

The True-badour

A LITERARY NEWSLETTER

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The True-badour

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Dr. Deirdra Williams – Lockhart, TX
Roy Clinton – Houston, TX
Bart Ambrose – Nashville, TN

Describing and discussing the
writing process through various
genres, methods, and venues,
for writers and readers alike.

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newsletter, Unsubscribe by contacting
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The Spring of Hope

It has been awhile since our last issue. If you had told me what would happen, I would not have believed you. Yet, despite the likelihood of these events, here we are. It just goes to show that you never really know what will happen. Sometimes the best laid plans get waylaid.

The first thing that happened was my own fault. After releasing the fall issue of *The True-badour*, we entered into a beautiful fall. Here at the lake, we had beautiful weather, with plenty of rain, and warm temperatures. There was a slight breeze out of the southeast, and the greens were calling on a Saturday morning. So, the old Bard decided to go play a round of golf. First hole was a par – good start. Trouble waited on the 2nd hole, but I did not see it coming. After a bogie on the hole, I was walking back to my golf cart marking my scorecard. Not paying attention, I did not notice that little muddy space on the downhill slope of the hole. Wham! Down I went.

I knew immediately that I was in trouble. In 2006, I had fallen from a ladder while trimming trees, and spent 8 months in rehab and therapy. After several surgeries, I was able to walk again with very little pain. I was lucky. However, I carried a lot of metal and more than 24 screws from below my right knee to my ankle.

To make things worse, I fell off the tailgate of my truck in 2014.

That little episode broke my right arm, and fractured my right hip. After another 5 months of rehab and therapy, I again cheated the odds and was able to walk with very little pain. I did develop a lot of arthritis in the right knee, but it was manageable. The first couple of steps were bad, but then it didn't bother me much.

This injury and recovery would be different. This time I fell on the same right leg and broke my femur. The femur is the large bone just above the knee. I received another plate and a set of screws. Now, I have metal above and below my knee. They performed emergency surgery that same Saturday, calling a surgeon in on the weekend. The about 10 days in the hospital before being transferred to New Braunfels Regional Rehab for a three week stay. Arriving home in early December, I was scheduled for outpatient rehab for the remainder of December, and most of January. I missed the Winter issue, but there wasn't much to report anyway. I finally made it to my studio (downstairs) and started work on the next book.

Then Coronavirus hit us all. *The True-badour* sincerely HOPES that none of you suffered from this pandemic. Condolences go out to any of you who have had to deal with the effects in your families.

Therefore, I am calling this the Spring of **Hope**. We've had enough of the Fall of falls and the winter of despair. This edition of *The True-badour* is dedicated to HOPE and all that it means. Here is **hoping** your future days be filled with fun, adventure and becoming reacquainted with family and friends.

It has been rough for our authors also. Libraries and events coordinators cancelled all the book shows and author events. They still have not been rescheduled, and no one really knows when we can get out and sell our books, and meet our fans. Part of that HOPE is that we can get together again soon.

The True-badour



I want to thank our loyal readers who have remained subscribers. Some of you are new, and some of you have been with us since the first issue. We would not be producing **The True-badour** without you. You are important to us, and to all of the writers listed above. Continue to support the True-badour and our contributing writers. Your readership is what we need, and by doing so you will keep those poems, songs, novels, and short stories coming.

In this issue we are honored to introduce **Dr. Deirdra Williams**. Dr. Deirdra has released a new book called *A Place for Me*. Check it out! Dr. Deirdra also has provided an excerpt from the book. If you like western stories, you'll be happy to meet **Roy Clinton**. Roy shares an excerpt from his latest book, *"Pandemic: Devil on the Run."*

A big fan favorite, **John Howard Hatfield**, sends in a new poem called "Old Soldiers and Only Nine." This is one of the most interesting poems I have ever read. It reads like a short story – but is a very powerful message. I don't believe I have ever seen the technique before, but I like it a lot! I'm sure you will too. Howard has just published a short story called *"Tishomingo on a Tuesday"* in the Dead Mule School of Southern Literature. You can read it here:

<https://deadmule.com/john-howard-hatfield-creative-non-fiction-may-2020/> In this issue of **The True-badour**, I get to interview a great writer who has contributed in the past. You have seen her book cover: **E. L. Dubois**, author of *Ransom, Texas*. In it she mentions her new work, *NOLA Bound*, and an upcoming continuation of the Ransom series called *Tennessee Whiskey*. Poet Laureate of Dripping Springs, Texas shows up with a neat little poem called, *"The Trail's End"*. If you like old cowboys, you'll like this little entry. **Kimberley Fish**, who we showcased last issue, has agreed to share the first chapter of her book *Comfort Songs*. I hope you enjoy it. My old songwriter friend from Nashville, **Bart Ambrose**, adds a timely article about collaboration during times like these.

Until next time, good luck and **Keep Writing!**

Ernie

INTRODUCING

The True-badour welcomes

DR. DEIRDRA WILLIAMS



Dr. Deirdre Williams is an author, educator, lecturer, and entrepreneur. Her current published works include children's books: *Quit, Khaliah!*, *Khaliah, Para!*, and *Donovan Says*. She just recently released her first chapter book *A Place for Me*, which reaches middle school age youth or those who might find reading lengthy chapter books challenging.

As a child, Dr. Deirdre's mother took her to the local library every day for children's story hour. That is where she gained her love for reading and books. Unfortunately, she never really saw any characters that looked like her. She knew that one day she would write stories with characters like her.

She gives credit to the DC Area Writing Project for giving her a renewed interest and focus in writing. This encouraged her to write her first children's books about her niece, Khaliah and nephew, Donovan.

Dr. Deirdre is a Project Wise Author, University Lecturer, and Consultant. She has been recognized as a Transformational Leader by the College of Education and Human Development Dean's Roundtable at Texas A&M University. She also earned the Memorial Scholarship Award of Appreciation as a local author. She has been a guest author at KAZI's Book Review: Celebration of Diverse Literary Voices. She has been a guest speaker at schools and various organizations as well as interviewed on "Sharing with Shani" and the "Russ and Stew Show". She presented at the 14th Annual Strengthening Youth & Families Conference hosted by the Texas Juvenile Justice

Department and the 21st Annual Teachers' Conference: Writing to Transcend Boundaries hosted by Texas State University, Central Texas Writing Project.

Dr. Deirdre is the founder and owner of Through Our Eyes, LLC an educational consulting firm and Books by Deirdre. She has a Doctorate of Education and an Education Specialist Degree from Argosy University, in Washington, DC, a Master's Degree in Education from Our Lady of the Lake University, a Master of Arts in International Relations from St. Mary's University, and a Bachelor of Social Work Degree from Texas State University. She currently resides in her home state of Texas with her family.

ROY CLINTON



Roy Clinton is a psychotherapist and Western author who divides his time between Texas and the Canadian Rockies. All of his books are about real places and are historically accurate.

As a fourth-generation Texan, he has lived in Texas his whole life. He loves everything western. Most of all, he loves Western culture.

Cowboys may have a rough exterior but most he has known are true gentlemen with hearts of gold and integrity in abundance. Roy writes about these Western heroes and the places they live and travel.

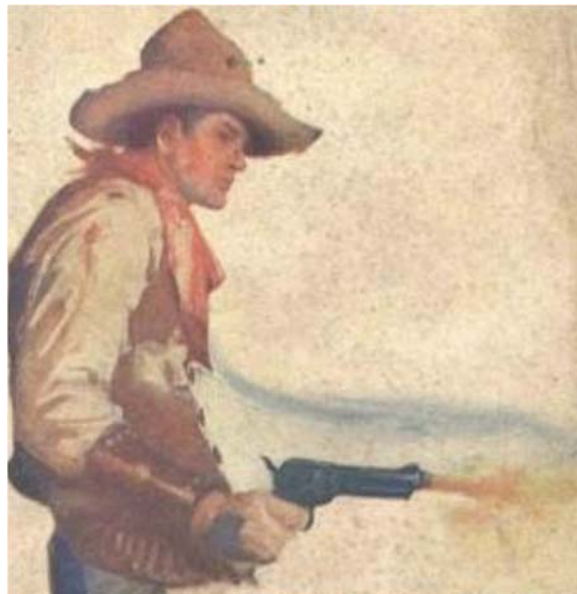
Roy holds two master's degrees and a doctorate and has written four professional books about addiction and recovery, one of which won

the Book of the Year Award from American Book Festival in the addiction category.

His *Midnight Marauder* series was awarded First Place, 2019 for Western Series by Texas Authors Association. Roy's hobbies include writing, cooking, running, hiking, and traveling with his wife, Kathie.

Roy's books can be found at www.TopWesterns.com

Roy's contact: Roy@TopWesterns.com





BART AMBROSE

CO-WRITING IN THE AGE OF CORONAVIRUS

We've all had our lives affected in some way by the covid-19 crisis that has swept our country. For me, as a musician and songwriter, it has virtually upended many of my activities. But I have continued writing songs every day, and I continue to co-write with other songwriters in Nashville. Here are some suggestions and ideas for you to consider if you currently write, or plan to write, with others.

First, there are several tools you can use to connect with co-writers. I've used Skype, Facebook Messenger, and Zoom for remote "face to face" writing sessions. Google is rolling out a tool similar to Zoom as well. The visual aspect seems to help in making communication better. I've also simply used the old-fashioned way of simply talking on the phone. It's a little more difficult if there are three or more people. I much prefer the more personal feel of seeing the people I'm working with.

Google docs is another effective tool, part of the Google suite of apps. It allows each writer to see the draft lyric at the same time and to make additions or edits on the fly. It's very much the same in use as MS Word, with a few minor differences. There are other programs to do this, but this one is pretty much universally available and very easy to use. I have two windows open during a session, one with whatever video feed I'm using and the other with the draft document. The music side of the process is a bit different. I find that all the writers will generally have an idea of how the melody, tempo, and groove of the song could be constructed. I've found the best way to work through this remotely is to record the ideas in MP3 format and share with each writer. This gives everyone time to get a feel for each other's ideas, and often generates other useful ideas. When that's done, we get together in video conference to discuss likes and dislikes. This generally surfaces one approach that stands out. Sometimes it means combining parts of two or more ideas, but it is a way to unify ideas. It's much easier to pull together the working draft from there.

Here's a few tips to help get through the process with less confusion and time:

- Do your homework. Be prepared to offer ideas to move the project along

- Be considerate. Not everyone communicates the same way. Try not to dominate discussion or let another participant do so. If it's a large group, consider designating someone as a facilitator to keep things moving and ensure everyone is heard. It's a good idea to establish some ground rules at the outset.

- Set realistic timelines and stick to them. It's easy for ideas to fall through the cracks without follow up in a reasonable time. Plus, many songwriters (and other creative types) I have known are not always the most organized, so a little nudge can help.

- Make sure of consensus before moving on. Don't leave friendly differences of opinion to simmer and become big problems later. Either take care of them immediately or get agreement to resolve later.

You get the idea. It may take several get-togethers to come up with a final song everyone is happy with. But the results can be pretty amazing! Hope this helps you along in your writing journey!

Poetry

The Trail's End

© DOYLE FELLERS

They were a bunch of salty old hands-
The ways of the West were their ways.
They were used to workin' dawn to dusk
A herdin' cows 'n chasin' strays.

They were a crusty lot of old cowboys-
A band of tough and seasoned old coots.
Their big-brimmed hats were soaked in sweat
And their joints squeaked more than their boots.

They were a weathered crew, full of grit.
Who knew the hurt of the fiery sun and heat.
They'd cut their teeth on the high Texas plains,
For a few dollars a day and a little somethin' to eat.

They were a dying breed of hearty souls
Who'd gathered agin to sit 'n talk a spell.
The talk ranged 'bout times past and long since gone.
Those were their times and they knew them well.

They were a group of hardened cowhands.
And their stories and tales told it all;
Tales about a stud they'd rode, or didn't ride,
And the one-eyed bull that'd horned them all.

They were a seasoned company of storytellers
And I loved every story, down to the very last word-
The year it never rained, that winter it snowed,
The last big stampede and the crazed run-a-way herd.

They're a delightful bunch of dirty old men.
They spun their lore into a kind a rough yarn.
They laughed about the lady upstairs who stole their youth.
And the night with a lass in the big boss's barn.

Now they are a hardy band of old cowhands
And the stories they tell are true in word and deed.
They live and relive these stories of old and better times,
But they know they're all a dying breed.

So, why not pull a chair, grab a beer and listen in
To the wild stories they tell about life of yesterday.
Listen in and you will get look inside another world
Even if you don't believe a word they have to say.



☆☆☆

Dedicated to my friends and cohorts who are, and were dedicated to ways and wonder of keeping the lore, lies and legends of Texas alive: HC Carter, Marshall Kuykendall, Ernie Lee, Hal Meyers and Mike Castleman.

Old Soldiers and Only Nine

JOHN HOWARD HATFIELD

He had heard the phrase early on in his career
Never thinking at the time, about the greater meaning.

Finally, the importance began to sink in
Causing him to carry an extra card in his wallet.

Maintaining the list of the Nine he kept his task
Hoping for them to be there when needed.

Adding a tenth to serve as alternate
Should any of the Nine not be available.

The Nine were primary
And he kept in touch always knowing their whereabouts.

To the four winds they dispersed,
Sometimes losing touch.

Eventually to hear the latest news,
Sometimes the message was bad.

Scratchin' one of the Nine previously chosen
And adding a new favorite to take their place.

The years flew by, and more news came.
Names were scratched and added.

More often than he thought they should,
Over and over, the Nine were kept up to date.

Card space became a premium.
He flipped it over and kept the Nine going.

The back now having only a few scratched
The front began filling up quickly.

Retirement causing additions harder to consider.
Scratches making new choices all the more difficult.

But keeping the Nine was necessary.
Who had he missed that deserves consideration?

There must be nine,
Always nine!

To get through life, it only takes nine.
Six pallbearers
Two road guards,
And someone to call cadence.

~~SFC Johnny R. Butler~~
SSG Martin Snyder
~~SSG Edward J. Cassidy~~
S5 Robert Majewski
~~SP4 Tommy L. Williams~~
SGT James T. Maggard
~~2LT Richard L. Winslow~~
SP4 Patrick Crimbliss
~~SP4 Frank LeFevers, Jr.~~
SP5 Terry D. Thomas
CPT Dennis L. Minter
1LT Lawrence J. Wilson
SGT Uliseses Aculan
~~SGT Marvin D. Craighead~~
2LT Craig T. White
1LT Williams (Doug) Brown
SGT Robert Garcia
~~SFC Alan P. Grant~~
~~1SGT Edward Juntiff~~
SCM Lopez Miguel Zapata
~~LTC Samuel T. Whitt~~
~~COL James F. Dunn, Jr.~~
Maj Richard L. Ellis
SFC Michael Longwell
MSG George Jolley
Mr. Mark Hambriek
Mr. Jim (Jimbo) Williamson
~~LTC Manley W. Jones, Jr.~~
Mr. Preston Brown
Mr. Louis Vela
Mr. Robert (Bob) Jones
Mr. James Lee Carter
Mr. Warren Stafford
Mr. Edward J. Herrera

DR. DEIRDRA WILLIAMS

A Place for Me

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Tonight is Drake's final game of his senior year and probably the biggest. Both teams are undefeated. My grandparents and I are driving in to cheer him on. Drake got a full basketball scholarship to attend City University. All of his coaches say he has a good chance of being drafted to the pros his freshman year if he decides to enter the draft. My parents are super excited about it. They can't wait for their superstar to go pro. The drive to the city was pretty long. Friday night traffic is the worst. We are going to spend the night so we don't have to drive back so late. It's going to be strange sleeping in my old room again. I haven't been home since I left seven months ago. The Dragons have always been the Wolves' rivals. So every season the game is sure to be a crowd pleaser and noise raiser. The Dragons are from the west side. They come ready to fight if things don't go their way. Last year they had to stop the game because fans came from the stand and jumped on one of the referees because he called a foul on their star player. Tonight I hear security is going to be tight, uniform and plain clothes. Because traffic was so heavy, we called and told dad and mom we would meet them at the game. When we got to the gym, people were standing outside hoping to get in. I saw dad in the crowd. He was waiting for us. He went ahead and bought our tickets. I was hoping it was sold out so we could get back on the road and head home. Home? That's funny. I just called Gram's and Gramps' house home. Well that's what it is, home. My home. Mom had saved us seats right behind Drake's chair. That's where we always sat. Right behind „Drake the Great“. That's what the entire neighborhood calls him. As usual, the game was full of excitement and drama. Every time Drake scored, the Dragon fans booed and yelled, "Hurt him!" They were brutal. The Dragon players, were pushing, tripping, and elbowing like crazy. But the Wolves managed to pull it off and bring home the win. 117 to 100. Drake scored 52 points, had 3 rebounds, and 10 steals. Of course he was the MVP. Game over, I'm super hungry. I hope we hurry up and get something to eat. "Kate, honey, come over here and give your mother a hug. I don't think we've spoken in a month." "Hi, mom. Well really, we haven't spoken in three months." "It hasn't been that long has it?" "You look good honey," dad whispered in my ear. "Here comes our star player „Drake the Great!"" Shouted mom. "Hey, Kate face. Did you see me take the fire out of those Dragons? I was awesome! We really showed them." "Yup, you guys really did it. Great game Drake." "You're right it was a great game." "Thanks, mom. I mean after all we have to celebrate Drake's big night. He had a great game and will be off to City University in the fall." "Hey everyone where are we going to eat!" "That's right," said Gramps. "We definitely need to celebrate. My grandson is headed for the big time." "Sorry guys. I'm going to hang out with the guys from the team." "Son, your grandparents and sister drove all the way up here to spend time with you." "I know mom, but the guys want to celebrate. Gram...Gramps, I'll see you when I get home." "Son it'll be so late, they'll be asleep." "Okay then I'll see them tomorrow." "They're leaving tomorrow." "I'll see them tomorrow before they leave then. C'mon mom, don't try to guilt me. It's not a good look on you." "Alright then son." "Love you mom. I won't be out to late. See you guys later."

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Comfort Songs

Chapter 1

Before choosing plants for your garden, you must first decide on the perfect patch of earth. Look at the soil, study the sunlight, and judge the ease for watering or installing irrigation before you till the ground. It's better to thoroughly plan first than have to pay twice later. —"Lessons from Lavender Hill," a gardener's manual

"You got a man on the phone."

Autumn Joy Worthington closed the hatch for a customer who'd purchased lavender, rosemary, and lantana plants that didn't fit well inside the BMW's back end. She glanced at her shopkeeper, who was pinching the portable phone. Betty's cheeks bloomed pink, as if she were moments away from a heatstroke.

"Is this like that old Prince-Albert-in-a-can joke?" AJ—as she preferred—wiped a bandanna around her neck and spied a caravan of SUVs pulling into the parking lot.

Betty's brow arched. "I'd take a prince over a salesman—which is probably what this call is about. Your grandmother gave me the phone on her way to the greenhouse. God only knows what she may have told him."

Yesterday, her grandmother, Inez Worthington, former San Antonio Junior League president, stuck her tongue out at a customer who had complained about the price of coreopsis. The customer had not thought it charming and demanded a full refund.

A breeze rustled the tops of lavender growing in rows behind the shop, sending fragrance and cooler weather through the outdoor rooms of her garden store. A cool breeze. Stunned, AJ's gaze shot north. The only way a cold front could ease the late April heat swirling over Comfort was if one of those strange, blustery weather patterns whirled over the Hill Country and surprised them with rainfall. Forecasters were stumped to explain the phenomenon, but locals prophesied the northern wind always brought disaster.

Betty held the phone forward. "Dang, a blue norther," she said, glancing at the clouds.

AJ took the phone.

"This means trouble." Betty sighed. "I better check the till. This is not the day I want to stay late if the receipts are off. My grandkids are coming for supper."

"If the receipts are off, it's not because of a wind." AJ raised her arms so the air would refresh her skin. "It's because someone let Gran work the register."

Betty opened her mouth, as if to start in on a retread of Inez's erratic behavior. AJ held the phone to her ear, preferring to take a call than hear the latest. It was a flimsy defense, but the Inez stories were tiresome. Her grandmother was in her mid-eighties and had simply lost her mental filter. It wasn't the end of the world, but every day the staff relished comparing notes. Climbing the steps of the porch that served as visitor central for those who came to explore Lavender Hill, the garden center and lavender farm, she glanced again to the horizon. Surprise buzzed among customers as they realized the change in temperature. She hoped the clouds brought rain. One significant change had already hit smack in the middle of her busiest sales season. The thought of another gave her heartburn.

Opening the periwinkle door, she closed it gently so as not to set off the bell that tinkled every time someone passed through. She sidestepped a customer breathing in the fragrances of candles. Shoppers lingered in this room filled with sachets and potpourri, telling her it was like an aromatic spa treatment. It didn't smell special to her, but she'd been working this room for six years and figured she'd gone nose blind.

She passed a couple scanning artwork and headed through to the kitchen. Despite peeling linoleum and a sink that burped fumes, the room was command central for her staff. Craning her neck to one side to relieve the strain of a morning's worth of work, she sat down on a chair. Propping her feet on a box, she tilted her face to the ceiling fan and connected the line. "This is AJ, how may I help you?"

The crackle of the phone line lingered, and she wondered if the caller had put her on a speaker and then walked away. Fine. She had more work to do than she even wanted to imagine. Just as she was about to push the "disconnect" button, a voice jumped to attention, and a baritone rushed her ears.

"Hello there, I'm Luke English. I understand you're in charge at Lavender Hill, and I believe in going right to the top if you want the best information."

She stilled with the awareness that this was not the usual twang of her seed supplier. This man's Southern accent implied he did business at fox hunts or debutante balls. She didn't have a lot of experience with those types, and she counted that lack of refinement as one of her better assets. Lavender Hill's mailbox was stuck deep into the limestone hills of Central Texas—if foxes roamed these spaces, someone gave them a free pass, providing they could survive the bobcats.

"I'd always heard the most reliable information came out of the mail room." AJ rubbed her palm across the hem of her shorts, trying to remove rosemary sap.

"I started there, but the lady warned me she had a tendency to lose messages. I had a request that was too important to not try for someone with more authority."

It figured. He was a salesman with a voice that oozed slow summer nights. She lifted her braid from her shoulder to let air circulate around her collar. “What makes you think I would be any more informative than the mail clerk?”

Luke paused. “I’ve been looking for someone, and the latest information leads to Texas, specifically Comfort and your business, Lavender Hill. I would appreciate any information you have regarding July Sands.”

AJ bolted to her feet, her blood cooling with no need for air-conditioning.

She pushed the curtain aside, wondering if some customers were paparazzi in disguise. “Then you should have stuck with the mail room,” she said, with a calm that belied the clench in her stomach. “Contrary to what you may have heard, Lavender Hill is not a lost and found.”

“Well, that’s an improvement over what the other lady said.”

Luke English must be a private investigator or—worse—a bill collector with a mint-julep tongue. “Did she tell you we were a nursing home?”

“A juvenile detention center.”

That’s a new one. “Did she say anything else?” AJ asked, listening for any salacious innuendo that her grandmother might have let slip.

“The more I asked about Ms. Sands, the more she said I needed to talk to you.”

AJ didn’t have time to ponder her grandmother’s unusual restraint because she was more worried Gran had given away a lot with what she *didn’t* say.

“Miz Sa-and’s?”

AJ stalled as she tried to think of a clever way to steer this man away from Comfort. “Are you selling a new brand of fertilizer?”

“Excuse me?”

The media hounds would be right behind this guy. “We’re a gardening center and a lavender farm, Mr. English. If you’re not a salesman or a client, there’s really nothing for us to talk about.”

“But I thought—”

Rapping her knuckles against the tabletop, she said, “Oh, someone’s knocking, I have to go. Thanks for calling.” She disconnected the line with more oomph than necessary.

Squeezing her eyes together, she knew that any moment now *Entertainment Tonight* would accost her employees for gossip.

“Hi.”

AJ spun, facing the man standing inside the kitchen door. The air trapped between her heart and her lungs released. He wasn’t a reporter. He was a youth pastor. She set the phone on its base and squeezed her fingers like there was still the possibility of residual electrocution. “Ethan, I didn’t hear you walk in.”

Ethan Ross shrugged his shoulders as if the freshly pumped muscles underneath the Comfort BBQ T-shirt weighed nothing. “You must give things away. There were so many cars in your parking lot I had to park down by the cemetery and walk.” He stepped into the small kitchen space, stopped without getting too close, and studied her face. “Your nose is sunburnt.”

AJ touched the tip, regretting that even more freckles would soon appear. “I’m trying an organic sunscreen. I guess the ingredients aren’t working too well.”

“Sun kissed.” Ethan brushed long bangs from his eyes. “I believe that’s the term.”

“It’s better than fried, which is what my grandmother would say.” Thinking of Inez made her itchy. She moved toward the counter, where cans of lemonade sat piled in a tin filled with ice. “Would you like a drink?”

“No, thanks.” Ethan paused as he watched her, then folded his fingers together. “Say, I, uh, heard some interesting news today.”

And just that fast, she knew. She’d not had a lot of time to form her plans for fortifying walls around her mother, but the bricks were falling regardless. Surely the people of Comfort had better things to gossip about? Wasn’t there some national crisis that everyone should worry over at the library or, now that AJ thought about it, some rumor that a developer had purchased a vacant shopping center? That had to be better conversation than what was going on at Lavender Hill.

“Can’t believe everything you hear,” she said. She’d learned how to fend off curiosity-seekers and paparazzi before most of her contemporaries had mastered bikes without training wheels.

“I think you’re the victim this time around.”

AJ popped the top of the can and took a long sip, buying seconds. *Victim?* That was an interesting term. All the locals knew her family dynamic. They’d watched her father ride his motorbike across these hills, called the sheriff when he scared their cows, and harnessed their daughters when he came to spend his summers at the farm. But July was a ghost to most folks here. She’d fly in on a private jet to drop off or pick up AJ periodically, maybe spend the night if forced, but kept a low profile in a town loyal to the Worthingtons.

Only a few of those closest to AJ knew who’d slept in her guest room the last two weeks, but they had strict orders to feign amnesia if questioned.

Apparently, she had a leak in her organization.

“I’ve heard that you have a visitor,” Ethan said, giving a pious tilt to his head.

She reached for a cookie on a tray. “And with that, you came straight to Lavender Hill?”

Ethan relaxed. “I did some checking first. I couldn’t believe my momma’s favorite singer had fallen into such dire straits.”

AJ had been thankful there wasn’t a photographer around when July, unrecognizable to most as one of *People* magazine’s most beautiful celebrities of the 1980s, crawled off a Greyhound bus.

As she debated whether to continue the charade that her mother wasn’t at the farm, AJ looked more carefully at Ethan. He was a youth minister at her church. Surely, he had to have taken a confidentiality vow. “Don’t believe everything you read. Dollar signs drive those stories.”

“Some have said July Sands has made her bed, and now she has to sleep in it.”

“That would be my grandmother talking. She’s convinced Mom has slept in too many beds as it is. But Dad isn’t without his share of the blame.”

Ethan propped his hands in the back pockets of his jeans and rocked back on his heels. “Sounds like you might need to talk. You want to grab burgers tonight?”

His eyes looked sincere, but she knew the temptation celebrity played even on the most noble. “Sorry, but I’ve got to sort through some end-of-the-month statements before my accountant drops me. I also have to write text for a gardening manual my publicist says I need to produce, but tell the gang to think of me next time.”

He shuffled in his boots. “This would not be a night with the others from the singles’ group.” His voice dropped to a husky level. “I was thinking just you and I could go out. You know, as—special friends.”

AJ glanced at the soul patch under Ethan’s lip. She’d suspected he was interested in her months ago. Her best friend, Kali, had been teasing her about puppy love because he was twenty-four to her twenty-nine.

She’d lived through so much in her lifetime, she felt about forty. She was sure it would take a man with burglar skills to unlock the rooms in her soul. Or maybe those were just lingering scars from the one man she’d let close enough to engage her heart. Her ideas of romance had been jaded by a golden-voiced heartbreaker—a category that pumped singers, musicians, and their assorted ilk into one classification she’d vowed to avoid for the rest of her life.

Then she remembered. Ethan played the guitar. And led the youth choir. He was one of them. Yes, Ethan would need to be let down, too.

“I’ve been gone too long, AJ. I didn’t know you had ‘special friends.’”

AJ’s circling thoughts derailed, and she turned toward that honey-and-bourbon-soaked voice with the same dismay she felt when frost killed off her spring blooms.

July Sands leaned against the doorjamb as if she were holding up the wall instead of the other way around. Life on the road had decimated her willowy frame—first as half of a famous singing duo with AJ’s father, then as a solo artist. Well, music tours and the steady diet of vodka, pills, and cigarettes. Even with faded auburn hair, a papery complexion, and shoulders that looked as frail as a sparrow’s wings, AJ saw beauty in her mother, but, she amended, she also saw splendor in compost, so that might not be saying much.

“Ethan’s just a friend, Mom, and a youth minister. So, be kind.”

July exaggerated a shiver. “Yikes. You should never be friends with a minister. Perfection is a communicable disease.”

Ethan moved so fast he tripped on a peeling corner of linoleum. “Ms. Sands, I’m like one of your biggest fans.” Enthusiasm crammed his words into a sandwich. “My mother used to put me to sleep at night playing your records.”

“And doesn’t that make me feel ancient.” July wagged her finger, pointing at Ethan. “AJ, this grown man was a baby during the peak of my fame.”

AJ ignored her mother’s pout and handed her a can of lemonade. “Here, you look dehydrated.” A steady infusion of protein and an IV of vitamins would be good too, but she’d start with what she could get her hands on.

July took the can, but she did little more than hold it as an accessory. “That girl, she’s always taking care of people.” July winked at Ethan. “When she was a child, she adopted every stray that wandered into the yard. Be sure and have her tell you about the round-robin of animals she’s named ‘Sassy.’”

July was still controlling the stage, even if it was in a kitchen surrounded by an ugly cookie canister collection and rooster wallpaper. The problem with having celebrities for parents was that there was a fragile veil between real living and performance. Almost no one understood this except other children of superstars. All those kids in private prep schools in Nashville knew they were one or two chess moves away from the dark bleed of scandal every time their parents hit the road. She’d known it when she’d been staring at a blackboard too but was powerless to control the outcome.

Until now.

Now, she had her mother in a place where maybe, finally, the madness could end.

AJ could see the skin around Ethan’s eyes soften, and his mouth drop open like July’s wit enchanted him. By tonight, Ethan would tell everyone how misunderstood July was by the critics, and that if people knew her—blah, blah. Blah.

Wiping her hands on the back of her cut-off shorts, AJ knew it was time to throw herself down as a roadblock. The move protected everyone. “You don’t get to tell Ethan stories if you don’t pull your weight around the farm, Mom. Remember? You swore you wanted to learn how to water the seedlings. I assume that’s why you’re here. *In public.*”

July's glib expression melted right off her face. "You've made such a success of your life, AJ. I wish I had a reason to get up every morning like you do."

AJ glanced at the ceiling fan. She fully expected a lightning bolt through her roof. When it didn't happen, she figured the angels had grown immune to July's pity party.

"Ms. Sands," Ethan asked as he stepped between mother and daughter, "would you like to come hang with the youth group this Friday night? You could bring your guitar and play a few songs."

"Tempting though that sounds—"

"Mom's retired," AJ interrupted. She would let nothing wreck July's first seclusion that didn't involve medical supervision. It was a classic example of a prodigal returning, and if she had to erect an electric gate to keep her mom at home, she would. "She told me she's burning her guitar on the pyre of her past. The ceremony is tonight at midnight. Sorry. Find another singer to impress the teenagers."

Ethan folded his arms and narrowed his gaze on AJ. "I didn't think you had such a cold heart."

AJ never realized Ethan struggled with idol crushes, either.

"AJ's heart isn't cold. She's the only pragmatic one in a family full of dreamers." July heaved a sigh from the depths of a hollowed soul. "Now, are you two dating or what?"

They both chorused, "No," and then looked sheepish that they'd said the same thing—AJ more emphatically than Ethan.

"Oh, that's right. AJ is married to her precious Lavender Hill." July ambled toward a chair. "She ran from Nashville the moment she heard this farm was available."

A broken heart, thousands of dollars of debt charged to her credit card by a former almost-fiancé, and a distinct distaste for people who could hum the tune "Tangled in Delight"—her parents' breakout hit—but let her mother have her quips. No one ever cared what the real reason was for AJ leaving. They'd just let her go.

AJ saw July's bunions poking through her sandals. As a child, those bumps had scared her as she rubbed coconut oil into her mother's feet after shows. "Mom, Ethan is a man of the cloth. We're not supposed to lie to him."

July's shoulders lifted along with a yenta inflection, "Who's lying?"

AJ saw her mother's cheeks had brightened. Must have been the attention of a male fan. "If you're bored," she said to distract July from Ethan's awe, "you can inventory that new shipment of candles that came in this morning."

July beguiled Ethan with her smile. "AJ's trying to put me to work because she thinks if I'm busy I won't dwell on the wasteland my life has become. Worthingtons don't do depression."

"AJ needs cheap labor." Plopping a well-worn cowboy hat over her braids, AJ wished she'd done a better job expecting when July would tire of the farmhouse. She should have come up with a plan B before the weekend. "Mom, since you're here, you might as well keep an eye out for my accountant, Keisha Dawes. She's supposed to swing by any minute to collect the sales records for this month. Apparently, I'm behind on tracking my quarterly revenue."

July popped the top of the lemonade, and the hiss circled the room. "You have an accountant on staff?"

AJ gulped her lemonade, knowing that her mother did not understand retail business, and maybe she'd been selfish in not letting either of her parents touch this part of her life. It had seemed prudent to keep them far removed from the groundwork needed for her dream; their shine had a way of spoiling her independence. But they weren't those people anymore. Hadn't been for a long time. And she still hadn't told them all that she created on the old family farm. They didn't ask either, so there was that.

"Keisha owns her own firm, but I keep her on retainer for my math emergencies. So, maybe she can sort through your checkbook. Be prepared for bill collectors. I think they have this number."

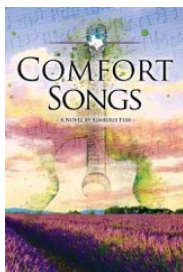
"Ouch," July cooed. "The kitten has claws."

The real challenge of having July home was putting up with the fragments of woman weaned on adulation. That was a hundred percent behind why AJ loved gardening. Plants didn't feel entitled, dismiss your heartaches as insignificant, gloss over your troubles, or ding your dreams for not being big enough.

"As you can see, Ethan," AJ stopped at the doorframe and glanced back at them, "Gran overrated the gossip here at Lavender Hill. So, don't worry about me. You sort through the issues of high school and unrequited loves. We will settle into a new routine around here. Something far removed from music." AJ saw her mother staring out the window. "Right, Mom?"

July turned back to AJ, but her eyes were glassy. "Whatever you say, honey."

To read the rest of Comfort Songs, or to buy other Texas-based novels featuring women discovering their grit, visit kimberlyfish.com



Pandemic: Devil on the Run

Book Excerpt

“Oh, John,” Charlotte said. “You’re hopeless. Look how wrinkled the letter is. You don’t put a letter from the president in your pocket. You treat it with respect.”

“How I treat the letter is not gonna change what’s inside. He’s gonna tell me how there is some big problem and how only ‘Special Agent to the President: John Crudder’ can handle it.”

Charlotte crossed her arms and stared at her husband. John got the message, opened the letter, and began reading.

The envelope was addressed simply to John Crudder, H&F Ranch, Bandera, Texas. The return address was equally as innocuous: Jeffrey Jameson, Washington D.C. Unlike previous letters, this one was not dictated by the president but was written in the uneven scrawl of the president.

Dear Mr. Crudder,

A scourge has plagued our country for several months. The Cholera pandemic from the Ganges Delta in India spread to Europe and then made it to our country and has left 50,000 American’s dead. We thought the disease had run its course. Now we have evidence someone is intentionally infecting citizens. Two newspaper reports, one from New Orleans and one from Houston, tell of an unknown assailant putting contaminated water into drinking glasses to infect citizens.

There has not been any identification of this miscreant and the motive is unclear. Additionally, it is not known if victims are targeted randomly or if there are specific targets. This devil is on the run. It’s your job to find him and stop him NOW by any and all means necessary. As my special agent, you are empowered to do whatever is necessary to carry out this assignment.

Yours truly,

U.S. Grant

President of the United States

“Cholera?” Charlotte looked perplexed. “What’s that?”

“It’s a serious intestinal disease,” Richie said. “We studied it in school. More than a hundred thousand people in Italy died from it. And Algeria had eighty thousand die.”

John and Slim smiled to each other.

“Richie,” Charlotte said, “you’re always surprising us. How do you remember that?”

“I don’t know. I just remember. Especially since we read that the United States would likely suffer from the same pandemic months or years later. And that’s what happened. It’s like the president said. Fifty thousand Americans have died.”

“It sounds like you may be my best source of information,” John said.

Richie smiled.

“I feel somewhat ignorant,” John said. “I heard something about it when I was living in New York, but I didn’t remember it being that big of a problem in our country.”

“It has more to do with the water,” Richie said. “The water supply in the United States is better than in Europe. But even with a good water system, people who live near contaminated water still have a high likelihood of getting infected.”

“What happens when someone gets Cholera?” Charlotte asked.

“They get severe diarrhea,” Richie said.

“That shor sounds uncomfortable,” Slim said, “but not life threatening.”

“It’s not just regular diarrhea,” Richie said. “People will lose gallons of fluid and get dehydrated. Some people die quickly after getting it. There was someone who arrived in New York from

somewhere in Europe. He got cholera and died. His trunk of clothes was distributed to ten men. All of them contracted cholera and died.”

“So, it is not just spread by water?” John said.

“That’s what my teacher said. Evidently the bacteria that causes it can contaminate clothes and sheets.”

“What makes this difficult,” John said, “is that I don’t know what I’m lookin’ for. I guess I need to find out about the cases of cholera in Houston and New Orleans and go from there.”

“The president sounded insistent,” Slim said. “I don’t recall him being so adamant before.”

“It sounds like he might be fearful of starting another pandemic just as this one is winding down,” Richie said. “Do you want some company?”

“I appreciate it, Richie,” John said, “but this is a trip I’m gonna do by myself. I don’t want to take a chance on you contracting the disease.”

“When are you leaving?” Charlotte asked.

“The sooner I leave, the sooner I get back. I’ll leave at first light.”

“Then I’ll have you some food prepared,” Charlotte said. “Are you taking the stage again from San Antonio?”

“Yes,” John said. “That’s predictable and faster than riding Midnight the whole way. And it worked out well when Richie and I went to New Orleans.”

“Then I’ll just make you enough to eat for tomorrow.”

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An Interview with author E. L. DuBois

I met Erica DuBois at the Crossroads Bookshop on Magnolia Street in Hearne, Texas. It was kind of a “homecoming” I had arranged with the bookstore owners Royce Jatko and Chuck Thompson. I had offered to bring my guitar, PA system, and books to sell. They agreed, and asked if some other local authors could attend. “The more the merrier,” I said. One of the authors was E. L. DuBois and her husband T.J.

It turned out that Erica was from Hearne also, although she hadn’t lived there for awhile. She and her husband were pushing a title called “Ransom Texas.” The book cover was awesome, and because it was set in Texas, I was interested. I was hooked by the quip, “The devil came down to Texas – Bad idea!” Whoohoo!

So I read the book and thoroughly enjoyed it. I included the cover in several issues of [The True-badour](#). I featured Erica and TJ in the Winter 2019 issue. After finishing the book, it seemed an interview was in order. I hope you enjoy the insight into this wonderful literary couple.

Ernie: Where did the idea of the book *Ransom, Texas* originate?

E.L. About 15 years ago, I was watching *From Dusk to Dawn* with my little brother and the idea came to me. My brother suggested I should write it down, so I left, went and wrote the first chapter, and Ransom was born.

Ernie: Who did most of the writing, you or T.J.?

E.L. The first book was by me. T. J. added in a few things. The second book *NOLA Bound* was where he really got to shine because he was responsible for writing the bad guy. He had to step out of his wheelhouse to write for a 1,000-year-old processed vampire.

Ernie: What exactly are the monsters in Ransom, Texas?

E.L. They are a demon of my own making – I like to think of them as the beginnings of all that is evil, the Devil’s first minions. They possess people tainted by corruption and greed – over time the human disappears and all that is left is the demon which sole purpose is to bring havoc, chaos, and the apocalypse to Earth.

Ernie: Is the story made up from Native American legends, or did you make up the whole thing?

E.L. I knew I wanted an original story based on Native American folklore. I am of Native American descent, and I wanted a story steeped in that rich culture. So I researched the origin beliefs of different tribes and took a little bit from each. Combined with my imagination, of the legend of the “Great Warrior” was born.

Ernie: Why did you name your main character “Cowboy?”

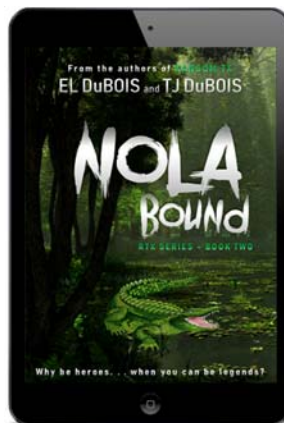
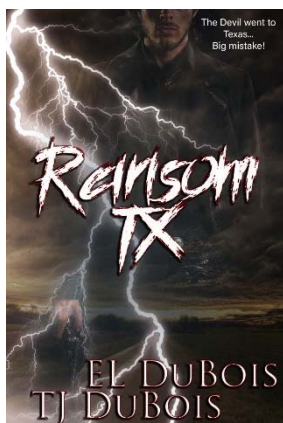
E.L. I thought it was a cool throwback to my modern-day western/horror. My mom had a cousin growing up that everyone called Cowboy. When my character first materialized, I knew immediately he would be nicknamed “Cowboy.”

Ernie: Was Cowboy based on any one person, or was he a composite?

E.L. I take their personalities, mannerisms, and physical appearances from many people. My family has a big influence on the characters. Cowboy has my brother’s composure, he is a leader, and speaks once the situation is assessed. Sheriff Daniels is my dad, through-and-through. All my female characters have a natural sass that reminds me of my mom and daughter.

Ernie: What is your next project?

E.L. It’s called *NOLA Bound*. In that book, Whisky very much has my daughter’s personality, and Rourke is easy going and easy to love – much like my husband T.J. There are some big future plans for the characters of Ransom and NOLA. The motto of NOLA is “why be heroes when you can be legends?” The sentiment pretty well sums up what is in store for my rag-tag group of unlikely saviors. You can look for book 3 of the Ransom series called *Tennessee Whiskey* coming soon.



Books for Sale

A spot for shameless self-promotion

E.L. DuBOISE & T.J. DuBOISE



Ransom TX

E.L. DuBlois & T.J. DuBois

ISBN: 978-1623441500

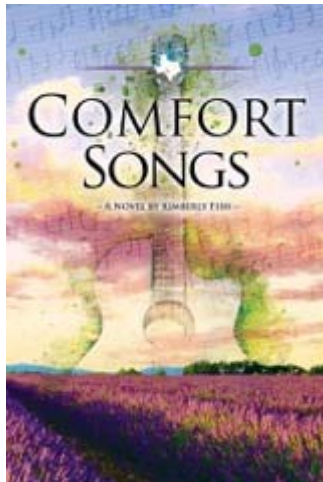
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The devil went down to Texas. Big mistake! Yesterday, James "Cowboy" Stone was Ransom's golden boy, a football god. Today, he's their savior, a warrior in a destiny he never expected. The devil got hold of Cowboy's small West Texas town, and all hell's broken loose. His friends have become enemies, and the love of his life...gone. Death surrounds him, but what must be will be. He's already lost everything, so now, he'll do anything necessary to stop the evil. Cowboy has a job to do or the entire world will pay. He has one night to save humanity. One night to derail the devil's plans. In this battle of good vs. evil, will the hero prevail or will he pay the ultimate price while the world burns around him? Whatever happens...in life or in death, there will be hell to pay.

KIMBERLEY FISH



Comfort Songs

ISBN: 978-1732338654

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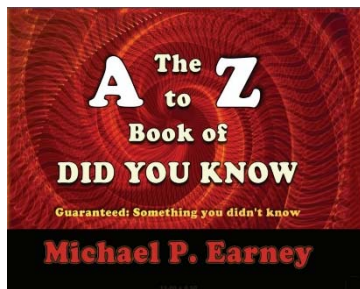
Fish Tales Publishing

348 pages

From the award-winning author of *Comfort Plans*, Kimberly Fish delivers a novel about family, forgiveness, and the seeds of second chances. Eight years ago, Autumn Joy Worthington, still reeling from the bitter divorce of her Grammy-Award-winning parents, endured the betrayal of a man who'd promised her a wedding. Running from pain seemed the logical response. Reinventing herself in Comfort, Texas, as a lavender grower, she creates a wildly successful gardening haven that draws in tourists and establishes an identity far removed from her parents' fame. Her mother's retirement from stardom inspires AJ to offer her refuge and nurse the dream that they could move past old hurts and the tarnish of the music industry ... to find friendship.

A grandmother in the early stages of dementia, and the return of AJ's father complicate the recovery, but nothing sets the fragile reality spinning like the arrival of Nashville music executive, Luke English. As Alzheimer's slowly knocks away the filters of their family, AJ comes to appreciate the true meanings of love and forgiveness, and that the power of redemption can generate from the most unlikely sources. When AJ uncovers the grit to make hard choices, she also discovers that the flowers that bloom the brightest can have the most tangled roots.

MICHAEL EARNEY



ISBN: 978-1941345672

www.MichaelEarney.com

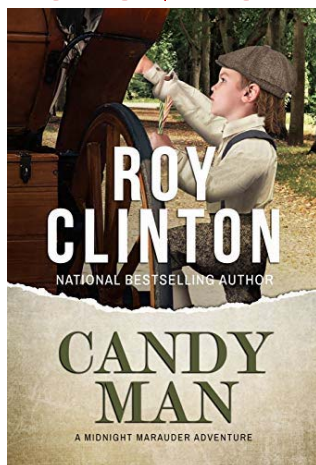
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Erin Go Bragh Publishing

60 pages

Did you know you can learn something new every day? I am sure that everyone reading this book will find something that they didn't know. Fun facts, strange truths, odd concepts and bizarre ideas, all have been collected by the author, Michael P. Earney, to entertain and perhaps expand our understanding of the world around us. The A to Z Book of Did You Know is part of an educational series, utilizing the original painted illustrations of this author. Other books in the series include: The A to Z Book of Birds, an ABC for young bird lovers, The A to Z Book of Weeds and other useful Plants, The A to Z Book of Wildflowers

ROY CLINTON



Candy Man

A midnight murder mystery

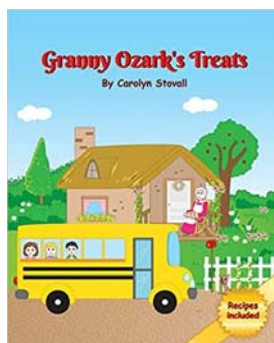
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176 pages

Ripped from the headlines of 1874, little Charley Ross was abducted in front of his home in Philadelphia. The nation was riveted as it followed the search of a city that expanded to the nation. Would their child be next? Who would steal a child in an effort to extort his parents? It was the first kidnapping for ransom in the United States. This historical event is central to this Midnight Marauder adventure. John Crudder is once again summoned to Washington DC by the President. He is commissioned as a special agent to the president to find the kidnapped boy. The Midnight Marauder's help is needed to solve the kidnapping and hopefully recover the boy. This historical novel closely follows the facts of that case.

CAROLYN STOVAL



Granny Ozark's Treats

ISBN: 978-0692119921

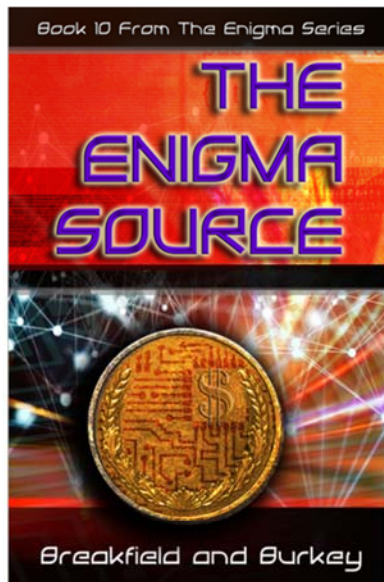
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Granny Ozark's Treats is a neat children's book, that children love.

Granny Ozark's Treats is about a Granny that lives in a cottage in the woods by a bus stop where the neighbor children get off the bus. Granny and her dog, Suzy, meet the children each day with homemade treats. They do many fun things at Granny's house. They ride ponies, go fishing in the pond, have picnics, and snowboard in the winter. They Make decorated cookies with Granny at Christmas.

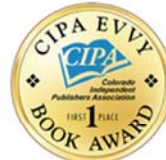
♥Recipes Included in the back of the book.



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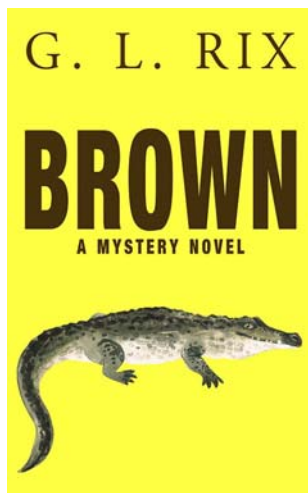
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G. L. RIX



Title: Brown

ISBN: 978-10903560-2-4

Available on Amazon or at

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Brown private detective who is working on four cases. Brown has the demeanor of a grizzly bear, and works out of San Antonio, Texas.

Among other things, Brown finds and returns stolen bodies, wife-beating husbands on the run from paid hit-men, performs background checks on bad guys, and finds lost animals (including, apparently, alligators.)

Ed note: Because of the alligator angle, I will do a review on this book for the next issue!

K. WENDT



Burned on Sunday

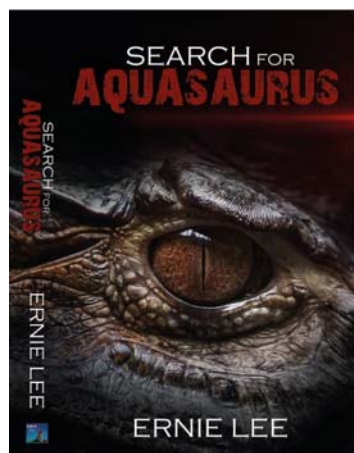
ISBN: 978-1950282531

209 pages

www.kwendt.com

In Lucy's opinion, every person in the Colorado town of Rock Springs was a hypocrite. After witnessing her best friend, Melissa, be publicly humiliated, Lucy knew that was the last straw. Every man in the town—from Melissa's cheating husband to the preacher—made their way to the saloon on a weekly basis. Town wives pretended they didn't know what went on in the bedrooms on the second floor of the saloon, but Lucy knew better. As she danced with men on the dancefloor, she noticed who went upstairs. She knew what went on within those walls. Fed up with the double-standards, Lucy decides to put a plan in motion that would expose all of the sins and turmoil in Rock Springs. What Lucy didn't know is that her plan would change her life forever. A woman's maternal warmth and an unexpected encounter with a stranger pushed through the noise and allowed her to feel true love for the first time.

ERNIE LEE



Search for Aquasaurus
ISBN: 978-1-7321131-2-1

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In this sequel to the award-winning novel Aquasaurus, Katie Marshall and her friends Jake, Rita, Jesse, and Hootie track the giant crocodile to the Gulf of Mexico. Professor Tom Morrison, and his student assistant, Mark, race to capture and study the prehistoric crocodile before it can be destroyed. When the dangerous crocodile is cornered in a remote Mexican lagoon, both teams get more than they bargained for.



A Place for Me

ISBN: ISBN: 978-0-578-52933-2

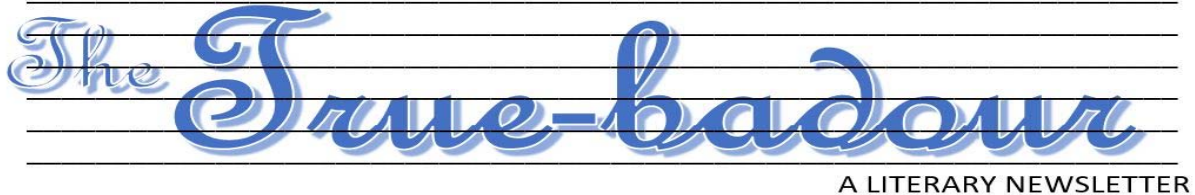
Available at:
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Katelyn, a very intelligent and talented young girl, struggles to find her own place in the shadow of her superstar basketball brother Drake. After getting accepted to the Metropolitan School of the Arts and moving in with her grandparents, tragedy strikes the family after Drake's biggest game of the season. Although a fictional story, Katelyn's story is not a make believe. There are many bright and talented kids who spend most if not all of their lives trying to escape the shadow of talented athletic siblings who stands out not only at school, but also at home. This is the first book in the Place, Past, Present Series. This is an excellent book for older students who have reading challenges.

AIM-HI BOOKS CALENDAR: Here is the list of places I'm supposed to appear this quarter. If you are in the area, please stop by and say hi! I'd love to see you, sign a card or a book for you, and get to know you better, or catch up on old times.

Have you a poem or short story you would like to share in the *The True-badour*?

Send it to Ernie at bardoftheblanco@hotmail.com. We would love to help you share it with our readers.



Submission Instructions for *The True-badour*

If you are submitting for **inclusion** in *The True-badour*, I am happy to review your work. We will consider your book cover at any time. We would like to print your book cover or showcase you as an author, or both. The showcase will include your picture & bio. Schedule your request to advertise new book releases or important career milestones. We want to hear your success stories. Short articles on the writing process, poetry, fiction, and non-fiction are always welcome.

Here is what to send if you are submitting for **book cover** space in *The True-badour*,

1. Send an e-mail to Ernie Lee at ernie.lee@live.com
2. Put your book cover in a separate .jpg document attached to your e-mail – not in the body of your message.
3. Include everything I need to know about your book: Title, ISBN, where it can be purchased, and a short synopsis of the story. **Please use Times New Roman 12pt.**
4. We will run your cover as often as space permits, but you must resubmit for each upcoming issue.

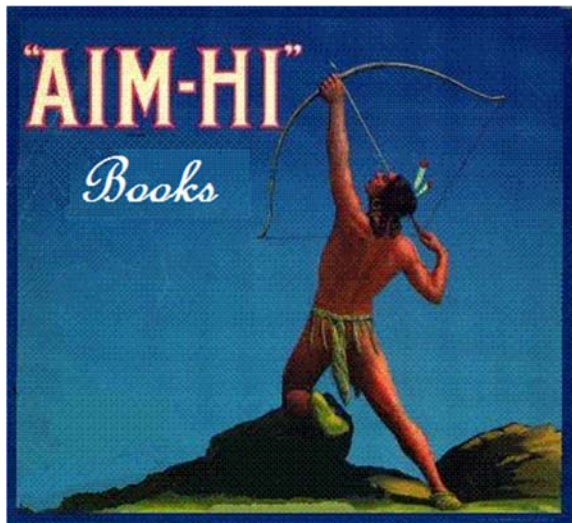
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1. Send an e-mail to Ernie Lee at ernie.lee@live.com
2. Put your story, article, poem in a separate word document attached to your e-mail – not in the body of your message. **Please use Times New Roman 12pt.**
3. If you want a showcase position, I will need a picture of you – head and shoulders shot so your face is recognizable. I may only use it for a showcase, but having it on hand will save a lot of time later.
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5. You must submit something I can print. It must be family friendly. Please keep it short – 3,000 words is about the maximum (but I will consider if it is slightly over)
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