



Lesley Webb Writes

November 2023

Newsletter

Some News Nibbles

The Heard Word

This on-line writing group meets weekly to present writing and receive feedback. I have been invited to be the Featured Writer in the Spring. This entails presenting some writing with a Q & A session, before offering feedback to other writers who have submitted their work. I am looking forward to that and it has also given me a target date to get the Tumbleweed Child novel completed. No pressure then...

King Lear Prize 2023

In July I told you there were 6,000+ entries for the King Lear 2023 prize. So imagine how pleased I was to be highly commended for a short story I'd entered (out of 1,500 story entries). Even more exciting was that Mitch, also a member of Gillingham (Dorset) Writing Group and who'd entered two poems, was both shortlisted and highly commended for the poetry competition. As a group we were pretty pleased with ourselves and await the Judge's final decisions, which should be announced on 17th November.

Anthology

The Writing Group Anthology has been snapped up. I was chuffed to bits to have my Flash Fiction 'First they came for the Teachers' name checked on the Library Facebook page, as their favourite.

Millie & Louise

I was so pleased with the printing of M&L. I have sold quite a few copies, and

lodged a copy with the British Library. The reviews are lovely, check them out on the News page of <https://www.lesleywebbwrites.co.uk/> If you haven't got a copy yet, but want one, drop me an email for details on how to get hold of it.

A Tumbleweed Child

I am deep into the story of the 'Tumbleweed Child'. I'm currently writing Amelia Bisson's story. She is the mother of the Tumbleweed Child. Some of this novel formed the basis of my Dissertation for the Masters in Creative Writing and Publishing.

Flash Fiction Freebie

So this FFF was written with hair dresser Douglas's storyline. I then flipped the same plot but wrote it with Queenie's storyline. I presented both to the Writing Group but the overwhelming response was that the first perspective worked best. I'd be interested to hear your views on whether it works for you.

A Study of Hands

Douglas's hands were beautifully manicured. He kept his nails trimmed, the cuticles smooth and his skin softened with fragrant hand cream. 'Oranges and Cinnamon' was his favourite. He bought it from a special shop in Covent Garden, had done for years. His work as a women's hair dresser usually entailed massage. His customers often commented on the softness of his fingers as he worked on their scalp, neck and shoulders, kneading gently. For many of the older ladies their weekly 'shampoo and set', as he still insisted on calling it, was the only human touch they received.

Applying the caustic chemicals needed to bleach the colour out of his client's hair, before dyeing it, would have burned his skin. It turned the fingertips of less careful hair artists, (*as he liked to think of himself*), a dusty shade of brown. Douglas wore rubber gloves to prevent such discolouration.

"These hands are my work tools," he told each customer. "Look after your tools and they will look after you," he'd say with a smile.

Douglas made each customer feel like they were the most special of his clients. He knew the birthdays of his regulars, and offered a free 'shampoo and set' to them each year on that anniversary. He knew their husband's names and those who did not have a husband. He knew their favourite foods and the names of their cats or dogs. He would never reveal his own birth date, or even how old he was. The regulars tried to guess, totting up the number of years they had been coming to the salon.

“Douglas, are you really seventy four?”

“Douglas, when will you retire?”

“Douglas, doesn't Queenie want you to pack in work and spend some time with her?”

He would nod his head, unwilling to reveal his age or his retirement plans.

“I can't let anyone else cut your hair Daphne. Not when I've got it just right.”

“Do you think anyone else would get the exact shade of blue rinse you need to set off those beautiful eyes Elizabeth?”

The women would giggle and shake their heads gently, so as not to disturb their hairstyles. After removing the protective black overall covering their shoulders he would give the fabric a shake, then lead the customers to the till to pay.

“Your hands are magical Douglas.”

As he held them out for all to admire, he had to admit there was a bit of magic involved. So it was a surprise to him, as much as to everyone else, when Queenie was discovered lifeless in their bed and the purple bruises around her neck matched the shape of those magic fingertips exactly.

446 Words

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