing that hangs  
Though In mid air.

Holds three at once  
With their squealing to share.

The barn is the best place to play  
With it's hay loft and hay bales.  
Hoot owls and mice  
But it's there that fun never fails

The lawns spread out for picnics  
For children to run and play  
Grown ups gather and converse  
For the joy and a gala day

This is the farm, the way of life.  
Where family and friends gather  
Where time stands still  
Children learn what really matters.

# HIDE AND SEEK

by Cyndi Lloyd

During the summer and through the fall, my siblings, our neighborhood friends, and I gather for outdoor hide and seek tag. We always play at our house, beginning at dusk (after dinner and chores) and into the night.

Our house sits on one of the bigger lots. The driveway shoots from the pavement to the garage, long and wide. Grass surrounds the house with a large flowerbed along the east side of the driveway up to the front patio. Wet soil and Mountain West Beauty Bark Nuggets permeate the air. The back half of our lot is field – the area for Mom and Dad’s vegetables and fruit trees. The yard isn’t fenced except for the north portion of the field that meets the Hessing’s backyard.

We kids gather in the front yard and discuss the rules. The front door is home base. Hiders get until the count of 100 to find a place to hide. The first person tagged will be the next seeker. Eeny meeny miny moe decides the one person who doesn’t get to hide. By this time, darkness creeps in. It entices the throng of chorus crickets that will soon surround us with their calls. Porch lights and street lamps glow, beckoning moths to their globes.

The counting begins. The hiders race off, asking each other where they are going to hide. I run to the back, into the field, in the small pumpkin patch. I dash to the empty ditch at the back and decide it’s not a good place to hide. In the distance I hear: Ready or not, here I come! I sprint over to the corn stalks, now the color of wheat. I step among them, each footfall cracking and snapping the dried husks. I squat. My skin feels cool. I hold my breath. I don’t hear anyone. I breathe again. Out of the corner of my eye – movement. I turn my head and come face to face with a spider. The garden spider doesn’t see me. It’s moving along the center of its orb-shaped web.

Its trap is nearly complete. The tan colored body and black legs of the garden spider coordinate to spin spiraling strands outward from the center. The radial lines are intact, and the support lines span the gap between two corn stalks. I back away slowly, as

though it were a rattler. A few stalks away now and I can barely see it. I feel a tap on my shoulder. “Got you!” my brother says. Caught, I scream. I point out the spider to him. It’s darker now. He can’t see it.

In the morning, the sun’s rays will glint along the silky lines, right to center of the web where the garden spider suspends itself upside down – not hiding – but waiting to feel the vibrations from caught insects.

# Windows

by Julie Liljenquist

After taking the screen off her bedroom window, Lila stared directly into the solar eclipse. "I see firelight," she said. "Ooooooch! The pain. It hurts." Lila screamed, covering her eyes with her hands. She collapsed to the floor, crying in pain.

Twenty minutes later, Lila got up and blindly made her way to the kitchen. She pulled out a clean dishrag from the shelf above her kitchen sink and got it wet in the cold running water. She pressed the wet dripping rag to her eyes. The cold soothed her eyes, and she felt calmer.

Lila opened her eyes, one at a time, to see if she could see the birds at the feeder hanging on a tree branch outside her kitchen window. She could hear them. Could she see them? "Oh, no! I can't see the birds!" she said. Lila rubbed her eyes and tried looking harder out the window.

Bang! Ding!

Lila turned toward the noise. She saw nothing, but she heard the bang and ding again coming from her living room. "Somebody is in my house?" she thought.

"Who's there? Is it you, Mom?" Lila shouted.

Lila couldn't see, but she felt something near her. She heard a roar, like the gears of a machine breaking down and stopping its movement.

As she felt her way toward the noise, she heard a deep mechanical voice. The voice said, "You're coming with me."

Something picked Lila up by the waistband of her pants and laid her down on something flat. Lila screamed, "Let me off! I don't want to go!"

Next Lila was sprayed with some sticky, yucky, gooey stuff. "Stop! What are you doing?" she yelled. The stuff covered her entire body, leaving only her eyes, mouth, and nose uncovered. Her hands touched the stuff. It felt spongy and gooey just like this inside of a freshly toasted marshmallow. Then she felt movement. She thought she was being carried out the front door on a stretcher.

When she got outside, the ting that was holding her up

stopped and dumped her off. She felt the sidewalk underneath her shoes. She stood still, trying to figure where she was and what was going on around her. She could hear nothing. Not even a car in the road, birds in the trees nearby, nor the machine that dumped her. All she could do was wonder, “Will that dreaded noisy thing pick me up again?”

Lila decided to feel her way back into her house to get the sticky gooey stuff off. When she got to the front door, she listened carefully for any noises before entering. Everything was very still. Very slowly and cautiously, she pushed open the door and crept inside, with one foot in front of the other. She closed the door, then she used her feet to feel her way to her bedroom. When she reached her bedroom, Lila shut the window then got in the shower, clothes and all. The sticky stuff just didn’t rinse off, so Lila poured body soap all over herself and scrubbed hard. The sticky stuff still wouldn’t budge. “Is this ever going to come off?” she said.

She climbed out of the shower and felt for the cleaners in the cabinet underneath her bathroom sink. “Oh, this might work,” she thought, as she felt the distinct rounded handle of the Goo-gone bottle and its illustrious smell.

Lila took the Goo-gone into the shower, then poured it on her left hand to find out if it would take off the gooey stuff. She rubbed the Goo-gone into the sticky mess on the back of her left hand. Slowly, she felt her soft skin underneath. “Finally!” she said. She showered with the Goo-gone, being careful not to get any in her mouth, eyes, and nose. Leaving her shoes and clothes in the shower, she wrapped herself in her bath towel then dressed. Then went down stairs still wondering if the thing that picked her up last time was going to pick her up again? If so, where was she going to go? And where would she be dropped off?

# Ephemera

by Jim Rosinus

I let the phone ring five times before picking up. No point in letting whoever was calling know I was sitting around the office with nothing to do.

“Central Detective Agency. How can I help you?”

“Mr. Gagnon, please.”

“Speaking.” Of course, the fact I was answering my own phone probably gave it away. At least he pronounced it correctly. With all the French Canadians in New England, you’d think people’d know the second G is silent. He did. Point for him.

“Mr. Gagnon. My name is Smith...” of course it is “...I represent a client who wishes to remain anonymous. My client is a collector, a very serious collector, of rare books and papers. Recently, there appeared in an auction catalog, published on line by an antiquarian bookseller there in Boston, an item of exceptional interest. My client was prepared to bid whatever was necessary to acquire this item. However, before the bidding was opened, the item disappeared from the catalog. My client has asked me to retain your services to find the item.”

“Y’know, I gotta think stuff gets pulled from auctions all the time. Didn’t it say why?”

“Lots are sometimes removed,” the caller conceded, “but not very often and it is customary to explain why. Sold. Reserve not met. So forth. This item disappeared from the site. Completely. No explanation given. The entire page was just gone.”

“Did you call the bookseller?”

“The phone number on the web site goes to voice mail. I have received no response to multiple calls or from the e-mail address listed on the site. My client wants a physical visit to the bookseller and the ability to follow up on whatever information can be obtained there.”

I looked at my caller ID. Area code 857. “I’m not turning the job down, but why don’t you just go there yourself?”

“I am not anywhere near Massachusetts,” he said.

I looked at the caller ID again. “Uh huh.” I thought of calling



him on it, but I'd been twiddling my thumbs before the phone rang. I needed the job.

I don't know if he thought my hesitation was because I didn't want the job or because he realized I'd caught him out on the local phone call, but before I could give him my rates he said, "I'm authorized to offer you \$500 per day, starting immediately, with a minimum commitment of two weeks."

I choked. "Five..."

"Plus expenses, of course."

"Of course." Did I sound as cool and collected as I intended? Doubtful. He was offering more than double my standard rate, not counting the expenses. "Well, Mr. ...uh...Smith. Look's like you've hired a detective. What exactly am I looking for?"

"Luckily, I took a screenshot of the item for my—our—client. What's your e-mail address?" I gave it to him, then gave him my business account. He assured me my retainer would be there in the morning.

The e-mail arrived within seconds. I opened the attachment and saw a color shot of five loose, raggedy pages with burn marks on them, some more serious than others. The lettering looked hand done and there were a number of cross-outs in the text. Actually, as I looked closer, they were more than mere cross-outs. The offending words had been completely blotted. It was impossible to make out anything underneath. Of course, I couldn't make out the words that were there, either. It wasn't English by a long shot.

Beneath the picture of the pages was a blur, written, I guessed, by the guy who was going to run the auction.

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

41

### **No. 21. From a Private Collection**

Five loose pages, 8vo, apparently consecutive, manuscript on virgin parchment, with comment in a second hand. Date unknown but probably c. 12th century. All pages show fire damage, pp. 1& 2, significant damage to top and right sides, approx.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of each page missing and  $\frac{1}{2}$  of each page illegible. P. 3 approx.  $\frac{1}{4}$  illegible. Pp. 4 & 5, scorching to upper right corners with minimal damage to text. P. 4

has 3 in. tear from center right edge to upper left. Text appears to be Greek, and may be in cipher. Text contains 14 instances of effacing in ink. P. 5, after the text, contains an emendment in a second hand in Latin: "It is not enough."

I read it again but it didn't make any more sense the second time. If nothing else, I'd have to go see the bookseller for a translation. I tried the number at the bottom of the illustration and got the same voice mail "Mr. Smith" had. Nice to know something he told me was true. There was a name but no address on the page, but it didn't take Google long to track the shop to the Back Bay, a couple blocks off Commonwealth Avenue.

It was after 5 so I decided to visit the bookshop tomorrow and instead went down to Julian's for wings and a pitcher. I sat at the bar watching the Sox lose to Cleveland—*Cleveland*—and pondered my new case.

Plus: I have a case. Minus: My client—my client's agent—may have lied to me already. Plus: They agreed to pay a lot of money. Minus: I don't have it, yet. Minus: I don't know anything about old books. Plus: I have a case and it's not some yuppie moron cheating on his wife. And I'm getting paid a lot of money. If it comes through, I ordered a burger. The Sox almost came back. I went home.

When I got on line to check my account next morning there was a \$7000 deposit pending which was two grand more than I was expecting. Either my client expected me to work twelve hour days or skip weekends. Since it was 8:30 Thursday morning, it didn't make a difference either way. I decided to take a cab to the bookstore partly to see if they were really going to pick up my expenses but mostly because you can waste half a day trying to find a parking space anywhere around Commonwealth Avenue. But first I had to go to the office to get my jacket and tie so I took the T to Porter Square and got the cab from there.

Addison Antiquarian Books was a three storey, narrow fronted, brick colonial just off Commonwealth Avenue. The large front window was made of multiple small panes of glass set in dull green wooden frames. The door was also wood, the same green, with a diamond pane window and a single stone step. Two six over

six windows on each of the upper floors. The buildings on either side were taller, modern brick, less than twenty years old. There was an open parking space right in front. I got a receipt from the cabbie.

I tripped an infrared device when I opened the door and heard a gentle *bong* sound from somewhere in back. Addison Antiquarian Books gave the impression of never having sold a single book. Every wall, except the front with the window and door, was floor to ceiling wooden shelves. Every shelf was stuffed with books and then more books were laid on top of those. A large carved wooden table stood in front of the main window with books stacked both on and under it. Another set of shelves, lower than the others, ran the length of the room down the middle from front to back. It was also packed, and piles lay on top and on the floor. The steep stairway along the left wall had shelves under it and above it climbing up to the second floor. Several steps held small stacks of books. A sign hung from the ceiling at the foot of the stairs with an arrow pointing straight up and the hand-lettered word “More”.

There was a narrow doorway in the far wall and a head poked out of it followed by its owner. The head was mostly bald but with a full fringe of long silver hair, sort of a Ben Franklin look. Half moon wire rim glasses added to the effect but the Phish T-shirt didn't.

“May I help you?” he asked. “Looking for anything in particular?”

“Looking for Mr. Addison?” I suggested.

His expression became confused. “Oh. I'm afraid your out of 43  
luck, then. He's dead.”

“Dead?”

“What, 17, 18 years? Seventeen. Bought the place in '89. He lasted for another three, four years. Came in almost every day right up to the end. Had no idea what he was doing by then, of course. Wouldn't let anything go for any price. Had to keep him away from the customers. Loved to dust, though. Right up to the end.” He shrugged. “Sorry.” He turned back into the doorway.

“Maybe you can help me?”

He stopped. “I'm not Mr. Addison.”

“You're the owner, though? I really need to speak to the owner.”

He stared at me like he'd caught me trying to play some kind of trick. Finally, he said, “Why didn't you say so? How can I help you?”

I pulled the screenshot from my jacket pocket, unfolded it and held it up for him to see. I started to say, "I'm looking for information on this thing you had up for auction..." but he turned away and disappeared through the doorway.

"More trouble than it's worth," I overheard him.

He didn't specifically say "Go away," and he didn't close the door to his office, or back room, or whatever it was, so I decided to follow. It was a tight fit. I had to turn sideways and hold the flaps of my jacket close to get down the aisle.

He was sitting at a massive, ornately carved desk pretending to study a very small, thick book with gold edges on the pages. I know he heard me come to the door.

"So why was it pulled?" I asked the back of his head.

He didn't turn around. I didn't think he was going to answer. "Owner died. Family pulled it back."

"I don't suppose I could talk to the family. Where can I find them?"

"Doubt it."

The phone rang. It was set on the answering machine but with the speakerphone on too so he could pick up if he wanted. The voice on the other end said, "Good morning. I am calling in regards to item number 21 from your current..." The voice cut off. Mr. not-Addison had reached over without looking and killed the speakerphone. The red light stayed on meaning the call was going to message memory. Didn't matter. I recognized "Mr. Smith's" voice.

"Popular item," I said.

"How can I contact the family?" I asked again.

"Vaduz," he said. "But keep me out of it. I want nothing to do with them again."

"Uh huh," I nodded. "Where's Vaduz?"

He raised an eyebrow and replied in a tone implying any fifth grader should know, "It's the capital of Liechtenstein." Which made my next question a little awkward.

"Uh huh. Where's Liechtenstein?"

# The Weaver's Tale

by Melissa Rasmussen

Lydia had worked with unmatched zeal the past week, stopping only when absolutely necessary, all the while resenting even small moments away from her loom. Her hair was pulled up in a messy, haphazard bun on top of her head. Chaotic strands of bright gold fell about her face and neck, catching the light streaming from the open window that fell upon her canvas.

She was a woman possessed, an artisan of the rarest kind who would not stop until her greatest work was done. She could feel it in the life force that ran surely through her veins. After all these years, first as apprentice to her Auntie Pallas, then as a much sought after craftswoman who always had more requests than time to complete them, she was *finally* creating her master piece. Inspiration flowed from her mind through her frenzied fingertips to the threads she wove in and out of the rapidly developing tapestry that was unveiling itself before her. With a frustrated sigh she impatiently pushed herself harder, increasing the pace until her weary hands were a blur of flurried motion. It was all in her head, the images and patterns for this tapestry. She wanted to get it all down right now. She needed to see it complete and true.

The impetus for this work had been the new materials. They had truly been her muse. She had never worked with such fine, such perfectly colored and textured threads and fibers. They had life in them! The dark claret color had been her first stimulus. When used as a dye it had made the richest, earthy red tones she'd ever seen. And the other vibrant, natural fibers she had acquired; when woven in and out with the thread every now and then had added fire and strength to the fabric. If only she had thought of it before now, her past tapestries would have the distinct brilliance of this one. Of course she had to use the shiny fibers sparingly. Though it added a sheen to her work that was unmatched, there was much less of it than there were the mounds of rich, scarlet thread stacked around her.

Two more days passed. Lydia slept only four hours between them and had berated herself for her weakness, mourning

the time lost. But now she was at an end. Not the end of her work, the end of red. She had more thread, but needed more dye. She needed more of the fiber too. It would not do to have one without the other.

Lydia looked about the main room for the first time in days, registering the utter disarray. There was dried stew splashed on the east wall. He had yelled at her before flinging the cast iron pot past her head, claiming it needed salt. Dry, brown bread and broken dishes were scattered across the floor. The table was on its side, one corner charred black. It had fallen too near the hearth and smoldered a little before the fire had gone out which had not been lit since. She had not noticed the crisp autumn air. Her focus had been on other things these past few days, though occasionally she'd shivered as she worked.

Rolling up her sleeves she began to set the room to order again. When that was done she took note of her own disheveled state. If she was to go to the village to get more red, she would need to look respectable.

With flint and tinder she lit the stove to heat water for bathing then drew the water from the well. While it came to a boil Lydia undressed. Letting her long, hair down she brushed until it was neat and smooth again, free of tangles.

Curious, she placed the brush on the table then carefully crept to the full length mirror which hung in the front hall to examine her body. A wry smile formed as she inspected every square inch of skin. The bruises had faded, even the ones by her eyes and along the left side of her torso, which had been among the worst. The cuts along her cheekbone and above her right eye were almost entirely mended as well. A hopeful sense of freedom and relief began to form. She took a deep breath which caught for a moment as she winced at the sharp ache. A few of her ribs were still knitting. They would take longer to heal. She clenched her jaw in determination. But they *would* heal.

After bathing luxuriously in steaming water and scented oil she calmly dried and arranged her hair. As she dressed she took careful stock of her situation. There was still the problem in her bedroom. She'd become aware that it was beginning to smell. "That might draw animals." She thought anxiously. In fact it was surprising the miasma had not already done so.

Abruptly she realized this probable dilemma was also her solution. With a grimace of pain, she took a deep breath and held

it then entered the room. Glancing with distain at the bulky, still form on the floor she opened the room's two large, low-set windows wide and threw back the shutters. As she left the room she closed the door behind her, making certain that the latch he had installed on the outside of the bedroom door clicked firmly into place. With any luck, what was left of her husband would be drug off in to the woods by the time she came back. Then she could purify and reclaim what had once been her only sanctuary.

"You might not be not as dumb as he liked to say you were," she thought with a sly chuckle as she threw her cloak about her. From the pantry, she gathered a large, woven basket in which she placed clay pots with tight lids to hold the dye and a sharp knife. She also placed in the basket a cloth bag to hold the fibers she needed. Closing and locking the front door she tucked the key in her bodice and started down the hill away from the woods.

As she walked she deliberated. The baker, like several of the men in the village, thought nothing of taking any wench he pleased whenever he pleased, even though he already had a wife. He was certainly more callous than some. He didn't care if the girls he took at his whim were exactly willing. And as was standard form, the constable usually turned a blind eye to the baker's roving one. The baker's wife, who frequently bore the marks of his rough treatment, was a capable woman. Minerva would probably be able to run the bakery better without him around to bother her anyway. And besides, the baker sported hair just like Lydia's husband had had. Being brothers, their flame orange waves and cruelty both ran in the family. "Yes," she thought, "the baker will do just fine."

Strolling merrily along the path to the village Lydia began to sing.

# What Helped Me to Learn to Read More This Year

by Paul L. Rosser

It took me a long time to get to where I am to learn to read. I have done more reading, writing, and spelling. I wrote and gave speeches this year.

Giving speeches helped me to learn to read more this year. I got to be a good writer to spell out the words. I gave speeches at the Utah Arts Festival, Literacy Action Center (FUND RAISER), Community Writing Center, and a church.

I've been reading the Old Testament Stories. I always wanted to read the Bible. It helps me with hard words. I read sixty books this year. I like books about Clifford. He is a big dog. It's interesting to read high school and college sports pages.

I go to the community college writing Class to learn to read and write. Going to class helps me to learn to spell better. I wrote about the Arts Festival, the Utah football championship game, and West High School Boy's State basketball championship. I wrote about going to Fort Douglas Museum.

I want to keep practicing the hard and easy words. I want to read all by myself.

Reasons:

Writing class

Speeches

Reading

Overview in 1<sup>st</sup> P. write, speech, read

What favorite books?

Why OT stories? Which like?

Examples of what wrote about.



# You are late

by Mary Garrity

You are late  
so I see your eyes in every face.  
So much time has passed that I know  
with a terrible kind of knowing, that you are not coming.  
Still I watch. Even children!  
It is foolish to wait longer.  
A moment more.  
It is very late.  
Foolish has just dissolved into ridiculous.  
Leaving is now a must.  
Perhaps I can salvage a little pride if I  
rise and leave with intense casualness.  
How stupid to be fighting tears.  
I've lost my cigarettes,  
my change,  
my mind.  
I am about to scream with both pain and panic.  
I have simply got to get out of here!  
Sweet God!  
My soul is exploding.  
You are here!

## America

Child beast.  
Bestial child.  
Exploding with confinement.  
Confining explosions.  
Happy to hate,  
Hating the happy.  
From puppy brutes  
to monster wolves.  
Nuclear valentines  
in a bow ribbon.  
Stand back!

Leave her alone  
Throw her a bone  
Stand back I say!  
America is dying  
Her death rattle is terrible.  
She has become toxic  
and wasted.  
Let her die her own crib death.  
Child Beast.  
Bestial child.

## Bus Ride

I ride the bus with a little man from Japan.  
And like his national characteristic, he is determined to live  
forever.  
He probably will.  
Over eighty and working in a hospital,  
his pride and his dignity are contagious.  
We all love him.  
He knows we love him.  
He sits with his son secure in his immortality.  
He will live always,  
rising always  
with his rising son.

# Excerpt from The Wee Poppets

by Greg Near

For weeks the girl Karrin had been saving her thin pennies. Each coin had a perfect hole in the center surrounded by the Queen's crown. Like many other children in the city Admintium, she knew she only needed to have eight little coins in order to gain admission to The Majestique Theatre of the Grande Enchantment.

In actuality, there was nothing majestic or grand about the small theatre. It was just a storefront sandwiched between a laundress' shop and a bakery. Often the smells of bleach or cinnamon (or both) were known to seep into performances at the Majestique. But one thing about the name was certainly accurate: there was a wisp of enchantment that floated through the theatre, like an insense that was both wholly exotic and comfortably familiar.

Karrin had gotten a sniff of that scent on exactly two occasions; her great-uncle Roberr took her to the Majestique the first time as a birthday gift in the winter, and her school teacher, Master Von Brakkel, rewarded his top three students with a trip to the theatre in the spring. After hearing the girl chatter on at every meal about the magical performances, her mother finally told her she would have to save her own pennies if she wanted to go again before her next birth anniversary. After that, when Karrin raised the subject, she was faced with the question, "And, so? Have you saved up enough pennies yet?" And when she replied, "No," her mother would ball up her rough, red hands, put them on her wide hips and say, "Then we'll thank you to spare us another recitation of the theatrical experience until you have gone again on your own penny." Her younger brothers snickered, and her stepfather looked at her sympathetically, and her resolution to return to the theatre rooted itself more firmly in her mind like a stikkelweed.

Karrin was determined to revisit the theatre by the end of the summer. Only eight pennies. Only. She would sometimes get a tiny dibbit for running to the market for the Countess who lived upstairs (who wasn't really a Countess at all, and even though all the neighborhood children knew that, they still maintained the old

woman's self-delusion that she was a foreign aristocrat in exile). Or a dibbit for carrying a sealed note from one end of the street to the other, down to the park, usually from one of the neighboring women to one of their elderly husbands playing cards or hopballast, telling them to come home for dinner. On one occasion she received three dibbits for carrying a bushel of salmon up five flights of stairs (though the smell clung to her clothes the rest of the day). But it took six dibbits to make a penny. Therefore it would take forty-eight errands or messages for her to earn the admission price. Forty-eight that actually paid, that is. Sometimes all she got was a pat on the head and a "Now that's a sweet girl."

Each night after that second trip to the theatre, after a hug from her mother and a kiss on the cheek from her stepfather, she would curl up in the cool sheets of her bed next to little Anders' crib, and relive walking through those heavy swinging doors. The doors with the ornate gold-leaf letters above them that read "The Majestique Theatre of the Grande Enchantment."

Into that dimly lit lobby, which was really no bigger than a sitting room, and up to the velvet-draped ticket booth. She dreamt of the girl with the long braids and crimson lips in that booth and of giving her eight precious pennies. In return, the girl would give her a tiny piece of golden foil with a crinkled edge all around: the yearned for ticket.

A mute boy at the entrance to the theatre collected the tickets into a tray from the patrons. Karrin knew he was mute because on her second admission, she had spoken to him in her excitement, remembering him from her first visit. He had opened his mouth and pointed at it, shrugging. His eyes, though, looked a little frantic, as if he were staring out at her from a window in a room that he couldn't escape. By the time she had gotten two steps into the theatre, the atmosphere swirling about her like mist, she felt as if she was floating to her red cushioned seat. A sweet scent enveloped her, like a forest after a cool spring rain.

The theatre itself was round, with the seats set on stepped, carpeted risers that looked down onto the diminutive stage where the performance would present itself. Plush curtains draped the walls, and a delicate glowing chandelier hung above the audience; it would be raised up into the ceiling by pullies and ropes before the performance began, and gaslamps would alight the stage area.

To one side of the stage was the most magical musical instrument Karrin had ever heard: the crystal-tubed harrmonium.

It had hundreds of clear, colored tubes rising up from a black lacquered base, the sparkling tubes all different lengths and sizes. It was turned on by the mute boy after the patrons had all taken their seats but before the chandelier ascended. He twisted a large key in the side of the mechanical device, and a clicking would begin deep inside it. Then, quietly at first, the tinkling, crystalline sounds like tiny bells would begin rising up from the harrmonium, sweet delicate melodies. Soon followed honeyed harp notes and colorful flute-like midtones, and then a resonant bass that made the floor of the theatre vibrate. When it was fully up to steam, the room had filled with wonderful music, harmonies and counterpoints played by a celestial orchestra. The lighting in the theatre shifted and the curtains pulled back on either side of the stage. That was when the real magic began.

The flickering gaslamps glowed golden on the stage, and the poppets began to appear. Not ordinary poppets, with haphazard painted faces, crude movements or tired storylines. The poppets of the Majestique were tiny and composed of the finest intricate workmanship anyone had ever seen; their faces each wore different expressions that seemed to flutter and change in the light, and their costumes of lace, frills and silk were like garments for miniature royalty that had been spun by bewitched spiders. Irridescent violet, jade and vermillion with sparkles woven through them like miniscule diamonds; cobalt blue strung together with cadmium and orange ribbons; toy shoes and slippers fit for a family of mice; tiny tiarras and wee jewels adorning the poppets.

First one floated through the air dressed as a princess, alighting on the stage on toepoint, twirling lithely to the music. She was joined by an acrobatic prince who tumbled and twisted around her, seducing her with his dance. Before long there was a pirouetting band of them on the stage, whirling in time with the rhythm and melodies of the harrmonium.

As the ballet of the exquisite toys continued, Karrin lost all sense of time. She could barely even detect the fine strings that controlled the poppets, and more than once the music and the story moved her to tears. The princess, thinking the prince no longer loved her, ran off into the woods where she was captured by a witch who was very beautiful and very evil. The witch, who lived in a hut made of human bones, turned the girl into a black crow so she could keep her as her familiar, and the prince would never recognize her. Karrin was completely mesmerized during the

transformation scene, when the princess poppet seemed to shrink within itself only to then unfold with black, feathered wings and the head of a bird.

The prince, whose fruitless search through the forest for the princess leaves him despondent, ends his journey by throwing himself off a cliff to his death, which broke Karrin's heart more the second performance, as she felt the dread of knowing what was going to happen. As the prince danced his final dance, she thought her heart would pound right through her chest, like a fist knocking to be let out.

The performance ended with the crow-princess outwitting the witch, trapping her in a spell of her own making and throwing her down a well, and being reunited with her family, though forever forlorn without her one true love. The music swelled and ended with a crash like the sound of all the crystal tubes shattering, but when the lights returned Karrin could see it was intact.

The audience roared and applauded their approval, some even stamping their feet and begging for an encore. No encore came. Instead the poppetmaster, Ivan Rokenholm, appeared from behind the curtains and bowed low. The barrel-chested man had a mop of dark curls on his head, and a bushy mustache that drooped below the corners of his mouth. His black eyes sparkled with the same intensity as the young boy's. He motioned for the crowd to quiet, and then he said in a thick, foreign accent, "Thank you very much for your coming to the Majestique Theatre of the Grande Enchantment. I hope some enjoyment you have found, and perhaps a little magic, in tonight's performance. Next month we present a new entertainment, the Tale of the Hedgehog King. Please to you to return again!"

He then stepped up to a richly dressed woman in the front row, bowed again and kissed her hand. They spoke in low voices for a moment, the poppetmaster nodding and smiling humbly, the rest of the audience waiting quietly.

Master Von Brakkel leaned over close to his three students and whispered, "It is the Marquise Vanderdahl." Karrin had no idea what a marquise was, but she knew from the way her teacher said it, and from the woman's clothing and demeanor, that she must be a very important person. Maybe even someone who had met the Queen herself.

Everyone waited for the Marquise and her entourage of beautiful young men to exit, bowing to her as she passed them,

before the theatre began to fully empty. Karrin asked if they could exit last, not wanting the experience to end. The other two students nodded up at the teacher as well, who then consented. Karrin was the very last patron to leave the theatre, and she couldn't help pausing and looking back over her shoulder at the darkened stage. The harmonium glistened as the golden light from the chandelier started to fade, and then Karrin saw something she was sure later that she must have imagined. Something she never told anyone about. Not even her Uncle Roberr. A tiny white hand appeared slightly pulling back the curtain on the stage. And then just as quickly, it disappeared. Karrin was stunned until her teacher called for her to catch up to the others.

In the darkness of her bedroom, reimagining the magic of the performance, she tried not to remember the sight of that miniscule hand peaking out and pulling the curtain back.

Remembering it made her feel cold and troubled.

# Who Stole the Voice

by Gerald Pickett

Born into the world an infant or  
Innocence, soon molded by  
Influence of parents and society,  
Of what other thing the child  
Should be: twist the little mind  
A little here and there—be subtle:

You should be a teacher or home  
Body baby maker, a football  
Player, a doctor, a pilot, and yes,  
Astronaut, but not an artist or  
Music merry maker; never the  
Poet; to effeminate for my boy!

No one listening to the unfolding  
Spirit, guiding a child into its talents  
And desires, joining the journey  
Of discovery of gift, to become a  
Vested partner in the enterprise;

No on listening to the voice, no  
One turning on the power of passion,  
Cultivating darkness, afraid of the  
Light.



# Auburn Venus

by Harold Davis, Ramona Maassen & Micheal Whitworth

The old man sat in the sun, partially shaded by the umbrella at the small café. On his table sat the small remains of grapes and cheese with a tiny amount of wine still in the glass that glimmered as the light flowed through it. Memories of times past began to flood his mind. Alberto Dorazi, half asleep thought of his one great love he left in Toscana.

Auburn tresses flowed over her olive, youthful cheeks. That was how he remembered her. Fifty years had passed since their parting, but still his senses tingled a half century and 5,000 miles later. The Second World War had been brutal for the young soldiers in Italy. All Alberto could remember though was the face of his beloved Esmeralda.

The invasion of the Italian boot had been successful, so far, and his unit had been cycled to the rear for much needed R&R. Alberto had a two week leave in his ancestral home of southern Italy. He had never been there and spoke only broken Italian, learned in his childhood in the Bronx.

He remembered when he first met her. He was 19, almost 20 and she was 17. She was combing the fields for any vegetables that might be overlooked after the farmers and soldiers had ravaged the near frozen ground. When she saw him she froze. Uncertain, whether to flee or welcome the young American soldier, she stood still.

“Boungiorino, signorina,” Alberto called to her from the road.

“Che cosa?”

She nervously pulled the scarf that wrapped her head. As it came loose, Alberto gasped in amazement. Her long flowing tresses made her seem to be Venus rising from the waters.

“What you want American soldier? What else you want from starving women and children?” She spoke in broken English.

Singor Botocelli’s “Birth of Venus” understated Esmeralda’s beauty in the eyes of the young, weary soldier.

“Lei parla inglese!” He replied, surprised she spoke English

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

“Si una poca. Yes, better than you speak Italiano”

They laughed heartily their breath forming small puffs of clouds in the cold morning. It was early December of 1943. Alberto hadn't even started to think of the Christmas holidays with the excitement of the war. Coming from out of the cover of the trees were several other people, Alberto saw the group consisted of a few old women and three young malnourished children of various ages.

“Are you hungry?” he asked, making the universal sign, for eat, the thumb and first two fingers placed against pursed lips.

“Si, Si,” she responded laughing at his juvenile attempts at communication.

He produced a variety of foods: fruit, dried meat, and a few other items. She smiled and the family guided him to their small villa. If it hadn't been for the war, the home would have been more amazing. They gathered what little they had including a rustic red wine and created meal that would remind him of the beauty of Italy. The simple ingredients made a wonderful meal; pasta with the rustic wine.

He stayed the night, staying up with Esmeralda. Talking and laughing over each other's attempts to communicate. The glow from the tiny fire flickered across her face. His strict Catholic upbringing kept him from ravishing the young beauty as much as his teenage hormones egged him on. They spent a chaste, enjoyable evening into the wee hours of the morn.

The following week, Alberto was injured in a fire fight. He was returned home before he could ever return to the maiden that touched him forever.

At the café, the waiter came over to shake the old man. His spirit was gone. A gentle smile was all the old man left behind.

# Emotional Armor

by Barry Kesler

I shifted and prepared myself to lift the lid of my emotional coffin then stopped. I asked myself, “was I well enough to go out into public without my emotional armor? Could I handle the searing white light of truth? Or were the wounds simply too deep and too fresh?” I tried to settle my mind for the pain of truth and shoved one more time at the lid as it gave way. It felt like the sticky sweetness of warm molasses as it began to pull away from my skin. In its place there was not anticipated pain, only the white light of truth.

The world began to spin and the nausea became a roiling torrent of confusion, I knew I was going to pass out but could do nothing to stop it. I had to simply find a place to sit down before I fell down.

The wave of nausea passed just before I felt the lights begin to wink out and my head began to clear. The fog of anticipation that had locked me in this cage of fear began to dissipate. I slowly began the arduous process of freeing my mind from my perceived fears. Fears that had haunted me since childhood like a ghoul from seasons past never relenting its hold on my innocence or youth.

How had I lived for such a long time and never seen this light? It was not as painful as I had perceived it. It was difficult to look at at first glance, yet it held a warm sense of comfort and peace. I remember my mother’s gentle touch as she wiped away the tears of a skinned knee, gently fussing amid kisses of kindness and words of calm.

Even now at the age of 48, she was still there, waiting her Phoenix to arise yet again from the ashes of his former self. A priestess of passion, calm and understanding that could always shed a light in the dark places of pain and excess.

So who was the armor there to protect? A shy weak boy who would crumble at the first sign of conflict? Or a mother who for far too long raged at the world for the injustices dealt her son? Maybe it was there to protect them from each other. The Boy who would refuse to be a Man, and the Woman who could not stave

off the rancor of a troubled world any longer? Could the two be reconciled? Perhaps the armor had become a tomb because I allowed it. Perhaps it was there because I needed it and it would not be when it was no longer essential.

Yet here I was, the armor washing away like the cleansing of a gentle spring rain. Could I learn to live without it? It seemed though I would soon find out!

# Our American Flag

by Ramona Maassen

While I was painting a picture of the American flag, these thoughts passed through my mind. I believe in our flag as a symbol of the principles and ideals our forefathers fought to instill in our country. The blue stands as a unifying field, our federal government, in which all of our states have a voice. To me, the white stars signify the rights of each state to govern those individuals within its borders. Red stripes are the blood and the sacrifice of the men and women who gave their lives and liberty for the betterment of all Americans. The white stripes stand for the principles we strive to achieve for all of us.

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

# All the Right Romantic Lines

by John Wilkes

*As a CWC group mentor, I'm always desperate for ways to challenge myself and the writers in my group. While listening to music one day, I reflected upon how songs were just verse, or some other form of poetic or creative writing, accompanied by music. I suggested a writing exercise which involved turning any song into a short story. This was my contribution. See if you can identify the song and artist which inspired it. -JW*

"I feel a little bit funny asking you here," said Reginald as he sipped his tea.

"Nonsense," replied Bernard, slipping off his coat and sitting across the table. What good's a mate if he can't be rung up in the middle of the night and asked to risk catching his death in the pouring rain to run halfway across London to help a bloke, eh?"

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be, Reggie."

"Coffee please, Love," Bernard ordered from a passing waitress. "Sweet, with milk."

"We could've shared my tea, Bernie."

"Thanks, but I need something a bit stronger if you want my full attention." The waitress returned and set Bernie's coffee in front of him, with a sugar bowl, a small pitcher of cream, and a spoon. Bernie thanked her, then turned back to his friend.

"Cheers!" he proclaimed as they both lifted their cups. "So what's it this time, Reg?" he asked. Another bird got you down?"

"I don't give a fig about bloody birds, Bernie," Reginald hissed. "All the girls I meet are silly cows. It's the song writing. It's driven me mad. I'm about to throw it all in."

"Ah. That again," Bernard grinned and leaned back in his seat. "If I had a pound for every time I'd heard that...."

"I mean it this time."

"And the queen's a bleedin' alien!" Bernard announced. He leaned forward to pat Reginald on the arm. "You can't quit writing songs now can ya, Reg? It's who you are; it's what you do; it's what

makes you such a special bloke.”

“I’m not so sure anymore, Bernie,” he sighed. “I’ve been at it so long. Ten years and still struggling. I’ve never made any real money from it.” He paused to pour more tea into his cup. “Maybe I should’ve been a doctor, like me mum and dad wanted. Or a painter. Or a sculptor like you. At least then I’d be creating somethin’ real, somethin’ solid, somethin’ people spend real money for.”

Bernard glanced sidelong at his friend. “We’ve turned this over and about again and again. It’s not about the money.” He bowed his head and paused briefly. “You would be a miserable wretch doing anything other than music.”

“I’m miserable anyhow,” Reginald lamented. “I’m frustrated and lonely. If I took some real work I could make enough to buy a big ‘ouse in the countryside, outa this bloody city.”

“What ya gonna do with a big ‘ouse?” Bernard interrupted.

“You’d miss yer rat hole of a flat and all the city business, the clubs, the plays.”

“No I wouldn’t,” Reginald continued. “I’d buy a big ‘ouse, where we both could live. You could have a studio in it for your art pieces. I could keep at writing songs on the weekend.” He smiled at the thought, blushing a bit pink.

“You’re mad you know?” Bernard dismissed. He caught the waitress’ attention and pointed to his cup. “So what’s so damn special about this song that’s got you so wound up?”

“It’s a love song.”

“A love song?” Bernard was nonplussed. “Since when do you write bloody love songs?”

“Since last week.”

“Well, that’s the problem then innit?” The waitress had arrived to top of Bernard’s coffee, and he took another sip. “You can’t really write a bloomin’ love song unless you’re in love, now can you?”

“I know.”

“Oh-ho,” Bernie chuckled, “So it is about a bit o’ fluff then?”

“If you say so.” Reginald put a fiver on the table for his tea and biscuits, reached for his coat and stood. “Look. Thanks for coming, Bernie. I really should be going.”

“Wait a minute.” Bernard gulped down the rest of his coffee, took a couple of wadded up bills from his pocket, threw them on the table and grabbed his overcoat. “I’ll walk you to your

flat.”

“I can get a cab.”

“Don’t splurge. It’s stopped raining. The walk will be nice, and you can tell me more about this damnedable song that’s got your knickers in a twist.”

“Reggie smiled weakly, “All right.” He put his jacket on and they strolled toward the door.

Once outside in the fog, they walked a bit without talking. Bernie lit a cigarette and offered one to Reginald.

“No thanks. Bad for the voice.”

“You fancy yourself a crooner now too then?”

“Not really,” Reginald admitted. “Though it would be nice to perform my own stuff for a change, rather than hearing everyone else doing it.”

“You’re putting too much on yourself,” Bernie suggested.

“Maybe you’re right.”

“Of course I am.” Bernard took a drag from his cigarette, then crushed it out under foot. “Look Reggie. You’re a brilliant pianist and one helluva song writer. But you’re no pop star. Just write your song. Let someone else worry about making it a hit.”

“I’m tired of being to the back of the queue all the time, keepin’ quiet.” Reggie explained. “This tune is too personal to relinquish to someone else.”

“That’s all well and good, mate. But you can’t let the complications bog you down.” Bernard lit another smoke. “If I worried about getting a show, or selling every single vase, pot, or statue I create, the work would suffer.”

“I suppose so,” Reginald conceded. “Anyway thanks. We’re here.” He fished in his pocket, found his keys, and started up the walk.

“Wait up then,” Bernard shouted after him “Got any booze?” I could do with a nightcap against the chill night air. Take the edge off the caffeine.”

Reginald turned hesitantly. “Come on then,” he said, and motioned his friend toward the door. “Hercules will be glad to see you.”

Bernard stepped inside and before he could shed his coat or Reginald could close the door behind them, a tabby leaped from the sofa, trotted over to the entryway and began dancing at Bernard’s ankles.

“Hallo puss! “Bernard bent down to stroke the large cat,



who immediately shot off back to his perch and began to clean himself nonchalantly.

“Naught but a tease, that cat.”

Reginald took his guest’s coat and hung it in the closet alongside his own. “He’s always liked you. He went to the kitchen, then bent down and began to rummage through the cupboard beneath the counter. He stood again and set three bottles on the bar. “Vodka, peach schnapps, or bourbon?” he asked.

Bernard had sat sown on the sofa and was petting Hercules, who rolled over and purred. “Whiskey neat.” Reginald fetched some orange juice and ice from the stainless steel refrigerator-freezer, then took down two glasses from an overhead cupboard. He poured three fingers of Jim Beam in one glass, then mixed himself a Screwdriver. He brought the drinks into the living room and set them on coasters on a low table. He plunked into a Chippendale across from Bernard.

“Cheers, mate” Bernard took a big drink of bourbon. “So tell me more about this song.”

Reginald sipped gingerly from his glass, then set it down. “Well, like I said, it’s a love song, but it’s a little bit funny.” He stood and began to pace. “It’s about someone who has feelings for another someone and doesn’t quite know how to tell them. One can’t quite describe the feeling inside, but finds that their affection is not easy to hide any longer.”

“Sounds complicated.”

“It is,” Reginald admitted, “but I’m trying to keep it quite simple. It’s what the one in love – in the song – wants, you see. “

“ I think so.” Bernard took his drink in hand, fished out a cigarette from the pack in his shirt pocket, lit it, then continued. “What’s keeping this person in the song from just coming right out and saying exactly what they feel?”

“Shyness. Fear perhaps. And the aforementioned complexity.” Reginald moved to a corner of the room where there sat a baby grand, and seated himself on the bench.” The music’s representative of the unexpressed emotions.” He opened the key cover and looked down. “I’ve finished that. It’s the lyrics that have me stumped. I just can’t find the words. The right romantic lines.”

Bernard joined his friend at the piano with both drinks. He handed the Screwdriver to Reginald. Hercules jumped up on the piano bench, then pounced into Bernard’s arms. “Well, let’s hear it then.” Reginald poured the remainder of his drink down his throat,

set the empty glass on the bench beside himself, wiggled his fingers like a Vaudeville minstrel, then began to play.

The keys tripped the hammers which struck the strings gently. A soft melody and counter melody of interwoven notes vibrated throughout the room. Reginald's eyes were closed as he lost himself in his playing. He swayed left and right, back and forth, working the keys and pedals perfectly. The chorus and verses complimented each other without overwhelming one another through grandiose crescendo or flamboyant flourish. As he struck the last chord, Reginald's sat straight and still on the bench arms hanging in the air as if he was casting a spell. After all sound had dissipated, he opened his eyes and his hands fell onto his lap.

"What d'ya think?"

"Brilliant."

"I wrote it for you, Bernie. I hope you don't mind. It's your song."

"See?" Bernard whispered as he wiped a tear from his eye. "That wasn't so hard to say now was it?" He released the cat and sat down on the bench next to Reginald. Let's write this tune together."

"Yours are the sweetest eyes I've ever seen," he breathed in Reginald's ear.

And they kissed.

# Great Grandpa's Model T

by Kyle Luke

Back when there were no automobiles, everyone rode horseback. The same was true with my Great Grandpa Allen. He traveled on saddle and horse wherever he needed to go.

Being conservative, he was careful saving his money, and when the Model T Ford first came out for sale, he purchased one.

Before having the truck delivered, he built a garage especially for his new automobile. The Salesman told him:

“You can have any color you want, as long as it is black.”

The day it was delivered Great Grandpa Allen, dressed in his Sunday best, waited for the salesman to bring it from Richfield. They pulled up and gave him some last instructions, and hopped in the spare car they had brought to take them back home. He waited until they had left and then he cranked the truck with the wide open. It choked a little and with a “kaboom” it came to life. He climbed onto the seat and pushed in the clutch, and placed the transmission in gear.

He started going forward with a “bang bang” as the four piston engine roared. He took his truck up and down the streets of Kingston. Everyone in town came out the front door to see the first automobile in Piute County. He waved wildly, letting everybody know how much he was enjoying his new toy.

Finally, he headed back home to park his truck in the new garage he had built for it. As he approached the garage, suddenly you heard Great Grandpa Allen yelling:

“Whoa, Whoa, Damn it, Whoa!” as the truck went into the garage and then a “Ka-bang” as it hit the back wall. The force completely took the wall completely off the foundation and flat onto the ground behind the garage. The truck traveled out the back and stopped dead after it hit a big cottonwood tree.

After that he went back to horseback riding for two months, before he attempted to ride in His Model T again.

*sine cervi: What I Think  
People Think About*

# March Forth

by Fran Crookston

According to the Declaration of Independence, all men (but I have decided to include myself and other women because I consider the more correct word Thomas Jefferson should have used to be adults) have unalienable rights including the pursuit of happiness. Ultimately, without the hope of happiness life and liberty (other unalienable rights also mentioned) don't particularly matter although life and liberty are essential to happiness. Although being around happy people is more pleasant than those who aren't, one person's happiness doesn't translate automatically to the next person. What gives me happiness would not necessarily even interest others and they might actually get depressed by the words, thoughts, and activities that I find joyful.

While engaged in fun activities you may feel happy; however there is a certain sadness that comes when faced with a decidedly unpleasant aspect of life if you pursue happiness by simply doing fun stuff. The memories of the fun activity cannot sustain happiness through the difficulties of life. Happiness is sustainable through life's troubles by developing the vision and personal confidence by exploration of finding values; it can't be done by just hearing and knowing what others think and it is found by coming through the mistakes one makes.

With finding personal happiness in mind, march forth is a directive that I give to everyone with the caveat that I want them to set out on the path of their choosing. Do you know where you are going? Why did you choose this path? Did you choose the direction you are going or is it the path that came by default or someone else? What are roadblocks that inhibit your journey? Ultimately, what do you want?

Rather than answer me, please ask yourself these questions because your answers are much more instrumental to you going where you want than my answers to what I suspect you have in mind. But this is the fundamental

component of what it is to be an American; we get to choose the answers to those questions for ourselves. So on this March Fourth, go out and march forth!

# Anna Goes Off Her Meds

From *Read My Lips*  
by Steven A. Dame

I didn't want to take anymore meds. What if the new medicine caused a rash? I never wanted to be that way again. Besides, I was feeling good. Why did I need to take them in the first place?

I hid them under my mattress, like little yellow pieces of candy. I never liked it when they forced them on me anyway. I was always being watched. I knew the word for that: Paranoid. I was Paranoid Anna, unraveling the lives of everyone I met.

I was "cute Anna"—a tiny little thing that caught the eye of every guy in school. That was so strange. You think they'd be looking at girls their own size. Or did they watch to see what trouble I would get into next?

I was Aunt Nicole's Anna: Sit up straight, eat all your food. Stop chewing your nails...Of course I love you, dear."

I was my boy friend Josh's Anna: I love you but we can't have sex until some far distant future when we're old and gray. You're mine. You're always mine. I love you and I'll never let you go. Don't you know I'll love you forever?"

It seemed that Blaze was the only "person" I could talk to. I ran my hands over her smooth, reddish-brown coat. I hugged her and told her, I love you and I'll never let you go.

But I didn't fool Joseph, the Navajo. He knew my moods. I think he read my mind better than Nicole did.

"Why are you so busy today? You're rushing around the horses so fast you're going to scare them!"

We were in the barn, one of my favorite places, where the hay smelled like springtime. I'd been off my meds for three days.

"You're different today, little dove. Have you had too many Mountain Dew's? You haven't been chewing tobacco, have you?"

Josh came in, my favorite cowboy. I blew Joseph a secret kiss and hung up the curry comb.

I jumped on Josh's back and kissed his neck.

"Whoa, girl!"

I dropped down, pulled him by his hand out of the barn, and kissed him some more.

*Let's go to Jerry's for a Coke. Let's go out with Kim and Matt tonight. Do you think I can get a car? If I had a car I could drive you around. Do you think Dalton will help me get a car? Does your Dad have a car for me? Do we cook tonight? How was work today? Aren't you glad we didn't have school today?* School was out because that Friday was a teacher preparation day.

"Anna..." He rolled his eyes. "I'm tired. I just want to go home."

*You never do what I want. What's wrong with you? You're supposed to be my boyfriend. It's Friday night! You're boring, Josh. Get away from me!* I pushed him away.

I skipped ahead of him, stomping in the muck and the puddles. *Just take me home if you don't want to be with me!*

"Anna, I—"

*I just want one little thing, and you can't do it!*

"What do you want?"

*I'm your girl friend. You should love me. It's like we're married but we're not. All I want is things that are fun, and you just want to go home. That's stupid. You're stupid!*

On the way home I thumped the dashboard loudly until he pried my hand off and said, "Stop it. What 's wrong with you?"

*Just go ahead. Hit me. It will be out first fight. I'll be the battered spouse. Oh Josh!* I started to cry.

He pulled over. He touched my shoulder but I slapped his hand away. *I don't know what's wrong with me.* I sobbed into the window, thinking: I only get along with windows and horses and empty rooms. I have no friends and now I'll lose my best friend.

He put his arm around me and patted my shoulders like I was a little child who had fallen down and scraped her knee.

*I always mess things up. I just want to die. I was rude to you. I'm so sorry, I—*

He held me—the little girl who wouldn't grow up. "It's O.K."

*I've been rude to Nicole. I've said bad things to her, too. I don't know what's wrong with me.*

When we got home, Nicole stood in the doorway. Her eyes were red and her nose had been running. "We need to talk, Anna. Josh, you may as well hear this too."

She flipped on the light above the kitchen sink to make the room brighter. We sat at the table. I felt my heart pounding. My hands sweated.

She came toward me slowly. Her fist was so tight I thought she was going to hit me. Her brow was furrowed, and her eyes were wide open, and angry. The pills fell from her hand onto the table in front of me—little pebbles of guilt.

"It's good I change your bedding once a week. What's your excuse for this?"

Nothing was worse than Nicole's rage. I put my head into my hands and wept, like the bad girl I was and always would be.



# The Quarnk

by Hal Davis & Michael Whitmworth

The small hairy monster was biting on Tam's toes. He had already reached the first knuckle on the little toes and was working his way in to Tam's fourth toe.

Tam awoke with a shock. "What do you think you are doing?" He asked while pushing the beast away.

The beast rolled and quickly recovered and scurried back to the digits, chatter as it went. It resumed his feast finishing the fourth tow and moving on to the middle tow before Tam could react. He continued to giggle and push it away.

Its features were catlike. It has sharp teeth and a small triangle nose, however its long ears drooped over the side of its head like a basset hound. It stood about seven inches high and about eight inches long. Its fur stood on end as if it was the ball on a Van de Graff generator. Tam in his groggy post sleep couldn't match reflexes with the fur ball beast.

Its fur was soft. So soft, that most bunnies were jealous. When Tam as alert and ready for its onslaught, he would take hold of it and pet for as long as it would allow. Its fur was an unearthly yellow with tan stripes that made it look like a beach ball. The yellow fur glowed slightly in the dark room. Its voice was more of a squeak than anything else.

"Squeak, Squeak, Squeak," it chattered softly as it continued to consume one digit after the other. Soon it would be almost to the ankle of Tam's left foot. Blood was starting to cover the blue tile of Tam's kitchen.

"Fine! Fine!" Tam huffed. "I am making you breakfast." Tam pulled the rude creature from his foot. He held it by the ears. "Let me clean this up."

The creature, called a Quarnk, wriggled free from Tam's grasp and immediately starting in on the right foot.

Tam huffed and reached for the towel he kept next to the bed for moments like this. First, he wiped his leg and then threw the towel over the Quarnk.

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

73

“I have had enough of this for now. Do we really need to go through this every morning?”

The discomfort of being eaten was beginning to grow. He wasn't in pain. He knew the little beast would fill up eventually and then he could get on with his day.

The Quarnk continued breakfasting its way farther up Tam's limbs. He was now into the meaty thighs and showed no sign of slowing let alone stopping. Tam started cooking while standing on his emaciated legs.

When the Quarnk reached the groin area Tam became fully conscious. Shaking the sleep from his head he realized he was still whole. As consciousness fully aroused his ravaged body Tam groaned to himself.

“Damn I've got to talk to the doc about these damned meds.”

# An American Dream

by Hal Davis

For many years I have had a dream. A dream I am seeing fulfilled. On 13, January, 2009 I suddenly realized the juxtaposition of two upcoming events. I sat and penned this remembrance of what I felt at a very historic time for our nation and mankind. This is that piece.

Two score odd years ago a man younger than I am today said, "I have a dream." That man was the late Dr. Martin Luther King. Part of his stated dream was that our children would be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

It was quite fitting that January 19<sup>th</sup> the day before Barack Obama's inauguration as the first U.S. president of African-American roots, has been set aside to commemorate that birth of the man who expressed his dream, some forty odd years before this historic occasion. I only wish Dr. King and his wife were alive with us this year, to see that dream come to flesh.

The excitement, which comes to my breast, is not that Mr. Obama is of African descent, but that America has embraced him for the content of his character. These events renew hope in the American ideals that were iterated by our founding fathers in the Declaration of Independence, that we all are created equal. Growing up, I took those words quite literally. It does my heart good to finally see them bear fruit.

This January 20<sup>th</sup> will be especially significant. I am proud to be an American, particularly at this time. It is well past time that we live up to those ideals, rather than just espousing them, and practice them as sacred and important. It is nice to see that we got one right, this time. Let us hope it's not the last one.

There is still dissension, but that is the American way. We need to allow room for those who do not agree with our view points and philosophies. But I do hope dissension will not grow til we must add a fourth name to the old song, *Abraham, Martin and John*, that of Barack.

*sine cervi: What I Think  
People Think About*

Love is the key.



Love is like a breeze,  
so gentle and calm.



Love is like the Ocean,  
so beautiful and so free.



Love is like the Sun,  
so bright, warm and friendly.



Love is like a flower,  
blooming in the light.



Love is like a tree,  
it grows stronger every year.



Love is like a rainbow,  
so full of color and cheer.



Love is like an apple,  
so wonderful and delight.



Love is like a bowl of honey  
and vinger  
sometimes sweet, sometimes bitter.

by Katrina

# Love is the Key

by Katrina DeMille

Love is like a breeze,  
so gental and calm.  
Love is like the ocean,  
so beautiful and so free.  
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so bright, warm and friendly.  
Love is like a flower,  
blooming in the light.  
Love is like a tree,  
it grows stronger every year.  
Love is like a rainbow,  
so full of color and cheer.  
Love is like an apple,  
so wonder and delight.  
Love is like a bowl of honey and vinegar,  
sometimes sweet, sometimes bitter.

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

# She is More

by Elizabeth Ernstsen

Don't you say that she is only an animal! ONLY! ANIMAL! She is more—much more than that. “What a cute pet” you say. No she is not a pet, she is more, much more. “Oh, a service animal?” you ask. No, she is not just a working service animal—she is more, much more. “She is so small and cute! She is a service animal? What does she do? What do you need her for?” Wow, there are so many ignorant people! I must find a nice way to say: “It is none of your blank-blank-blank business!” Whew! How do I say it without the colorful metaphors? Some say to me: “A companion dog? I'll be with you.” She is more, much more. My cute GiGi is more than humans can ever be! She is NOT my pet. She is more! She is NOT just a dog. She is more! She is NOT just a working dog. She is more, much more! What others very seldom understand is very hard to explain, but I will try just this one time.

My sweet GiGi is my gift from God. A gift I hope will be with me for as long as the grace and mercy of God will allow. She is one of a kind! I feel we are kindred spirits and joined at the hip. There is a connection that separation is extremely painful as if we are part of each of each other. She is more than I could have ever expected to imagine! She was set aside for me in the most mysterious ways which I don't comprehend. I just know the day I walked into the critter shop, with the pink dinosaur outside on the corner, there she was at four months old. She was some how not taken yet which I don't understand why. There she sat and when our eyes met—wow—love at first sight yet more—much more. She was wagging her whole body, not just her tail. She was more than I thought a small white toy poodle could have ever been! I held her in my arms trying to not drop this small bundle of wiggles! In time we both calmed down after our first embrace. I sit down with her on my lap and I get a thorough bath of puppy kisses. She washes away all of my

germ a phobia with all those very wet, very earnest, unable to count millions of puppy kisses. Such a transformation I me with her can only be explained best as: “A miracle.” She truly is my special gift from God. I never imagined such a miracle as she is!

Wow! After years of not being with my babies, watching them grow from a distance and raised by my enemy, their father! I didn’t realize how very painful it was. I love my babies and I love holding babies. I guess that love will never die. I wasn’t sure why my doctor recommended I get a dog, but now I know. When I pick up my GiGi, I am picking up my babies and embracing them in my arms with all my love. She is more than that even to me. In the five years we have been together I am realizing that I am not only embracing her or my babies, gone from me years ago, but I am embracing myself. Odd as it sounds, it is me I am embracing with love for the first time.

Never being good enough in my whole life for humans, I find I am just right when GiGi is in my arms or lying beside me. We are part of each other in ways that I have yet to find words to express. When I hurt and the pain begins, she knows before I know and is on my lap or in my arms. It has taken me years to figure this one thing out. It feels so good to have such unconditional love that she so willingly gives to me. I pray that I can return it to her just as much if not more—a love so difficult for humans to give or even understand. A love, only I felt from my babies so long ago. She is more; my GiGi is, more than I have ever felt. She is so unique and when she goes back to God she will take a big part of me. But for as long as we are together I will embrace the love we both give each other.

To tell others why I have a service dog I will not simply say: “Doctor’s orders!” If they keep asking I will say: “None of your business!” To be honest I will probably use the blank-blank-blank words until others’ questions no longer irritate me.

## An Anecdote

by Shirley Fifer

Winter was fun in Montana, I went innertubing with a cub scout troop.

I was riding on a big truck tube with a big 300 lb mother of a cub, who screamed

all the way down the hill. I was a skinny high school girl over balanced on the tube

It was such ridiculous sight I nearly fell off the tube laughing.

The cubs were all concerned

over the terrified mother. One of the boys turned his cap around so he wouldn't get

snow in his face. Of course he ran head first into a tree.

80

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

## Anecdote

a bully was standing in the swing at recess and wouldn't let my sister have a turn.

She went to a mud puddle and brought back

some mud. He said if you throw that on my shoes

I'll beat you up. So she threw it in his face instead.



# Earth Day

by Shirley Fifer

How dare it rain on Earth Day?  
We've been waiting for spring  
To get out and weed  
And now it rains.

The millions of daffodils  
Are beautiful at the library  
But who can read a book  
In the spring. The soil calls!

The tulips at Thanksgiving Point  
call. It better not rain  
Next Monday. Take an umbrella  
go see the tulips. Once a year.

Why not bulbs in the fall?  
Spread the beauty around  
instead of red and brown  
Denoting the end

You can get the garden ready  
for winter. Ugh.  
Plan for some color in the snow  
Put a smile on your face.

# Haiku

by Shirley Fifer

the smashing red of the  
tulips, tiny bowls of color  
after the acres of snow

the crocus are gone,  
the daffodils almost!  
Spring is too short

spring color is fleeting  
warm weather too  
cooking hot is coming.

82

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

# Haiku

the day is grey, calm  
there should be wind and snow  
a march blizzard.

winter is unfriendly  
add 50 lbs of clothing  
only the snowman's a pal

sleeping in a warm cave  
in a 3 inch fur coat  
a 4 month nap, oh boy

mummy it's snowing outside  
can we go out and play?  
go back to sleep it's only January

# Lovely Winter

by Shirley Fifer

softly falling snowflakes  
the weatherman said we'd get 14 inches.  
We need all the soft rain we can get.  
Noone likes a drought  
especially in farming country  
the sourpusses say the like snow  
as long as it's in the mountains.

Mother nature doesn't always be kind  
When she delivers. First there'll be  
howling winds and snow drifts to  
hide the car. The roads are slick  
and make the footing treacherous.  
The cars slide into the ditch  
and into each other.

The snow is so thick the drivers  
can't see what's ahead of them  
the children are so excited the  
driver can't think so he yells at them.  
Mom says Happy winter. Let's go home.  
Then mom will yell at dad for  
yelling at us. Sshh be quiet. It's  
safer.

# Slogans

by Shirley Fifer

A smile is better than a scowl  
but if it's unusual it may kill you

Happiness is contagious  
pass it on

If you must frown  
do it in the mirror.  
You deserve it.

# Worthy

by H. Rachelle Graham

falling  
brand arm pink  
ignore eyes  
triangular gas  
shout to village cloud  
not worthy  
clog pennies in my broken bones  
starve heat  
force me tea  
hell party  
black roses  
crucifix  
baptize dawn  
sew clit  
pin parts  
judge me Eve  
Adam rape  
bleed insides dry  
angels cry  
gender is Worthy  
burn  
every tear  
shadow outcast  
karma hit you dear  
secret lies of gold  
justify storm  
age-old book

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

85

blood endless  
ignore my pleas  
bless AIDS  
lifestyle choice  
is not the light  
truth inside  
scale unworthy

Vampire  
thirst heaven  
sing to a statue  
for I sing  
to you  
in light  
all Worthy

tears fade  
souls heal  
forgiving  
blue veins  
wiser  
Goddess

spit then swallow  
entice Guardian  
I alone  
declare myself  
Worthy

# Dichotomy

by Christine Lee

In fifth grade I joined the volleyball team. I distinctly remember changing into shorts and a jersey with my friend B.J. We had ducked into a hall restroom. When she saw me with my top off, she said, “You need a bra.”

“You really think so?”

“Yeah, look at me.” she said, drawing attention to her chest with her hands. Though flat, she looked very young lady like in her training bra.

I started wearing lose fitting tops in an effort to hide my new found young womanhood.

More than anything I wanted to blend, the thought of standing out for good or ill terrified me.

One of my favorite Friends episodes shows Phoebe and Joey at Central Perk. She’s sharing her concern that there must be something wrong with her because the guy she’s dating hasn’t made a move. Joey tells her one of the first things he commented to his friends about her was that she has a cute butt and great rack.

“Really?” she asked, then added, “I’m officially offended, but thanks.” This dichotomy is typical of the female experience. As women we want to be judged on our merits without the cloud our perceived beauty or plainness puts before the lens. Notwithstanding, it’s always nice to be noticed and appreciated. So we’re constantly warring within about what to wear or how to present ourselves.

I realized this once again while donating blood. I asked my phlebotomist, “Is she OK?” referring to a gal with five techs hovering. She confirmed my guess.

“It doesn’t take five people to stick one donor, they’re ogling her breasts.”

Despite my efforts to conceal myself and prevent flopping or flapping, jealousy toward a complete stranger with five onlookers at her side welled up in me ‘til the voice inside my head shouted, if she gets five my breasts are worthy of - at least three!



# Life's Trails

by Joyce Luttrell

Seems like yesterday when  
Life was so simple, so uncomplicated.  
I suppose you would say  
Well, those day's have dissipated.  
That is a shame, because,  
Life it self hasn't changed  
It's everything around us,  
Seems totally out of range  
People are still the same.  
Thinking we still know it all.  
But people just the same  
Two arms, two legs, short some tall.  
We don't think much different  
Then we did back when,  
Except we learned so much more,  
Then we did back then.  
But as a whole you and I  
Still care, still love, have compassion  
But guess we just do it  
In a whole different fashion  
Some say we make so little,  
Money isn't as plentiful  
As it used to be again  
We don't need the life of bountiful.  
So why do we think  
The way that we do.  
I don't have much more now  
Or eat any less then I used to.  
I don't know about you  
I'm really quite content.  
Except living till ninety,  
On this I'm really quite bent.  
But all in all my friend,  
Again I will reiterate,

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

Life to me is preferably a gas.  
But if so, we could debate.  
Life to me is of the essence,  
And living is what I'm up to,  
Life's not really a trial  
It's living your best, it's all up to you.

# Love

by Joyce Luttrell

I search my soul for the  
meaning of love. There is so much to be  
Said for the meaning of  
something, so very few really have a  
feeling for. I too may be one of  
them, all I can do is express my feelings  
for what I believe to be love. To me,  
I don't believe that anyone person could  
ever put love into a few words.  
Love is something you must feel. Not  
physically, or mentally but body  
and soul. There is love for many things,  
A puppy, a tiny kitten, a love for  
food, our love for writing, for friends, I  
could go on and on, but there is  
one Very special kind of love, that is love of  
your soul mate. That one very sweet  
And loving friend, sweetheart, lover in your  
life. That one heart that was and  
still is the one that makes your heart  
Beat just a little fast when he or  
she thought of. That is the kind of love  
that keeps the twinkle in your eye, a  
flame in your heart, the sparkle in your  
life. I don't believe this happens to  
every one a love like that come only to the  
True in heart, to someone that  
gives their all, who are willing to sacrifice  
much and are willing to give up  
Much of what they have had for a life of  
never ending love. Love to me is  
that warm fuzzy feeling you get just  
thinking of that special someone.  
To look into their face seeing the glow you

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

91

cause just by saying I need a hug.  
Saying goodnight and by the way, I love  
you. Having your counterpart say  
to you, have I told you today how beautiful  
you are. Knowing these are his  
Heartfelt feeling for you. This is love  
without boundaries. Love from the  
bottom of your heart, love without any  
strings, a love that our Lord Jesus  
Christ tried so hard to teach in his three  
short years of His Ministry. Love he  
felt for all, not just the human race, every  
single creature on earth. When you  
love, and are loved in this manner, you too  
Feel the true meaning of what the  
Master tried to teach.

# The Forest Deep

by Joyce Luttrell

I love stories that start with Once Upon a Time, they seem to hold a certain amount of intrigue or anxiety, not only when you're young but when you are older too. I believe it's the child in you. There is so much to write about when you start out with this.

Once upon a time deep in the forest where your imagination can become overwhelmed and you feel all alone as though you were the only person left on earth. There was a tiny little mouse named Neville Forester.

Neville was one three brother and one sister, they were a tight little family with a great mama and papa, Trina and Timothy.

One day Trina asked Timothy to help her gather some moss. Trina used the moss for bedding for the family. Trina told her children to stay home, and stay in because the birds of the forest could take them off if they weren't careful. The children said they would all be good and stay in until mama and papa came home. All except Neville, who was being very quiet and didn't always listen to mama and papa. Trina told the children, "There are cookies and milk for you in the cupboard. Now be good and we will be home soon."

Off they went to gather moss. They say was a hot one but the forest floor was nice and cool. They lived in an old tree trunk, but mama kept their home clean and warm.

Many of the forest creatures were friendly, then there were some that weren't so friendly. One of them was old Mr. Owl that lived at the edge of the forest near the meadow where the children liked to play in the deep grass. The meadow was Neville's best friend was Norton Meadowmouse.

Now Neville Forester had other ideas for his day and he was not listening to mama and papa like he was told to. Mama asked if everyone understood what she said, of course everyone said, "yes, mama," all except Neville.

Now Neville knew that old Mr. Owl was not a friend

to the meadow mice or the forest mice either. Neville thought to himself, I can fool the old owl and I won't get caught.

Everyone said, goodbye and that they would be good children, that they wouldn't have to worry about them.

Neville also told mama he would be good but Neville had his little fingers crossed, that meant, I'm telling a fib.

Mama and papa left and all was well until Neville thought the way was clear and nobody was looking. Then Neville sneaked out the tiny hole in the wall of the old tree stump when no one was looking. Papa didn't know that there was a tiny hole in the wall, and Neville wouldn't tell. Neville was a good little boy, but just a little mischievous. Neville only seemed to get into trouble when he thought he could do just what he wanted to.

Neville crawled through the tiny hole and ran just as fast as he could down the sun lit path to find his friend Norton. Neville was told that Norton had been caught in the claws of old Mr. Owl, crying to his friends to find his daddy. Neville said he would find Norton because he knew where old Mr. Owl lived. In the meantime mama and papa Forester came home from gathering moss. Timothy Forester asked where Neville was, he was told by Neville's only sister that he had sneaked out when he thought nobody was looking, but that she had seen him leave, then she told pap where Neville's secret little hole was. Papa told mama about it and poor mama started to cry tiny little mouse tears, telling papa, "Neville will get caught by old Mr. Owl and we'll never see out little boy again." Papa said, "There, there mama I will find him and bring him home. You just stop your crying and keep the other children from getting upset. I will go now and be home very soon."

Papa left out the side door just in case old Mr. Owl was out looking for his dinner. Papa didn't want to get caught either, he wanted to find his little boy, the little boy that didn't listen to his mama.

Now in the mean time Neville went looking for his best friend Norton. Neville found an owl feather on the ground, then he found another and another. "I wonder why old Mr. Owl is loosing his feathers? I wonder what is happening?"

Papa found a feather too and he thought to himself,

“Mr. Owl is out hunting his dinner.” Papa found another feather, guess who was on the other end of that feather, it was Neville, papa found him and told him, “Son you come home this very minute. Your mama is home crying herself to pieces. Shame on you for upsetting mama, and scaring me half out of my mind. You made a promise to your mama that you would stay home and be good.” Neville said, “No, papa, I didn’t promise, I crossed my fingers and told a lie.” Neville started to cry and told papa the rest of the story, and about Norton being taken by old Mr. Owl. Neville asked papa if he would help find Norton? Papa said he would, only if Neville would listen to papa and did what he told him to do. Neville said he would.

Papa told Neville, “When we get to the tree where old Mr. Owl lives you be very careful. Go around the back of his house, pick up some rocks and when I call out to Mr. Owl, you start throwing the rocks at this window and making a lot of noise. When you see the old Owl, hide, do you hear me, you hide.” Neville said, “Ok! Papa I’ll do it, I’ll do just what you say, I promise.”

Papa went close to Mr. Owl’s front door and yelled out Mr. Owl, it’s Mr. Forester, I need to ask you if you have seen my son Neville? Mr. Owl came to his door, and said, “No, but I see you.” About that time a window shattered Neville was throwing rocks at Mr. Owl’s house, Neville saw the old Owl and hid under a stump so the old Owl wouldn’t see him. Then papa ran into Mr. Owl’s house picked up Norton, running as fast as he could. Papa found Neville and they both ran as fast as they could. Norton was so happy to see Mr. Forester and Neville he started to cry. Papa Forester and Norton to be very quiet they weren’t safe yet. The children were very quiet, but they could hear the old Owl stomping around, they were barely breathing. When they thought they were safe, papa peeked out of the burrow they were in to see if it was safe enough to leave, but the old Owl was still there, he too was being very quiet. Papa and the children remained very, very quiet. Suddenly they heard the flapping of wings. Did Mr. Owl finally leave, papa put his finger to his mouth and said to the children, “shhhhhh, don’t say a word, be very quiet.” Again, papa peeked out and there sitting at his front door sneaky old Owl was just waiting to see if he had missed them.

Papa was wise to the old fellow, and knew just what to do. Papa had a big rock and threw it into the bushes on the other side of Mr. Owl's house, then grabbed up the children and ran as fast as he had ever run before. Papa saw to it that Norton got home safely, then returned to his own home where Neville made a promise to papa that he would never disobey him or mama again. Neville was never happier to be home as he was then, but most of all, he was even happier to see his mama.



# Point Man

by Ramona Maassen

The green was all around Corporal Tom Ramsay. He inched forward with every step, the sweat crawling into his eyes. He needed to blink but he knew moments and movements counted. The jungle was alive with increasing noise, the insects buzzing and clicking louder in an ever tightening circle of sound.

He moved ever so slowly til the psst sound of the bullet tore through the green foliage and caught him in the right shoulder. He felt the impact but no pain.

Adrenaline flashed through him. He dove alongside a fallen mossy log cracking off a limb with his helmet. In one movement, he pulled off his bayonet with his left hand. Lying as still as possible, he controlled his breathing as best as he could. He breathed in through his nose with care, keeping his tongue touching the roof of his mouth, his heart drumming too loud for him. He felt the whole world could hear his heart pounding out his aliveness.

Tom waited

He knew the blood was rushing out of his body, but here was nothing he could do except wait.

The enemy came as Tom knew he would. The sniper crushed the wet emerald undergrowth with stealth. Each step sent a humid scent of green foliage into the thick air.

Tom kept his mind empty. He noted two ants on the decaying long engaged in a life and death struggle as he lay there in the dense growth. When he sensed the shooter pause inches from him, Tom lashed at the back of the man's leg cutting the flesh and tendons with desperation. HE knew he had once chance of coming out of this alive and he was taking it.

The sniper's weapon sent pssts zinging through the forest, as his trigger finger tightened in response. He fell

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

across the dead log on his right side, bouncing heavily. Tom plunged the bayonet into the man's neck. Knowing his enemy was near death, he covered his mouth. Looking into the dying person's eyes he saw them glaze over.

Tom pulled out his communicator "Bravo One, Bravo Two. It looks like they're as hard up as us. They left just one behind. Can you send a medic out? I've been hit."

"Roger that. We're a couple of clicks behind. Thanks for covering our asses, those blues SOB's breed like rabbits. I'll be glad to get off this rock."

Tom said nothing. He watched ants. One had bitten off the head of the other and was dragging the body home.

# Time Traveler's Guide

by Ramona Maassen

In the interest of those time travelers that will follow me, I have decided to create this journal. I did not create the method by which I can be aware of the present point I travel but I find it is quite pleasant.

The atmosphere is redolent of cherry blossoms in spring and I am actually able to pinpoint varieties of trees, such is the power of the field. Some pauses are a bit strange, language being one of them. As is a recent turn in the Norse vector. While I will be a Goddess tomorrow, the fish was quite salty and needs much mead.

Lastly jumping, luckily I land feet first in the fleshy part of the melons, still managing to stay afloat in the juices. You really have to like to travel to put up with the changing wear. My suggestion for the nest of younglings is to bundle up heavy on the undergarments.

I will be surprised at my next stop. Glad that happened. If I had been off ever so slightly. I would have landed on myself. We, of course, were surprised to see each other. But we knew this ages ago. Well, we are off again, see you yesterday.

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

99

# Spring in Fairbanks

by Clancy Metzger

Snow's supposed to be white.  
Remember when we believed that?  
We figured out we were wrong in that first  
Spring in Fairbanks.

Looking out the window, as mom  
drove us to school, we could see  
it was gray, dingy snow - but it was  
Spring in Fairbanks.

We wondered why they called it 'break-up',  
but then rivers of ice began to break up. We  
kinda figured that out in our first  
Spring in Fairbanks.

Layer after layer of gray, grimy snow  
would melt only to reveal another layer  
of gray, grimy snow. Remember that first  
Spring in Fairbanks?

I remember how excited we got when  
crisp, green patches of grass finally  
peeked through the snow. At last, it was  
Spring in Fairbanks.

# Across the Border

by Clancy Metzger

Across the border.  
Things look different there.  
Even the sky is less blue there.

Walk across the bridge.  
Twenty feet below  
barefoot, dirty children yell up...  
*Nickel miss? Nickel?*

Pass the shops blaring tejano music.  
Step over the piles of rubble  
permanently part of the sidewalk.  
A dirty corn cob displaces the mud  
beside what appears barely a curb.

Winter Texans plod through the masses  
smiling distantly as brown-faced people  
shove chiclets and crucifixes in their faces...  
*You want, miss? Four dollars, miss.*  
*OK, OK, three dollars. You want, miss?*

The wheelchair bound little man  
has no legs and one tiny twisted little foot.  
He just exists there  
in the middle of the sidewalk  
begging.

Next to the open stall hawking hammocks  
leans a woman, cross-legged and dark-skinned  
cradling a baby to her breast.  
She, too, begs for change.

Cross the bridge.  
Here, grass and pavement exist  
where they possess only dirt.  
Here the sky is blue again.

# Write For Me

by Clancy Metzger

Write for me,  
unsettling thoughts  
with words that shock,  
images that haunt my mind.  
Right for me?  
I don't know.

Write in me.  
Impress upon my soul  
some mark that's left by yours.  
Could we be right together?  
Right for me?  
Write what you need.

Write to me,  
of sex and souls,  
of passion and obsession,  
bind us in fact and fiction.  
Write with me.  
You're so right for me.

Right for me,  
your body, my body,  
whole pages rewritten as one.  
Could we write together?  
Write for me.  
Maybe that's enough.

# On the Cutting Edge of Bitter

by Clancy Metzger

From the womb of inspiration  
comes offspring destitute  
From the depths of compassion  
is a wish to persecute

In the sound of ages passing  
is the scream of mute indifference  
In the taste of budding youth  
is the stale bite of pretense

In the air surrounding love  
is a stench of corruption  
In the sustenance of joy  
is a flavor of starvation

On the cutting edge of bitter  
is a place where there's no pain  
On the jutting ledge of lost  
is hope's last domain

From the well of human suffering  
seeps a trickle of elation  
From the spring of warmth and kindness  
runs a river of frustration

On the margin of existence  
is grief's last twilight zone  
On the extremity of spirit  
is life's grave headstone

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

103

# The Dread of Peppersmille Hollow

[excerpt]  
by Greg Near

Dr. Ignacious Q. Honeychurch was the most officious villager anyone in Peppersmille Hollow had been forced to endure in recent memory. His dialogue was tedious, but his skills as a physician were unmatched – skills that were to be tested in a most unexpected fashion.

“There is no putrescence that cannot be cured,” the doctor was fond of saying, “no ailment of the bowels that cannot be discerned, and no fever that cannot be cooled. I’ve yet to meet the boil I cannot prick.”

Lord help me, thought Mayor Whitby as he lay back on his heavy mattress with an enormous sigh, Dr. Honeychurch prattling on at the bedside, regaling the town elder with

yet another story of his miraculous cures. If I possessed the strength at this moment to throttle this young man and silence his chatter, I would, and we’d all be happier for the quiet.

That was what the mayor told a small group of village gentlemen who had gathered together a fortnight later at Widow Olsson’s ale house, The Black Goat. They had come together on a foggy evening to sample the victuals and resolve a number of small disputes over crops and property boundaries. In Peppersmille Hollow, more issues were settled over a mug of ale and a steaming plate of the widow’s fare than at any official town meeting.

“I’m loathe to admit my weakness, sirs, but the fact remains that if I had not been drained of all strength by the water in my lungs, I would have risen up out of that bed like the Mad Man of Blackwiche Isle, wrapped my fingers about the doctor’s throat and silenced him straightaway.”

“Aye,” said the old mortician to his right, the always agreeable Matthew Peace, “I don’t mind saying, that’s one body I wouldn’t mind dressing.”

To which there was a grumbling of assent and a few



low chuckles among all the men seated at the long table.

“Pardon my bluntness, but he’s just so damned arrogant,” said Simon MacNare, the local veterinarian, who had spent an afternoon earlier that same week with his earhorn up against the belly of Dr. Honeychurch’s cow, listening to her yet-to-be-born calf and desperately trying to hear over the voice of the doctor. “He seemed physically incapable of stopping the air through his vocal cords, as he began telling me of the preferred treatments for calves twisted in the cow’s womb and of new procedures he had heard of in the city.

“Then, to my vexation, he told me yet again of his irresistible charms among the more wealthy young ladies of Boston, to which I wanted to respond, ‘Then why didn’t you marry one of them, settle in the city and spare us all the torture of your company!’”

The chuckling around the table increased.

“Here, here,” someone muttered.

MacNare lowered his voice to a whisper and glanced over his shoulder to make sure the Widow wasn’t within earshot. “Then, sirs, he went on about the prodigiousness of his

physical attributes and how that together with the techniques of coupling he had learned from perusing Oriental texts on the subject, which he described in more detail than I care to repeat, he had never failed to carry his many paramours to the very heights of purely sensual pleasure.”

The Mayor gasped and felt the heat of embarrassment rise from his weighty jewels to the tops of his ears. Yet he leaned in to hear more, asking “Did he name the volumes?”

“He did, but their esoteric names are too much for my memory. He even went so far as to reveal that a particular method of entry from behind was verily assured to produce squeals of breathy delight from the fairer sex.”

The Mayor nearly fell forward into his dinnerplate, the mortician turned paler than usual, and the other members of the impromptu council wiped their brows, blew their noses and squirmed on their benches. The mortician rose and threw another log onto the nearby fire, his hands rubbing together like two pieces of dry parchment.

“I tell you, gentlemen, I barely knew how to respond.

So I didn't, simply gathering up my tools and exiting as politely and quickly as possible having finished up my examination of his animal. But damned if the man isn't a fine doctor in spite of his capacity for self-appreciation. Last summer he cured my little Joe of an infection to his leg that could have easily left him crippled for life. It was, dare I say it, practically miraculous.

"Now if the Reverend Pike ever heard me say such a thing he would give me a full lecture on the power of prayer, and how the night-long beseeches of my dear wife to Our Lord could not be discounted in the cure. But I witnessed the dexterity of his administrations and the keen workings of the doctor's mind as he bent over my boy's troubled limb. If it had been old Doctor Washburne still serving our town, I fear little Joe would have gone under the saw. I hate to say it - for I feel as the rest of the company that he is like a buzzing bottlefly in our ears - but the man knows his business."

After a silent moment, John Kettlesworth took a long draught of his ale and with foam still on his lips said in his gravelly voice, "It's true. He took care of our housekeeper Addy, who had taken to her bed with a noxious fever, and had her back up on her feet within a couple of days. The few coins it cost me to have her healed up were more than worth the endless complaints I would have had to endure from Mrs. Kettlesworth about the inconvenience of a sickly maid."

"Aye, aye," they all mumbled in consent. The fire cracked and hissed, its yellow light producing deep shadows in the room. It had grown late and the uneaten food on the board had long gone cold.

"Now if he could just cure that damnable Dread on my property," Kettlesworth added.

Some of them filled their pipes and proceeded to smoke in silence, each waiting for the other to take up the subject at hand. After a round of throat-clearing and finger-drumming on the wood, the mayor finally spoke.

"It's a dark matter, that. And not the first time it has disturbed the peace of this village. I remember sitting on my father's knee when I was a sprout of three or four, and him

warning me that if I didn't say my prayers before bed and always mind my mother, the Dread would surely drag me out from under my covers and into the cold night air. I doubt I slept a wink that night."

It was then the heavy front door of the The Black Goat swung inward, and the gathering was joined by a smiling Dr. Honeychurch, who was wearing a brocade waistcoat of gold and vermilion beneath his black jacket.

"Evening, gentlemen," he greeted them. "Do you mind if I join you for a mug of the local?"

The mumblings of assent were subdued, and the mayor managed to motion toward an empty space at the table where the doctor slid himself down like a dancer. A drawn out,

almost uncomfortable silence followed, during which the only conversation was between the fire and the logs, a sizzling dialogue that continued until after the widow in her lacy bonnet had sat a pint of ale down in front of him.

"Gentlemen," Dr. Honeychurch said, "it seems that I have stumbled into the middle of a depressed meeting. Has there been a death in the village, Mr. Peace?"

The mortician looked around the table from face to face, then said, "Only the cattle on John Kettlesworth's farm of late."

Kettlesworth mopped his wet brow, as he sat closest to the hearth, and said, "Aye. I fear if I lose even one more the lady of the house and myself may have to pack up and relocate back to the city, as much as I hate the thought of that."

"I hadn't heard of this," the doctor said. "Are there wolves in the surrounding hills?"

"Certainly," Simon MacNare said, "but the wolves in these hills have never ventured down into our farms or village. Either they're well enough fed on venison or something deters them from drawing any closer than the very edges of the woods."

"Then what, pray tell, is the cause of this bovine decimation? And is it only your cattle, Kettlesworth?"

"So far it has only been mine. But that will surely change afore long at the rate they're going, as mine will be gone by Christmas." The large man hesitated to reveal more

about the nature of their problem.

“Well?” the doctor prompted.

Kettlesworth then looked to the mayor for a sign of whether to continue or not.

Mayor Whitby let out a large sigh, leaned back into the shadows causing his chair to creak under his weight and wrapped his hands around his ample belly. All eyes turned to him.

“You may think us mad, doctor, or full of our New Englander superstitions, but the plague on our countryside is far worse than any pack of wolves. And far older. It has been here since before the first settlers. Probably since before the earliest indigenous natives tracked their kill through yonder woods.”

“Ahh,” the doctor expelled, puffing himself up a little and pulling back the lapels of his coat, as if to make sure no man at the table missed the fine needlework in the brocade fabric. “Now I understand. I recently heard of a similar disease that was striking the livestock up in the Montpelier region.”

“Similar to the Dread?” MacNare asked.

“And not without a cure as well. It is merely a sulphite mixture that takes out the hidden disease where it lies in the ground, roundabout where the livestock were feeding.”

The mayor began to wave away this explanation of the doctor’s.

“Yes, you see, gentlemen, there really is no putrescence that cannot be cured.” His smile had broadened and glowed in the firelight.

There were deep murmurs among the men, many of whom were shaking their heads or moving restlessly in their seats.

“Doctor,” the mayor said, using the same tone of voice he used with his wife or his young children, “you have failed to understand.”

“But--”

“No, we are not referring to a common disease, such as our inestimable Mr. MacNare might treat in a cow or a pig.” The veterinarian nodded his thanks to the mayor’s kind words. “We refer instead to something called a Dread.”

The doctor's smile had faded, and he shrugged as if to say, "And? So?"

"It is a malicious presence in the countryside. An enormous vapor or entity, if you will. Untouchable and apparently unstoppable, that slumbers for years, and then once again awakens and begins to feed off of the lives and livelihood of Peppersmille Hollow. The community has always been able to wait it out until it returns to hibernation, but this time is different. It is stronger, and more bold in its ravenous appetite. It only moved on to John Kettlesworth cattle after completely exterminating all of the animals on the Schooley farm - chickens, pigs and two horses. The Schooleys have since moved on further west.

"Throughout the history of our village, there has been evidence both seen and experienced, of animals - and in some more vile instances, young children - who disappear in a cloud of blood and flesh, or hide and feathers. Never to be seen again."

For once, the doctor had no reply, his features having gone very serious and his eyes reflecting a distant light. He nodded for the mayor to go on.

"The Dread is sometimes heard, like an enormous bale of hay being pushed through the undergrowth of the woods, or a ghastly rumbling that makes the very ground shudder. But more often than not it is felt: a nauseating chill that you can feel to your very bones, and that stays with you for days afterward. Many of us here have felt that, and the attendant inability to once again get any warmth back into our frames. It is an unnatural evil, but one that we have no weapons against. I fear it may be the undoing of us all, and that this fine village will be ultimately devoured."

The very discussion of this dark corruption had generated a pall over the gathering, like a cloud of black fog that settled over the table, so much so that the men all avoided each other's eyes for fear of seeing there the reflection of their own weakness and yellow-bellied alarm in the face of the Dread. As if the creature itself had entered the pub, sending a shudder down everyone's spine. No one touched their remaining ale, and John Kettlesworth looked slightly green, on the verge of losing his supper.

The mayor leaned forward slightly. "So you

see, Doctor Honeychurch, while we appreciate your administrations at the sickbed, this is one malady for which there exists no cure.” This brought a strange satisfied smile to mayor’s plump lips.

The doctor sat up a little straighter and laid both hands palm down on the wooden table. He gazed around from one villager to the next. Finally he said in a low voice, “Gentlemen, I certainly don’t think anyone here mad. In fact, this is not the first time I have encountered such a story.” This got everyone’s attention, all eyes fixated on his smooth, charming face. “As part of my studies, I have spent a great deal of time analyzing various facets of the Occult. And I believe I can help.”

# I Couldn't Read Before, Now I Can

by Paul L. Rosser

I couldn't read before. Now I can read a lot better. Lots of things helped me in 2009 to help me to learn to read, write, and spell better.

I read a lot in 2009. I read books about Clifford, he is a big red dog. I read 103 books; some were about dinosaurs and feet. I read about West High School Boys State basketball championship and the University of Utah Sugar Bowl Championship.

I learned to spell better and to write more. I wrote notes to my landlord. Then I wrote speeches, papers for my class, and thank you notes. Writing helped me to learn to spell better.

I went on a lot of field trips in 2009. I had fun reading signs at the Fort Douglas Museum, the University of Utah Red and White game, and at an Air Force Art exhibit. I read signs at the Utah State Fair, Farmers Market, the Church History Museum, and the Museum of Natural History.

I want to learn to read menus. I'm learning words from out of the menus from a restaurant. Some of the words are: bacon, omelet, French toast, hash browns, pancakes, and coleslaw.

I gave speeches in 2009. Some of them were at the Community College, Utah Arts Festival, the library, and Literacy Action Center. I talked at the University of Utah LEAP program, to the West High School football team, and a church.

It was fun in 2009. I want to keep reading, writing, spelling, and giving speeches. Then next time I hope to read in front of the president of the United States. Then before I read in front of the president, I'm going to say, "I can read".

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

III

# DIGGETY DANK

by Jackie Skinner

Ciel shielded her eyes from the glare, then pressed her face to the metal bars. The cold wrought-iron gate stood guard with menace, but carried a calming familiarity to it as well. She looked at the fleur-de-lis topping the gate, and felt as though she had known this place as a child and had forgotten it as she had grown older and other pursuits had taken its place.

A wooden sign wedged in to the archway of the gate read “Welcomme to Lyghte” in an ancient text. She chuckled as she squinted at the decrepit and eerie mansion residing behind the gate, feeling the irony of the sign. She felt neither welcome nor in the presence of light. Suddenly unsure what she was doing there, she realized with a sinking feeling that she had no idea how she had arrived at this residence, and she had no idea where or what this place was. She assumed that Lyghte was the name attached to the land, how they did it in the olden days. She peered at the sign again. What an odd spelling of the last name. An impossibly old spelling. Perhaps a surname? And what a macabre phrasing of the words. She couldn't tell if the owners had a wicked sense of humor or if they hadn't quite understood the meaning of the phrase. She joked to herself that maybe she was dead and had missed the memo, but quickly dismissed the thought as absurd.

Ridiculous as the thought was, she had been thinking about death recently since her friend Amy died in a car accident a year ago. Ciel missed her bubbly and optimistic friend, and felt that Amy had been robbed of her life. Always excited and passionate, Amy's death had been a major blow for Ciel. Since the incident, Ciel refused to drive, and it had taken her four months before she would consider public transportation. She argued that walking kept her in great shape, and continued to exercise even when she finally acquiesced to riding the bus.

*Well, she figured, I'm already here. Might as well*



*check the place out.* She pushed the gate open with one hand, shaking her can of mace, holding it at the ready. She vaguely sensed that letting go of the cold metal would cause her life to shift, but she shrugged her shoulders, walked through the gate, and closed it. It reverberated with a chilling finality. Nervous, Ciel shoved a frozen hand in her pocket. Then she told herself to stop being stupid.

“Well that was stupid,” said a voice from above her. Ciel screamed and whirled around, simultaneously emptying the can of mace into her attacker’s face. “Ha-ha!” she exclaimed, proud that her weekly self-defense classes had paid off. She awaited the screams of her assailant, then muttered “Oh shitbird,” as the man in front of her nonchalantly wiped off his face and raised himself to his full height. He towered over seven feet tall and looked down at her with an almost amused expression. He wore creaking black leather pants with dangling chains that looped around his waist and jingled when he moved. His pants were tight enough to accentuate his package, and Ciel found herself tilting her head to inspect. His well-muscled chest was partially covered with an open leather jacket decorated with spikes and studs. *He looks like a very gay biker,* Ciel thought, reasonably. *With a harp. Wait, what?*

Over his shoulder, partially hidden by all the metal gear, was a beautifully carved harp, glinting golden in the sunlight with “One Man Army and the Undead Quartet,” “Thanatos,” “Through the Eyes of the Dead,” and “Winds of Plague” decals pasted to the frame. Ciel recognized some of the names, mostly heavy metal and thrash metal bands from the U.S. and Sweden. She shook her head in disbelief, then focused again on the man standing before her, who was calmly wiping the mace from his face and licking his finger, a thoughtful expression on his face. “Oh, I’m not sure you’re supposed to eat that...uh...” she trailed off as his face lit up, looking very much like a child granted full access to a candy store.

“My, but that’s tasty,” he moaned, drawing the word out, his eyes rolling up in his head. “‘Heavenly,’ one could say,” chuckling to himself. He licked his lips lasciviously. “It tastes like cherries, with a trace of almond bark.” Ciel raised an eyebrow, but said nothing. He looked over at her, then held

out a delicate hand. “Call me Nate, my full name is quite the story.” She went to shake his hand, then leaped away from him as she saw the sword strapped to his waist. Leaving his hand hanging in mid-air, she leaped out of range, diving over the ground, rolling and ducking for cover behind a rock. Ciel held the can of mace in front of her face, then realized its ineffectiveness as it was not only empty, but currently serving as a flavored syrup on the man’s face. She threw it aside.

The man looked questioningly at her until a drop of the mace tickled his nose and he sneezed. She heard a twang followed by an expression of shock and upset. “My harp!” he cried, twisting the magnificent instrument off his back and grasping a broken string. “No! Do you know how hard these things are to replace in this day and age? I have to go barter with Mizrael and trade him a goat!” He put his face inches away from hers. “I’M RUNNING OUT OF GOATS! DOES IT LOOK LIKE I OWN A GOAT FARM? NO IT DOES NOT.” His booming voice rang off the trees, and Ciel felt the rumbling in her chest.

It was at this point Ciel heard whining in the bushes. The man glanced into the brush and shouted, “Bruce! It’s alright, I’m not mad at you. Come here!” Over the bushes came the largest beast Ciel had ever seen. Larger than a wolfhound, and almost as tall as her head while standing on four legs, the beast must have weighed over two hundred pounds. Ciel heard whining again, but this time realized it was emanating from her. Fighting her terror, she asked “Bruce? Why Bruce?”

“Oh, it’s just a nickname. I found him sitting by this red-hot river one day, and it looked like he was guarding a gate of some sort. Found out later his name was Cerberus or something. I dunno. Ridiculous name. I mean, really, who names their dog Cerberus? Anyways, he looked a little mopey, so I found some treats for him. Since then, he’s followed me around everywhere. I felt like an idiot yelling out ‘Cereberus!’ all the time, so I shortened it to Berus, but then I sounded like a bigger idiot. I couldn’t figure out a good name until he attacked the cat.”

Ciel tried to follow. “What cat?”

“Well, one day Bruce started playing with a little cat, but you know, he’s kind of big, so he was really maiming the

cat. Poor little guy only had two legs in the first place. I kept screaming “Berus, Berus, Berus! trying to get him to stop, and that’s when I realized it sounded a lot like ‘Bruce.’ Bruce sounds friendlier, so he’s been Bruce ever since.”

Ciel waited for Nate to finish his story, but he was busy scratching Bruce’s ears. “And the cat?” she prompted. What happened to the cat?”

Nate looked confused. “How the heck should I know? I was happy I finally found a good name. I’m assuming the cat wobbled away safely. Lucky he kept a front leg and a back leg. Not sure how he would have been able to move otherwise.” Nate pondered this for a second, occasionally turning his finger in circles as if he were stirring a pot. “Huh.” Then he shrugged and looked at Bruce. “He’s a cute little guy, though, isn’t he?” He scratched the beast under the chin until Bruce kicked his leg maniacally. Ciel stared at the pair, too shocked to say anything. Nate continued, “Bruce is very sweet, although the drool is a little ridiculous. It’s like taking a shower when he says hello, know what I mean?”

Ciel did. “Yeah. Sounds like my ex-boyfriend.”

Nate calmed Bruce, then sighed, frowning at his harp. Hoping to cheer him up, Ciel asked “So, do you play often?”

The man shook his head despondently. “When I can. Apparently there aren’t many metal bands that need master harpists.”

Ciel nodded understandingly. “I’m really sorry about your harp. It’s quite beautiful.”

“Thanks,” the man said. “Damn goats,” he muttered, then, brightening, said “Anyways, I guess I should show you the City!” Without waiting for an answer, he turned and walked lightly up the front steps, not making a sound. As Ciel climbed, she noticed the stairs sagging with her weight, the wood already ancient millions of years ago. She filed this in the back of her mind. They approached the threshold and Ciel looked back through the gates as if savoring a memory. She smiled faintly and walked through the front door.

Instead of a room, she looked down into a vast city. Lush with brightness, Ciel felt an urge to shield her eyes. Looking closer, she saw people flying around with...gold and silver harps? That couldn’t be right. She shook her head. What was it with these people and harps? Ciel stared dumb-

founded, knowing in a very primal way that she was slowly sinking into the awaiting arms of madness.

Nate, on the other hand, was bumping and bouncing along to the music, thrashing his head around, his sword banging against his hip. The chains on his leather pants created a startling, off-tempo harmony. "Check this OUT!" he crowed. "Check out those harps. Oh man, are they diggety dank or what?"

"I'm sorry, what? They're, what? Diggety dank?" Ciel asked, confused.

"Exactly!" replied the angel.

Ciel lunged to the ground as she dodged a golden-haired, naked angel plucking out a Bach masterpiece. "Oh I'm so sorry," said the angel, a cocky grin on his face. "I do believe I almost brained you, irrelevant as that would be. A-ha." Looking amused with himself, he trilled upon his harp and ascended into the clouds.

Ciel stretched up and tapped her angel on the arm. She gestured to the myriad angels gliding along above her. "Excuse me? Nate? Um, do you think you could you tell me exactly what the hell is going on?"

Suddenly she heard a cacophony of harp strings twanging and snapping, and she clapped her hands over her ears to quiet the maddening sound. And then there was silence. A silence so complete she felt the madness creeping up again and spoke to prevent it from overtaking her. She looked up at the angel questioningly, but he was staring at her, aghast.

"What did you say?" he whispered. "Did you say 'aiche, ee, double hockey sticks?'"

"Aiche, ee, oh good lord are you kidding me with this?" Ciel shouted, exasperated. "I'm watching harp-people floating through the air on clouds, there's a city of light in a run-down mansion, and all you need to put on some damn clothes!" She pointed at their instruments. "I think I've been pretty tolerant so far, but put those damn things away!"

No one so much as floated off course. "You took the Highest's name in vain."

"I...what? Did you listen to anything I said?"

"I'm trying to listen, but all I can hear is that foul language. Well come on, we're almost in the City."

Ciel had no choice but to trot along after him. “So what’s your real name?”

“Thanatos. I chose it when I got here. I think it has a cool ring to it, don’t you? And I love the band. They are so hardcore!”

They approached a hill covered with a velvety green grass that Ciel wanted to sink into and luxuriate in. She smiled and bent down, caressing the grass across her fingertips. Thanatos cocked his head towards her, mildly amused, then continued down the hill. They came to a set of stone stairs, worn smooth and caving in from age and countless footsteps. The surrounding hills formed the sides of a vast valley, looking almost like a giant spreading its arms wide, all-encompassing and safe. Ciel gazed in wonder at the beauty comprising the valley, continuing to walk carefully down the slippery steps. After fifteen minutes her thighs burned as she realized she had barely covered any distance. She felt as though she could walk for all eternity and never actually get anywhere. As she walked, she distracted herself by taking in the vastness of her surroundings, losing herself in the verdant trees and grasses lining the stairs.

And then she came around a corner and stopped dead, Thanatos gliding ahead of her, unaware she was no longer with him. Mouth agape, she could finally see the City. White spires soared into the sky, disappearing behind fluffy clouds. The spires offset the Gothic buildings they shot out of, providing the City with an eerie mix of unearthly beauty and mystery. The City was a work of perfection. Thanatos walked around, pointing at buildings and giving their history as if he were a tour guide on a bus. His sword jangled slightly as he sauntered along, and he occasionally reached down and adjusted where it rested on his hip. Ciel could tell he was incredibly proud of the sword and commented on its craftsmanship. Nate flushed with pleasure and his broad shoulders straightened a little more.

A stream ran through the middle of the city. An intricately carved bridge spanned the stream, marking the center. People sunned themselves as they admired the light reflecting off the stream. Ciel noticed with delight that each person was speaking a different language, and that she understood all of them. *These people seem content*, Ciel

thought. *At peace in this quiet, serene—*

“Holy shit! Ciel, is that you?” Ciel spun around, knowing the voice, and gaped at Amy. Amy looked at Thanatos, who was busy fencing the air with his sword. She turned her focus back to Ciel. “Well hot damn! You too! Diggety dank. I had no idea we’d meet up again. Gosh I’m so happy to have a friend out here.” She crushed Ciel to her, then held her at arm’s length, eyeing her suspiciously. “You don’t have a harp, do you?” She crushed Ciel to her again as her friend shook her head. “Oh thank God. I’m so sick of harps. They’ve had all of eternity to create other instruments, and they’re stuck on the harp, for chrissake. Although I have heard that one guy decorated his harp with the names of death metal bands. Pretty hot.”

In her excitement over seeing Amy, Ciel forgot the portent of their meeting. “Amy? You’re real right?” She took a deep breath as Amy nodded. “Okay. So that means...okay. Okay. I’m dead aren’t I?”

Amy lifted one perfectly sculpted eyebrow. “Gosh Ciel. What gave it away?”

# FOOTS MCGEE

by Jackie Skinner

Seven days ago, I accidentally mauled the neighborhood cat. Affectionately named Foots McGee, the feline was enormous. At twenty-five pounds, he frightened dogs and humans alike. Despite Foots' battle scars – a torn ear and patchy fur – the dogs kept their distance, sensing their disadvantage of an animal that had four sets of claws and was supposed to be much smaller. They weren't prepared for that kind of a fight.

Adults couldn't figure out how Foots stayed so huge while roaming the streets until Anita at the corner house tied a note to Foots' neck, reading, "If you've fed me in the last 24 hours, please call 562-1927. The food lady at this number would like to redo her budget." The next day, Anita received twenty-nine calls.

It was during one of Foots' frenzied feedings that I managed to kick him near the lawn mower. Late for class, I sprinted to my car, hurriedly waving to my neighbor as he fastidiously gave his grass a buzz cut. Foots had chosen that time to eat, but he first weaved between my legs in greeting. What resulted was the world's longest punt of an object that happened to have a pulse. Poor Foots was launched into the air and hurled into the neighbor's lawn, a perfect spiral over the fieldgoal that was the fence. For a time, all I heard were belated curses, angry yowls, the choking of a motor, and finally, the desperate scratching of a terrified beast desperate to escape with its two remaining legs.

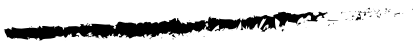
Since the incident, I've been shunned. A usually friendly neighborhood filled with cheerful people baking goodies for each other has turned into a cold and uninviting wasteland for me. The usual warm cookies are no longer left on my doorstep, although the day after the incident, someone left me a plate of cat-shaped cookies with its appendages arranged in a little pile.

For some time, I have been thinking about moving out

of the neighborhood. In the last week, though, I've decided that perhaps I'll move out of state instead. It might be safer. Whenever I hear a lawn mower, I think the neighbors have come to avenge Foots McGee.



# STARS COME HOME 12.7.09



by Jackie Skinner

I like the idea that we came from the stars. It allows us to be as big as the universe, as small as a spark in a lightning strike, as insignificant as a piece of dirt, a grain of sand.

But each grain of sand was years in the making, years of random and concerted forces working together to create something, however small, that couldn't have existed individually. Whether forces pull apart or bind together, they are always creating, for tearing down allows the next idea to take shape and grow. Out of nothing always comes something.

If we came from the stars, then our wisdom is ancient. Inside ourselves we hold the passing of time, the knowledge of continents and constellations, the vast loneliness of nothingness and the purity of belonging to everything that exists. We've heard music reverberate from a thousand stars at once.

We can feel the tides ebb and flow with every step, and we breathe the sun's path as it animates us in the morning and puts our souls to bed.

If we came from the stars, we've felt impossible cold and smiled at the blistering heat of a supernova. We've lived beneath the seas, steamed upward as air through geysers in the mountains of the ocean. We've traveled the abyss, felt the crushing weight of years settling the deep. We've felt the shadow of a space so dark that even the flashes of light behind our eyes are muted and dull. We've seen light so bright that we're still blind after we close our eyes and shield our fragile faces.

We've fallen into black holes and marveled at the non-existence of time, grinned with the safety of knowing that nothing needs to be rushed and nothing is important. We've traveled to the center of the earth and slid like children on

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

sleds down molten lava into the womb of the earth.

We've tasted the soil, made tea from the rain, crossed meadows of the most verdant colors, seen the earth through the eyes of a meteor. We've looked at planets as if they were tiny pebbles on the beach, and we've looked at the sky feeling as though a single wisp of cloud could crush us underfoot.

We've become part of the fire, felt the embers surge and burn their way through us until we're blackened chars, and we've fit in a single raindrop as we skydive toward earth.

We've been the center of the universe and in the farthest reaches of space. We are completely insignificant and we fit into everything. We are the trees, the galaxies, the vein in a leaf, a nebula that holds the consciousness of a nation. We are the soul and the body, the spirit and the corporeal. We are all that was and ever will be. We fit into the spider web of existence, and when we die, we'll gracefully dissolve into particles and make our journey to the stars once more.

# Broken

by John Wilkes

I fell in love with you the first moment I set eyes on you. I know that sounds like a cliché, but it's so. I also knew that you would break my heart one day. I had no way of knowing, however, how much it would come to seem that you enjoyed doing so very much.

The first time you broke my heart was when your cousin Lorenzo told me that you had told your family I had been responsible for sending you to the hospital. He said you'd told everybody I'd pushed you into the street that night outside the club and that's why you fell and hit your head.

That lie struck me like a fist in my gut.

Of course you didn't know that everyone else on the scene, your friends, high-tailed it, and I had to get the bartender to call 9-1-1. You never knew I held your bleeding head in my hands until the paramedics arrived. You were unaware that the cops had to handcuff me to a bus stop to keep me from getting in the ambulance with you. I borrowed \$10 from a friend to take a taxi to the emergency room and waited three hours for you to regain consciousness.

The second time you broke my heart, I had sent you to the store for something. When you returned, you showed me the receipt and counted out my change. I said you didn't need to do that because we were lovers, and I trusted you. You said we were *not* lovers. I should have told you that I didn't want to be with anyone but you, that I hadn't been with anyone else since we met. You couldn't know that I thought about you day and night. You had no idea how it made my day when you called me up and invited me to come over to your place.

Your rejection penetrated my heart like an arrow.

I never thought of myself as a sucker, but I just kept thinking that breaking my heart would eventually lose its novelty for you, that my persistence would prevail. So I showed up at your door Easter Sunday with dozen red roses and a four foot tall Easter Bunny.

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

123

When *he* opened your door in your bath robe, I thrust my gifts into his hands, then turned and left without a word. My entire body prickled with a thousand thorns, my mouth dry as cotton. You couldn't have known I would show up unannounced. You were clueless as to how important pleasing you and making you smile were to me. But that was the third time you broke my heart.

We didn't see each other for quite a while after that. You weren't there to see me drink and drug myself jobless and homeless. So you couldn't find me for a long time after that, and I was ashamed to find you. You never knew how I had cried every night for weeks, sure that I would never see you again. But fate has that way of bringing people together, and you had another chance to break my heart.

We bumped into one another at the supermarket. You'd heard that I'd lost my job and was on the street. You said I could come to live with you until I got back on my feet. I thought for a second that my desire of desires had finally been granted.

"Come live with me and Tommy," you said.

Those words burned my soul to ashes.

I said yes. You were unaware of how desperately I wanted to be near you, whatever the circumstances, no matter the cost. It wasn't the best arrangement. My heart broke every day. Eventually I had to pack up my pain, and we parted ways again.

Then you tracked me down somehow and called me up one day, just. "I'm very sick," you said. "The doctor says I could very well die."

I wanted to ask you how that was my problem, but instead I muttered, fighting the lump in my throat and the cry in my voice "I'm sorry. If there's anything you need, anything I can do."

"I don't deserve a friend like you." You were the one crying this time. "I know there were times I was a real ass, and I'm sorry."

"That's OK."

"I do have feelings like everyone else, you know."

"I know."

"I've just been hurt. I protect myself."

*Don't I know it.*

“I don’t want to die alone.”

I asked about Tommy; you said he was gone. I told you I was there for you anytime, whatever you needed, always.

We haven’t been seeing a lot of each other, but we stay in touch. We get together for lunch now and again. We’ll never have the relationship I hoped for, but we are friends, and that has helped my heart heal.

Between bites of salad the other day, you casually mentioned you were going to Colorado to visit you father. The doctor believed you had about six months, maybe a year left, and you wanted to tell him in person. The waiter brought your entrée, and you asked him for a glass of milk.

A numbness seized me. I needed to scream and strike out, to cry and run. All I could think was that just when I thought you would never have the power to break my heart ever again, you proved it was your specialty. I was ashamed of that thought. It wasn’t your fault this time; you weren’t hurting me on purpose. It occurred to me for the first time that maybe you weren’t all those other times either.

Sometimes at the movies the screen fades to black and the credits start to roll and everyone heads for the exits. Then, unexpectedly, the film maker throws a last curve ball, drops one more bomb.

So now I always stay until the lights go up and the projector beam disappears, because just when you think the story is over, the parting twist, the final shocker, blows us away.

I may not know exactly how our story will end, but I do know you will break my heart again, just one last time.

# All the Right Romantic Lines

by John Wilkes

*As a CWC group mentor, I'm always desperate for ways to challenge myself and the writers in my group. While listening to music one day, I reflected upon how songs were just verse, or some other form of poetic or creative writing, accompanied by music. I suggested a writing exercise which involved turning any song into a short story. This was my contribution. See if you can identify the song and artist which inspired it. -JW*

"I feel a little bit funny asking you here," said Reginald as he sipped his tea.

"Nonsense," replied Bernard, slipping off his coat and sitting across the table. What good's a mate if he can't be rung up in the middle of the night and asked to risk catching his death in the pouring rain to run halfway across London to help a bloke, eh?"

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be, Reggie."

"Coffee please, Love," Bernard ordered from a passing waitress. "Sweet, with milk."

"We could've shared my tea, Bernie."

"Thanks, but I need something a bit stronger if you want my full attention." The waitress returned and set Bernie's coffee in front of him, with a sugar bowl, a small pitcher of cream, and a spoon. Bernie thanked her, then turned back to his friend. "Cheers!" he proclaimed as they both lifted their cups. "So what's it this time, Reg?" he asked. "Another bird got you down?"

"I don't give a fig about bloody birds, Bernie," Reginald hissed. "All the girls I meet are silly cows. It's the song writing. It's driven me mad. I'm about to throw it all in."

"Ah. That again," Bernard grinned and leaned back in his seat. "If I had a pound for every time I'd heard that..."

"I mean it this time."

“And the queen’s a bleedin’ alien!” Bernard announced. He leaned forward to pat Reginald on the arm. “You can’t quit writing songs now can ya, Reg? It’s who you are; it’s what you do; it’s what makes you such a special bloke.”

“I’m not so sure anymore, Bernie,” he sighed. “I’ve been at it so long. Ten years and still struggling. I’ve never made any real money from it.” He paused to pour more tea into his cup. “Maybe I should’ve been a doctor, like me mum and dad wanted. Or a painter. Or a sculptor like you. At least then I’d be creating somethin’ real, somethin’ solid, somethin’ people spend real money for.”

Bernard glanced sidelong at his friend. “We’ve turned this over and about again and again. It’s not about the money.” He bowed his head and paused briefly. “You would be a miserable wretch doing anything other than music.”

“I’m miserable anyhow,” Reginald lamented. “I’m frustrated and lonely. If I took some real work I could make enough to buy a big ‘ouse in the countryside, outa this bloody city.”

“What ya gonna do with a big ‘ouse?” Bernard interrupted. “You’d miss yer rat hole of a flat and all the city business, the clubs, the plays.”

“No I wouldn’t,” Reginald continued. I’d buy a big ‘ouse, where we both could live. You could have a studio in it for your art pieces. I could keep at writing songs on the weekend.” He smiled at the thought, blushing a bit pink.

“You’re mad you know?” Bernard dismissed. He caught the waitress’ attention and pointed to his cup. “So what’s so damn special about this song that’s got you so wound up?”

“It’s a love song.”

“A love song?” Bernard was nonplussed. “Since when do you write bloody love songs?”

“Since last week.”

“Well, that’s the problem then innit?” The waitress had arrived to top of Bernard’s coffee, and he took another sip. “You can’t really write a bloomin’ love song unless you’re in love, now can you?”

“I know.”

“Oh-ho,” Bernie chuckled, “So it is about a bit o’ fluff then?”

"If you say so." Reginald put a fiver on the table for his tea and biscuits, reached for his coat and stood. "Look. Thanks for coming, Bernie. I really should be going."

"Wait a minute." Bernard gulped down the rest of his coffee, took a couple of wadded up bills from his pocket, threw them on the table and grabbed his overcoat. "I'll walk you to your flat."

"I can get a cab."

"Don't splurge. It's stopped raining. The walk will be nice, and you can tell me more about this damnedable song that's got your knickers in a twist."

"Reggie smiled weakly, "All right." He put his jacket on and they strolled toward the door.

Once outside in the fog, they walked a bit without talking. Bernie lit a cigarette and offered one to Reginald.

"No thanks. Bad for the voice."

"You fancy yourself a crooner now too then?"

"Not really," Reginald admitted. "Though it would be nice to perform my own stuff for a change, rather than hearing everyone else doing it."

"You're putting too much on yourself, "Bernie suggested.

"Maybe you're right."

"Of course I am." Bernard took a drag from his cigarette, then crushed it out under foot. "Look Reggie. You're a brilliant pianist and one helluva song writer. But you're no pop star. Just write your song. Let someone else worry about making it a hit."

"I'm tired of being to the back of the queue all the time, keepin' quiet." Reggie explained. "This tune is too personal to relinquish to someone else."

"That's all well and good, mate. But you can't let the complications bog you down." Bernard lit another smoke. "If I worried about getting a show, or selling every single vase, pot, or statue I create, the work would suffer."

"I suppose so," Reginald conceded. "Anyway thanks. We're here." He fished in his pocket, found his keys, and started up the walk.

"Wait up then," Bernard shouted after him "Got any booze?" I could do with a nightcap against the chill night air. Take the edge off the caffeine."



Reginald turned hesitantly. "Come on then," he said, and motioned his friend toward the door. "Hercules will be glad to see you."

Bernard stepped inside and before he could shed his coat or Reginald could close the door behind them, a tabby leaped from the sofa, trotted over to the entryway and began dancing at Bernard's ankles.

"Hallo puss! "Bernard bent down to stroke the large cat, who immediately shot off back to his perch and began to clean himself nonchalantly.

"Naught but a tease, that cat."

Reginald took his guest's coat and hung it in the closet alongside his own. "He's always liked you. He went to the kitchen, then bent down and began to rummage through the cupboard beneath the counter. He stood again and set three bottles on the bar. "Vodka, peach schnapps, or bourbon?" he asked.

Bernard had sat sown on the sofa and was petting Hercules, who rolled over and purred. "Whiskey neat." Reginald fetched some orange juice and ice from the stainless steel refrigerator-freezer, then took down two glasses from an overhead cupboard. He poured three fingers of Jim Beam in one glass, then mixed himself a Screwdriver. He brought the drinks into the living room and set them on coasters on a low table. He plunked into a Chippendale across from Bernard.

"Cheers, mate" Bernard took a big drink of bourbon. "So tell me more about this song."

Reginald sipped gingerly from his glass, then set it down. "Well, like I said, it's a love song, but it's a little bit funny." He stood and began to pace. "It's about someone who has feelings for another someone and doesn't quite know how to tell them. One can't quite describe the feeling inside, but finds that their affection is not easy to hide any longer."

"Sounds complicated."

"It is," Reginald admitted, "but I'm trying to keep it quite simple. It's what the one in love – in the song – wants, you see."

"I think so." Bernard took his drink in hand, fished out a cigarette from the pack in his shirt pocket, lit it, then continued. "What's keeping this person in the song from just coming right out and saying exactly what they feel?"

“Shyness. Fear perhaps. And the aforementioned complexity.” Reginald moved to a corner of the room where there sat a baby grand, and seated himself on the bench.” The music’s representative of the unexpressed emotions.” He opened the key cover and looked down. “I’ve finished that. It’s the lyrics that have me stumped. I just can’t find the words. The right romantic lines.”

Bernard joined his friend at the piano with both drinks. He handed the Screwdriver to Reginald. Hercules jumped up on the piano bench, then pounced into Bernard’s arms. “Well, let’s hear it then.” Reginald poured the remainder of his drink down his throat, set the empty glass on the bench beside himself, wiggled his fingers like a Vaudeville minstrel, then began to play.

The keys tripped the hammers which struck the strings gently. A soft melody and counter melody of interwoven notes vibrated throughout the room. Reginald’s eyes were closed as he lost himself in his playing. He swayed left and right, back and forth, working the keys and pedals perfectly. The chorus and verses complimented each other without overwhelming one another through grandiose crescendo or flamboyant flourish. As he struck the last chord, Reginald’s sat straight and still on the bench arms hanging in the air as if he was casting a spell. After all sound had dissipated, he opened his eyes and his hands fell onto his lap.

“What d’ya think?”

“Brilliant.”

“I wrote it for you, Bernie. I hope you don’t mind. It’s your song.”

“See?” Bernard whispered as he wiped a tear from his eye. “That wasn’t so hard to say now was it?” He released the cat and sat down on the bench next to Reginald. Let’s write this tune together.”

“Yours are the sweetest eyes I’ve ever seen,” he breathed in Reginald’s ear.

And they kissed.

# The 1960s Diet

by Doug Woodall

When I was growing up on the west side of Salt Lake County during the 1960s and 1970s, my brothers, sisters, friends, and I were super lean and super fit. Today, I'm still lean, and I think most people would say "fit," but my siblings and old-time friends have put on a lot of extra weight.

What's changed? A slower metabolism due to aging is definitely one factor, but my parents are still small people. What else could it be? I think the biggest difference is the way we used to play and eat then and the way we sit and eat today.

In the old days we climbed trees, dug tunnels, played outdoor games, explored the ruins of Camp Kearns, camped, fished, hiked, went tubing and sledding, and played in the snow. We didn't have food around us at all times, and we couldn't make too many bad choices. My parents and most parents in our neighborhood couldn't afford fast food nor could they buy many bags of potato chips and cases of soft drinks.

If my family and friends truly wanted to be lean and fit again, I would tell them to go back to our roots. Look at how we were raised, and give what I call the "1960'S Utah Diet" a try one more time. Here are the rules:

**Rule #1: Eat at home.** My father was the only one who worked outside the home, and he didn't make a lot of money. My mother had to be a smart shopper, and use all the resources available to her. This is why she cooked 99 percent of all our meals, packed some of our lunches for school, made most of our bread, forced us to eat leftovers, bought fruit in bulk and bottled it, and made cakes and other desserts from scratch.

She even cooked when we went on road trips. For breakfast, we stopped at a park where she cooked pancakes and eggs on a camp stove. For lunch, she packed sandwiches.

If we went to a fast food restaurant, it was usually for a treat such as a root beer float, not a meal. We probably went

to a buffet restaurant once every two to three years.

**Rule # 2: Rarely eat between meals.** I don't recall ever eating between breakfast and lunch. When we were in school, we could have a snack—a piece of toast, a bowl of fruit, or two or three cookies—when we got home. But an hour to an hour and a half before dinner, we couldn't have anything. My mother didn't want us "ruining our appetite."

We rarely ate between dinner and bedtime. If we did, we usually had to sneak it. But my mother had very good hearing, and at least three quarters of the time she could hear us no matter how quiet we were or what part of the house she was in. She would yell at us, "Who's in the kitchen?" And then, "You had a good dinner. You don't need anything else tonight. Get out of the cupboards." Or, "Get out of the fridge."

**Rule #3: Eat at set times.** On weekdays, we always had breakfast before we left the house. My mother usually got up at 5 a.m. She served my dad by 6:30 a.m., those who were in high school before 7, and those who were in junior high or elementary school before 8. Monday through Friday, she served hot cereal and toast. On Saturday and Sunday, we were allowed to eat cold cereal. About once a month, she cooked pancakes or eggs, and sometimes hash browns with bacon, sausage, or ham.

On the weekend or during school breaks, lunch was always between noon and 1 p.m. I remember as an adult running errands or working on different projects with my dad. He made me laugh more than once because he had to have lunch practically on the stroke of 12 even if we weren't hungry or could finish what we were doing in an hour or two.

Dinner was always between 5 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. This was true for everyone we knew. One of the most important rules was never call or visit a neighbor during the dinner hour.

**Rule #4: Ration desserts.** Desserts at my house were always made from scratch and rationed. Everyone got one serving. On very good days, those who wanted it, got two. My mother's goal, at least it seemed this way, was to always have leftovers. Then the leftovers were rationed. If I got a piece of whatever the dessert was in my sack lunch, but my brother Brent, who went to

high school and ate school lunch, didn't, he got the next piece.

**Rule #5: Reserve snacks and sugary drinks for special occasions.** My parents couldn't afford to have snacks and soft drinks in the house at all times. These were reserved for special occasions—road trips, campouts, fishing expeditions, picnics, family reunions, and New Year's Eve. For dinner we usually drank water and sometimes juice or milk.

**Rule #6: Play until the streetlights come on.** As children, we were always very active. In winter, we went sledding and tubing, we built snow forts, had races, and played in the snow. In summer, we were expected to get our chores done in a timely manner and then go outside to play, bike, hike, and explore. In the evening, we joined our friends to play Hide and Seek, Daddy Killed All the Bears Last Night, Simon Says, and Red Rover, Red Rover. When school was out, the rule at our house and practically everyone else's was, "Come home when the street lights come on."

This isn't something I truly want to do as an adult, but the sentence is a reminder to be active. To stay fit and mentally alert, do something physical for an hour or two every day.

Can people living in the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century turn the clock back to relive how my family and everyone we knew ate and played in the 1960s and 1970s? If we set our minds to it, we can do anything. Is it likely? Probably not. Most people I know don't want to prepare 99 percent of their meals, bake almost all of their bread, and buy fruit in bulk and bottle it. If they did, both men and women would need full-time wives at home. Still, we should be able to learn from the past to eat better, slim down, and become fitter.

Here are some points to consider. Follow the above rules and their underlying principles as closely as possible. Some of these principles include eating healthy by making healthy choices, cooking at home when we can, adding more fruits and vegetables to our diet, and cutting down on fats and salts. They also include eating when we're hungry, stop eating when we're full, and exercising every day.

Here are some specific things I do. I always eat a light breakfast that includes whole grains and fruit. I pack most of my lunches. These include a reasonable mix of whole grain

bread, lean meat, a healthy drink, vegetables and fruits, nuts, and cottage cheese or yogurt. In other words, the good stuff found at grocery stores but not at fast food restaurants.

I try to abstain from eating anything between breakfast and lunch. There is nothing wrong with feeling hungry. In fact, I strive for it. If I have a snack between lunch and dinner, it's usually something left over from lunch.

Then I try not to, as my mother used to say, "ruin my appetite" before dinner. Again, I want to feel hungry, but when I'm eating dinner, I also want to pay attention to the signals my stomach sends out that says, "Stop! I'm full." I cook 80 percent of the meals on the weekends and sometimes one to two during the week. My wife usually cooks the rest of the time.

Whenever I'm in Provo, I like to stop at the BYU Creamery, which is a grocery store with a grille and ice cream counter. The burger and fries aren't the healthiest, but all of us need a fix of our favorite greasy grub once in a while. The reason I mention this is because the place has 10 to 15 black and white photos of BYU students from the 1950s or early 1960s. Not one person is fat. However, when I look around the tables, 7 out of 10 need to lose weight.

Perhaps the secret to getting thin and fit now is to turn to the past, and the 1960s Utah Diet is the best decade and place to walk or run and eat our way back to.

# O'Shunandra's Whim

by Doug Woodall

Perry stood with his forehead pressed against the wooden door of his house. The screen door was lightly resting on his back. He had stopped, wedged between the two doors, to listen to the puppy. His gut had been slightly churning on and off throughout the day because of the anxiety he felt about what he would find inside. For the last three weeks, ever since Michele bought the dog, Perry had come home to a mess of pee and crap. Then on different occasions, the stupid animal had scratched the stain off the bottom of the front door, knocked everything off Perry's dresser, broke a \$120 vase, and, of all things, cracked the glass of a print hanging on the living room wall.

When two minutes had passed, Perry took out his key, unlocked the door, and went inside. The puppy, who must have been powered by nuclear fusion, was in full attack mode—jumping, barking, and running in circles. In the middle of the kitchen floor was a puddle, and, from the smell of it, a surprise was hidden in the living room carpet.

Before Perry could say or do anything, someone started knocking rapidly on his door. He opened it to his landlady, Mrs. Sadler, who lived in the house facing the street and rented the tiny, one-bedroom unit in the back to Perry and Michele. She was wearing with her, "I'm-peevied-at-you" face.

"Mr. Wise," Mrs. Sadler said firmly but still in her former way, "where's your wife?"

"Sorry, she's not home," Perry said affably.

"Well, I wish she was so I could have a word with her," Mrs. Sadler shot back. "You've got a dog in there, haven't you?"

"Yes, I do Mrs. Sadler," Perry answered.

"When I told your wife," Mrs. Sadler said tightening her lopsided lips to add emphasis to her words and clicking her false teeth together, "that you two could have one small pet, I wasn't talking about a wired beast like the one you have in there. I was talking about a cat that follows the sun around all day or a little house dog."

"Yes, ma'am," Perry said automatically as if he were talking

*sine cerri: What I Think  
People Think About*

135

to his first grade teacher.

“Look, you men are all the same,” Mrs. Sadler said. “You get a pet without thinking of where it’s got to live. Some animals are good for small places like yours, and others need a farm or a ranch.” Then after narrowing her eyes and pursing her lips, she said, “I doubt I’m getting through to you, Mr. Wise. I’m sorry, but I’ve got to talk about this with your wife. As soon as she comes home, you send her up to my house. Okay? That dog of yours has to go, and that’s all there is to it.”

“I understand,” Perry said simply, and Mrs. Sadler turned away and started waddling up the footpath to her house.

When he closed his door, Perry smiled. *My wife?* he thought. *Mrs. Sadler, if you only knew. I met Michele ten days before moving in here, and we’ve been going at each other almost every night without a wedding band between us. Eat that one, Mrs. Sadler. Eat it!* Then in a moment of frustration, he said aloud, “Dammit, he’s not my dog! He’s that swindler’s, Michele’s.”

Michele was gone. She’d left Perry five days before. She spent the first three with one of her lesbian girlfriends, then she flew to Los Angeles to try to get in a heavy metal band. Such sudden changes of purpose were normal for Michele. One day she came home from work ecstatic and said to Perry, ‘I’ve made a decision. I’m going to do three things: I’m going to dye my hair red, change my name to O’Shunandra, and get a boob job.’

At first Perry loved Michele’s spontaneity, outrageous opinions, and acts of defiance. When some time had passed, all these traits began to annoy and then infuriate him. Every conversation included something about Michele. Every outing had to meet Michele’s wants or needs. Every moment at home was overshadowed by Michele’s mood or level of energy. If Perry dared to express an opinion, even on the most inconsequential issue, Michele usually found some fault with it.

Perry was too kindhearted, and too in love with the idea Michele loved him. Or, did she? Perhaps “liked” and “tolerated” were better words. Now all Perry had was a puppy he didn’t want—one that Michele bought on a whim.

When he had mopped up the pee and scooped the crap out of the carpet, Perry was fuming. He grabbed the dog and made him hold still. Then he put his hands around the dog’s neck and started to choke him—hard. The animal struggled and whimpered, and after 10 seconds, Perry let him go. He could never really hurt



him. The dog was still with him because he didn't want to take him to the punt where they might put him to sleep. The animal was his consolation prize. Instead of love he had a dog.

*To hell with you O'Shunandra*, Perry thought. *And to hell with you Mrs. Sadler*. "I hope," he said out loud while visualizing Mrs. Sadler's lopsided mouth, yellow fake teeth and heavy butt, "you die and rot up there waiting for 'my wife' to talk to you about getting rid of 'my dog.'"

# Drip Drip Drip

by Michael D Whitworth

The silence of the night breaks with a sound very quiet but very repetitive. I explore the house looking for leak faucets.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

Nope, there is nothing out of place in the kitchen. I check the bathroom next.

Everything operates as it should. Maybe, this is just dream.

Drip. Drip.

The sound of water slowly hitting a larger pool continues to grow louder. I check outside for sings of rain water falling from the roof. Again, I find nothing

Drip.

I return to my room. "It must have been part of a dream. Where did that come from?" A bucket doesn't belong but neither does the drip. The drip appears to start about four feet above the bucket where nothing else seems to exist. The measured drops behave like a timer.

Drip. Drip.

I head back to bed. Maybe, when I awaken again, this will be all gone and I can get on with my day. I close my eyes and snuggle up to my calico. She is restless.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

"Hey, mister!" I hear. "help!" I bolt upright. My cat has a little man pressed up against the wall licking her. chops as if a meal delivered itself. He stands no more than three apples high, like a Smurf, without the blue skin. He wears a hard hat and a nice tailored suit. He is an impressive figure despite his size. "Could you get this cat away from me?"

I shoo my cat away from him. Trivia expresses her displeasure with a huff.

"I thought I was a goner this time." The little man replies.

"Who are you?"

"I am Reginald Biggfoot." He replies with a tilt of his hat. "I am the foreman for Work Crew 73."

"work Crew 73?"

“Yes, my crew and I fix anomalous leaks, like the one in your corner.” He points to the bucket in the corner of the room. There is now about five feet of scaffolding made of Lincoln Longs built up to the where the water falls. Another four men stand dressed like plumbers discussing the problem.

I can't believe what I am seeing. Again, I must be dreaming and lay back down and close my eyes.

“Hey, don't go back to sleep.” Reginald snaps. “That cat of yours is a real hazard for us.”

I sigh as I sit back up. “What can I do to help?”

“Kick the cat out and give us some space to work.” He replies as if talking to an imbecile.

I do as he demands.

My curiosity gets the better of me and I ask, “How did this happen?”

“Oh, that is simple. Mrs. McGrew in London has a leaky faucet.” He says as if it happens everyday.

“In London? Then why is it leaking in my bedroom in Salt Lake City?” I ask a bit indignantly.

Ahh, that is where we come in. For some reason, instead of it falling into her sink so she can call a plumber in to do the repairs, a hole formed between her sink and your room.” He explains as if it is an everyday occurrence. “My crew's training allows them to diagnose and repair these things quickly. Usually, we can have it done before any of your kind even notice.”

“My kind?” I interrupt feeling a bit insulted.

“Humans. Most of the time, they seem to think it is a leaky roof. Your house has our greatest threat. Cats,” he sighs “I have lost three men this year to cats.”

He bows his head respectfully. “And I didn't feel like being the fourth so I woke you.”

The sound of the dripping water slows. The workers efficiently work to do the repairs. I could hear the occasional swear coming from one man or another. I guess plumbers aren't that different. Reginald yells instructions when they start to slow down. What seems like hours but probably only lasted minutes, the leak stops.

“Thank you for your time.” Reginald says with a bow. The crew fades, as if they were never there.

“Well, at least, the leaking has stopped.”

# Father's Day

by Michael D. Whitworth

David flew to Denver and then to Colorado Springs where Fort Carson was located. He was beginning to hate flying. He especially hated the small plane to his final destination because he could feel every bump of turbulence. Little did he know, it would be the last time he would fly for many years.

From there on he returned to daily military life. He rose early for PT and then worked his day. Within a month or so he was able to purchase an old used car. He drove from Colorado Springs to Denver, where he last saw his father. He was driven to find him again. The car wasn't in shape for the trip. He made it twenty miles out of the city before it died at a gas station near one of the exits. He called a co-worker to rescue him. He couldn't explain where he was going or why.

A couple months later, he bought a new car. It had less than 100 miles on it when he took possession. He then could continue his quest to find Leon. The next Saturday morning he took climbed into his car and drove. He found the exit toward the small town where he lived when he was twelve. He had the whole weekend so he continued his quest. Shortly after lunch time, he arrived in Brush, Colorado.

He remembered the liquor store that his grandmother ran. He made his way through the town. He found the store and entered to begin a more personal investigation.

"Can I help you?" A handsome young ten boy asked. He was dressed as many young country boys do. He wore jeans and plain t-shirt.

"Um... Do you know Leon Black?" David asked nervously. "He used to word here with his mother."

The boy nodded his head. "He is in the walk-in. He will be right out."

Almost as if on cue, Leon emerged from the beer cooler. With barely an introduction, the two men know who the other was. Leon couldn't believe his eyes. He had longed for this day since David left seven years earlier.

For the first time and only time in his life, he finally knew that this man he wanted in his life actually loved him.

Over the next several months, David and Leon got to know each other. David would travel each weekend to stay with his father. He would drink and smoke and talk at the end of each shift his father worked at the store. He would sleep on the sofa in the living room of the trailer Leon and his mother lived in on the grounds of the liquor store.

Father's day weekend, David became ill and was hospitalized. He regretted missing this one day with Leon. David's mother took this rare opportunity to tell Leon that he needed to go to David. Leon couldn't just call this one in. Leon arrived at the hospital in time for David to be released and sent home. They had lunch and talked to each other before Leon returned a tired David to his barracks to continue recovering from his recent bout with strep throat.

Twenty years later, David again felt compelled to seek out Leon. However, this time he learned Leon had passed away fifteen years earlier. The anniversary of his death was Father's Day.

# The Journey

by Jamah Karnga

I am a Liberian refugee. I fled from Liberia, an English speaking country, because of a Civil War with the rebel leader Josh Taylor.

When it got really dangerous my family and I fled to the Ivory Coast, a French speaking country. We lived there for more than thirteen years. We stayed for so long because we feared for our safety.

In 2002, the people of Ivory Coast decided to harass the Liberian refugees. There was war in the countryside. We were in the capital city, Abidjan, and we didn't know about the war. We finally heard about the war when they started torturing the Liberian refugees. We couldn't stay in the Ivory Coast or go back to Liberia, so we went to the United Nations. They put us in a refugee camp in the Ivory Coast's capital city.

After two years in the camp, the immigration department from the United States came to interview each family member. We told them we had nowhere else to go. We passed the interview. They said, "You can come to the United States."

So on April 8, 2004, they put us on a plane to Utah, and we've lived here ever since.

# The Secrets to Saving Our Life

by Julie Liljenquist

I was born on September 1, 1963. My mom, Marliyn Cox, was 22 when she had me. When I was born, my parents didn't know they were going to have two babies. They thought my mom was only pregnant with one.

My mom was so skinny. The doctor checked out why she was losing so much weight when she was pregnant. The doctor couldn't find anything, so the doctor told my mom to eat more food so she could give the baby enough food.

My twin sister was on top of me. I came out first, and when my sister came out the doctor didn't even know she was coming. My mom kept having pains until she said, "I think there is another baby in me."

Even then, the doctor was not prepared, but neither was my mom. All the time, when she was pregnant, she thought there was only one baby. While the doctor was stitching my mom up, she said, "Here comes another one." The doctor was not ready to catch my sister because we were only five minutes apart. The doctor had to move fast to catch my sister in a hurry before she fell to the floor.

After all the drama, my sister and I had to spend four months in an incubator. We spent the four months to gain weight under the doctor's care. We had to be closely watched after the forty-eight hours in which we were in the most danger of losing our lives. People that were born premature in the time I was born usually didn't live. It is a miracle that we did.

Even after that period, when the doctors didn't know there was anything wrong with me, they told my mom that she should put us in an institution. My mom and dad said, "No, these two babies are ours and they are a part of our family now. We cannot give our babies away and just forget about them." They wanted to care for us like any other parents. We had a hard time when we were finally able to be taken home. We couldn't be left to cry for over five minutes at a time because our lungs weren't fully developed yet. Every time there was a whimper, my mom would end up holding both of us at once.

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

143

My dad had to work. My two older siblings were too young to help. They had to be cared for and a lot was left to my mother during the day. My mother had to learn how to feed two babies at once and do it by herself without us getting upset. She quickly decided not to nurse, and I don't remember anybody being called in to help my mother at home. I think she did it all by herself.

All of a sudden, she had four kids to care for of which two were infant babies that needed attention all the time. What was she going to do? She didn't give up. This didn't surprise me after living with her for twenty-two years. She would never give up on any of us.



# Brotherly Love

by Mary Macke

In 1948, my parents lived on Girard Avenue. My oldest brother, Melvin, was three years old, and my second oldest brother, Earl, was two years old. The two boys were in the backyard of the apartment playing, and they found an old refrigerator. Mel climbed in, and Mel closed the door.

Right away Earl knew there was something wrong. He was only two years old. He could not tell much. Earl went into the apartment and pulled on his mom's shirt and said "Men," which was his nickname for Melvin. He pulled on her hand and led her to the backyard.

Luckily, she followed him and found Mel all hot and sweaty in the fridge.

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

# Lifestyle Change

by Richard Griffin

This time last year, I was in jail for domestic violence. At that time, my weight was two-ten. Her weight was two-forty. Sometimes I would win the arguments. Sometimes she would win the fight. But on February 5<sup>th</sup>, I lost the argument.

I found myself in jail. During this time, I met a cellmate. He was in jail for aggravated domestic violence. I asked, "What's the difference?" He said he hit his girlfriend in the face with the butt of his gun, but he did not shoot her. By listening to his excuse of violence, he was no worse than me.

I came to the conclusion that I needed help with my lifestyle. So, I joined a jail program that helped me to realize that I used drugs and alcohol to make up for my lack of reading and spelling difficulties. So I would try to improve myself and have a better life. Now with the help of the Literacy Action Center, Deb and her staff, I feel like I can succeed in life.

I was always in a special needs class as a child in the late sixties and early seventies. How they are teaching me now is so much more understandable than the past. I have a place to go to get help and feel comfortable. I have not used drugs or alcohol because of the self-respect and dignity I have gained through this learning center.

*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

147

# Author Bios

**Dave Bastian** is a woodworker, beer brewer and environmental activist. Dave Bastian is not a hippy.

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

**Mimi Broadhead** is a writer in the DiverseCity Writing Series. Her work, *Cherry Stones*, is included in this volume of *sine cera*.

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

**C. Chambers** is a writer in the DiverseCity Writing Series. His works—*Cities*, *Coffee Time Rag*, *Directions*, *Gaudi*, *Poems*, and *The Walk*—are included in this volume of *sine cera*.

**Larry Chaston** is a writer in the DiverseCity Writing Series. His works, *Sunday Dinner* and *My Sister*, are included in this volume of *sine cera*.

**Dan Christensen** has written in CWC workshops and writing groups, and has previously been selected for publication in *sine cera*. He wrote "The Thief on the Cross" after depicting as an actor a thief's role in the Crucifixion. The film was produced last summer by Crown Ministries, a non-denominational Christian organization.

**Kate Cushing** loves dogs and likes to play the piano. She likes writing, and is learning how to type.

**Hal Davis** is 54 and co-mentor of the Veterans' writing group. Both of his stories are based on real events, but the accounts are fictionalized.

**Chanel Earl** loves reading, writing, cooking, eating, parenting and the color green.

**Randy Eggert** has never competed in a pissing contest, but he really likes the word *pubococcygeus*.

**Misty Evans** says, “I’m just a girl who likes to write.” She has a B.S. in Literature, reads a lot, and dances to Metallica in her underwear from time to time.

**Gregor Gable** is a social justice indigenous rights activist, and the first person arrested at Yucca Mountain (a proposed high level nuclear waste dump). He worked with Corbin Harney, the Western Shoshone spiritual leader, for over 22 years. Corbin passed over in July of 2007.

**Elvin Gage** was born in 1940. He’s hunted, fished, rodeo-ed, gold mined, and coal mined. He was literally illiterate. Now that he’s learned to read and write, he’s written about his mother.

**John Hicks** is 38, and lives in Murray.

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

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

**Paul Kartchner** is a writer in the DiverseCity Writing Series. His work, *What I Think People Think About*, inspired the title of this volume of *sine cera*, and is included in the first half of the book.

**Julie A. Liljenquist** likes little children. She likes seeing them, hugging them, loving them, and giving them gifts. She loves all of her great nieces and nephews.

**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.

**Kyle J. Luke** was raised on a ranch in southern Utah. He attended Utah State University, where he received his BS.

**Joyce Lutrell** is 80 years old. She has been blessed with a talent for oil painting, writing and cooking. She was born in San Francisco in 1928. She studies cosmetology, and was a hairdresser for many years.

**Ramona Maassen** is a Jill-of-Many-Trades. She loves to read, garden, woodwork and craft.

**James Mone** is a writer in the DiverseCity Writing Series. His work, *Hot Air*, is included in this volume of *sine cera*.

**Rose A. Petersen** is a disabled creative writer in Salt Lake City. Now teaching Empower Groups for veterans, she also works with NAMI Therapy Groups.

**Ervan Peterson** likes to play sports. He likes to learn. He likes to write about his past.

**Warren D. Price** is an Iraq War veteran, married with 4 children. He lives in Saratoga Springs, Utha. He's been telling stories his whole life, but only started writing 3 years ago.

**James H. Rosinus** is a mentor for the DiverseCity Writing Series. His work, *Letter from CM Longwood*, is included in this volume of *sine cera*.

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

**Richard G. Scharine** is a professor emeritus in theatre and ethnic studies at the University of Utah.

**Michael Scott** is a recreation therapist at the VA Medical Center. He has 5 grown children and 3 grandchildren.

**Albert E. Smith** likes wildlife, likes fishing, and likes life. He likes to write stories, and he likes to read them. Most of all he likes himself and his wife.

**Maria Spradling** is a writer in the DiverseCity Writing Series. Her work, *Falling Into Love, Right On Your Back*, is included in this volume of *sine cera*.

**Alia Rose Thiel** was born in Oakland, California, and raised by loved ones in Salt Lake City. Her submission to *sine cera* is a part of her farewells to the city she loves before moving back to the Bay Area, California.

**Winnie Mae Walker** spent her childhood in Missouri, her teen years in New Mexico where she attended Eastern New Mexico University for two years, followed by a 13-year marriage here in Utah.

**Annette Weed** is a writer in the DiverseCity Writing Series. Her work, *What I Learned This Year*, is included in this volume of *sine cera*.

**Becky Wilson** is a volunteer tutor with the Literacy Action Center. She enjoys sharing her talent to help others learn to read and write, and learning from each person she tutors.

**Deborah Young** has lots of ideas for interesting pieces. Now she needs to eke out time to anchor her words on paper. She likes writing about other people, not herself. She enjoys painting pictures through words.

Join us for readings from:

*sine cera*

a DiverseCity Writing Series anthology

What I Think  
People Think About

*Wednesday, June 10, 2009*

*from 7 to 8:30 PM*

*in Salt Lake City's Main Library*

with writing and readings from:

Dave Bastian

John Boles

Mimi Broadhead

Tiffany Carver

C. Chambers

Larry Chaston

Dan Christensen

Kate Cushing

Hal Davis

Chanel Earl

Randy Eggert

Misty Evans

Gregor Gable

Elvin Gage

John Hicks

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Von Jones

Paul Kartchner

Julie A. Liljenquist

Cyndi Lloyd

Kyle J. Luke

Joyce Lutrell

Ramona Maassen

James Mone

Rose A. Petersen

Ervan Peterson

Warren D. Price

James H. Rosinus

Paul L. Rosser

Richard G. Scharine

Michael Scott

Albert E. Smith

Maria Spradling

Alia Rose Thiel

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*sine cera: What I Think  
People Think About*

153

