

# odyssey oracle

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## Personal Reflections and Family Memories

### Downtown on a Dime by Danielle Rosales

I have patiently waited this break for something worthy to write a review about. This fantastic, free day downtown almost slipped my mind.

As a family, we set out downtown to go to a free, family-friendly brass holiday concert at the capitol. We had a great time. The concert was very child-friendly, allowing you to sit feet away from the musicians so you could really feel the joyous uprising of the music. The children could participate by playing small instruments like tambourines and bells. They played 15 or so traditional holiday songs ranging from Rudolph to Silent Night and combining some favorites together. It was magical to feel the enormous capitol building erupting with music as we looked down from the second floor onto the Christmas tree.

Our next stop was the Overture Center for Kids in the Rotunda, a free family Saturday concert featuring local children's performer Ken Lonquist. He was a riot, filled with enticing, exciting energy and fun music. He had parents laughing and kids bopping to the music. He played guitar and sang silly songs about winter fun and his travels to Mexico. Then he played a song where he let the kids pick a setting, such as the beach or a desert, and then Ken would improvise an elaborate, hysterical song about that location. It was an all-around great time for kids and adults alike.

Then due to my son's excitement, we chose to ride the free trolley. It travels around the square down State St., turns right at the end, and pulls right along the lake. It was such a pleasure we stayed on for a second loop.



To our surprise, a group of male carolers got on and started singing. The small overheated trolley car brimmed over with their soulful voices. It was a deeply rich experience.

How amazing it was to be able to go downtown with my three kids and husband and enjoy a day full of music without paying a high ticket price.

### **This Christmas by Dwayne Ellis**

Christmas this year was very special to me, not because of the gifts but because of the people I was able to share it with. Family is something that is very important to me, and this year I got to spend Christmas not only with my family of origin, extended family, and close friends, but also with the family I have created.

This Christmas I went to Chicago to visit with my family of origin and extended family. I brought my immediate family along to get to know my family of origin better and to meet my



extended family. It was a day of joy and delicious food. Everyone got along, relaxed, and enjoyed themselves.

This Christmas was exceptionally special to me because I also spent it with my niece. This was my niece's first Christmas. I got to enjoy watching her open her gifts along with my fiancée's three children. The happiness and excitement I observed in everyone's eyes was priceless, and I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world. I look forward to many more happy holidays with the people that mean the world to me. I am fortunate to have such a close, caring family and group of friends.

### **Something Stirring Inside by Catina McAlister**

I don't really get a break like some students get. I still have my full-time job and also taking care of my two boys, going to basketball practice and games, etc. But I did do a lot of thinking about what I want to do with my life and which directions I need to go towards making certain things happen.

The more I think about how kids are lost in this world due to drugs, mental or physical abuse, peer pressure, and homelessness, among other things, the more I want to help them all. The more I am out in the streets, the more I see and hear.

During my break I had to go to Milwaukee to conduct interviews for the program I coordinate, which is the Minority Counselor Training Institute. While conducting these interviews with potential candidates, we came across some very young, driven, passionate individuals with their own big hopes and dreams. Listening to some of the stories, I felt something stir inside me that was pretty much already there but grew more with every story I heard pouring from their mouths like water from a tea kettle, soothing and hot. The motivation inside



me intensified, and at that moment I knew some of the things I had to do, including continuing my education after the Odyssey Project.

My goal is to be a peer specialist for teenage girls. In order to do that, I know that I must obtain my degree in Human Services so that my personal knowledge will go hand in hand with the educational knowledge I will receive. This was by far the best part of my break besides seeing the expressions on my boys' faces on Christmas morning.

### **Arrested Vacation by Michael Lozano**

For most people, Christmas Day is a family-gathered celebration, but for me it was not so much of a celebration.

I started my night by going to a club accompanied by friends and family. We were having fun drinking and socializing.

Next thing I know it's over and time to go. I thought I could drive home, but unfortunately I was not being realistic. I got pulled over and taken to jail. I spent the next few days in jail, which felt like weeks. I was let out on the condition that I would do house arrest for the next two months or be back in jail.



### **God Showed Up and Showed Out by Nikyra McCann**

Over my break, what stood out most was when I went to church one night and God really showed up and showed out.

I had gotten sick, and things hadn't been the same. I felt as if God left me and didn't care, so I hadn't been into church the way I had been before things happened. In church before I wouldn't feel anything, and I would just sit there in disbelief.

On this day, it was different. This day I went up

for prayer, and I remember my pastor saying, "God wants to do something for you tonight. Block out everything."

At first it was hard. My problems and situations were on my mind, so I raised my hands. Some other evangelists and preachers began to pray for me. The next thing you know I was shouting and screaming and praising God all over that church.

That night God showed me, "Nikyra, I'm still with you to the end!"

### **Enough is Enough! by Trendell Johnson**

In December 2010, I told myself, "Enough is enough. I've had it!" I have always tried to please people and do what they wanted me to do. I've had my heart broken for the last time. It hurts too much when you give all you have and the one you

love says it's not good enough. I am done with doing my best to please others. I'm giving my all for a greater me in the future. This last relationship had me depressed for months, all because I allowed a woman's feelings, thoughts, and words to mean more to me than my own.

I decided to receive pure, genuine love and acceptance from Jesus Christ. I believe He will comfort me when internal pain and sorrow comes. I don't have to be someone else to please him; He takes me as I am. He won't lie to me, nor will he ever leave me or forsake me. I will not allow my





past relationships to affect my future relationships, but I have to continue to learn from them.

Staying faithful to the Lord in our everlasting covenant, I'm sure that all of my needs will be met and my desires fulfilled. Working on myself is my constant goal. Who knows me better than the Lord? Nobody, so I'm just going to follow His lead. From this day on, I will grow and learn to reciprocate the love Christ has for me. What great joy I have knowing I am always loved and accepted, no matter how badly I mess up.

I'm staring at my future, which is bright and glorious, and letting go of my past. I won't take life for granted. Remember what I said: "Enough is enough!"

### **Trying to Bury the Pain** **by Michelle Bozeman**

My kids and I brought in the New Year with each other. I bought the kids some sparkling grape juice, and I had a bottle of champagne. We watched the video countdown of 2010 on BET. That was fun because it was all the good videos, and we had snacks to go with them. We baked cookies and roasted marshmallows over the fireplace. Relaxing with my kids—I wouldn't want to trade them in for anything.

The morning of January 4, my grandmother



called to tell me that my dad died from his short battle with cancer. It was lung cancer, and I say short because I just found out this past October, and now he was gone.

My dad and I didn't have much of a relationship because he was a drug user and was a deadbeat dad. He did nothing for me and my brothers—no Happy Birthdays, no Merry Christmas, no nothing. The past couple of years I tried to bury the pain and become the daughter I should have been, but he made it so damn hard to compromise my feelings. I was angry but I tried to reach out. When I heard of his death, I really had no emotions. . . . I didn't know what to feel. I just lost one of the people that gave me life. Why was I feeling this way?

His funeral was in Chicago, and I really didn't want to go. Expenses, my emotions—I wasn't ready for this at all. My brother from Louisville was there, and I haven't seen him in years. I saw a lot of family that I haven't seen but hated that we were reunited at a time of sorrow. I enjoyed the family, but once again my pain was greater than the enjoyment.

Overall, I'm glad that he is resting. I just hate that I wasn't 'daddy's little girl' like I've always dreamed of being. I hate that I blame him for my problems and downfalls in my life, and I was hoping that I would have had the chance to repair most of the issues I had with him. I guess this is something that I have to deal with on my own now. It's hard.

### **So Much Love Flowing** **by Edwina Robinson**

We have a family tradition I started that we are to read two stories to the grandchildren, with adults taking part, too. The first story was *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, and the second was *The True Meaning of Christmas*.

We played







Christmas songs, and my daughter-in-law and I prepared food. The tree was lit all over, with lights blinking. The house had so much love flowing this day that you could feel it all over. I enjoyed watching my grandchildren laugh and say, “I can’t wait until morning!” We laughed and sang songs. The girls helped with baking cookies for Santa and making pies. How I wished this feeling would never end. It was so beautiful.

My grandkids asked, “Grandma, when are we going to read the stories?” . . . I stopped preparing the food and got down on the floor with them to read. They laughed and frowned at the story about the Grinch who stole Christmas, but I noticed they were sad about the story of Jesus’ birth because there was nowhere for Mary to give birth but in a barn with the animals. They asked, “Grandma, didn’t they have any hospitals?” I told them not in those days but that Jesus was safe and Mary was OK. Now they know why we give gifts at Christmas—it’s to celebrate Jesus’ birthday.

I asked them what can we give Jesus for his birthday, and they said, “I don’t know.” I said you can give of yourselves if you treat each other right, have good behavior and listen to your mother and father, have a good attitude, do the best you can, and pray.

I don’t know if they really listened to me or will remember it all, but it made me think of how I can do better. I need an attitude of gratitude for life, no matter what. I’m here to lead by example to my grandchildren. Whatever mistakes I made with my children, I have been granted grace to teach my grandchildren, so I am blessed.

## My Life Is No Piece of Cake by Precious LaShore

If you were to take a walk in my footsteps, you would quickly learn that I have never been a person of luck. Growing up for me was never really a piece of cake.

I can honestly say that Christmas and New Year’s were both outstanding and disappointing! Being blessed with \$100 extra from Professor Emily really help set up a great Christmas for me and mine.

I left class on the last Wednesday before Christmas break feeling uplifted and unstoppable. I had already started shopping for my little one and had plenty of things for him. When Christmas morning finally came, it was filled with nothing but smiling faces, ripping wrapping paper, and surprisingly joyful moments. Everybody was satisfied, and I do believe that this was one of the best Christmas days ever! . . .

Well, loving the fact that it’s a new year and I’ve been working two months, I’ve been taking pride in saving up money to get an apartment of my own. My goal was to have my apartment keys by



Valentine's Day, but due to the fact that I recently had to bail myself out of Dane County Jail for accidentally missing court in December, I don't believe that is going to happen. Sometimes I sit and think, "Why, when I'm not doing anything with my life, nobody messes with me, but the moment I start both going to school and working, the devil is at my back?" I wonder if I'm the only one that noticed that.

Being in jail has taught me to appreciate the little things in life, and it has also taught me to never judge a book by its color. You would never know by just looking the talents and things other have done in their past. I've also learned that everything happens for a reason. I do take pride in saying that I read a whole book in one day, something I haven't done since elementary school! Again, the biggest thing I learned was to appreciate my freedom and every precious thing in it. At any time, a small incident can take it ALL away.

### **Clean Time Countdown by Ray "Migizi" Hopp**

I went to a wonderful Recovery Dance and New Year's celebration! They had a potluck dinner for everyone, with lots of food. I remember the Swedish meatballs the most; a good friend had made them from scratch. Wow, were they delicious! I also ate pizza, some varieties of crackers and cheese, all kinds of cake, candy, chocolates, and cookies. I drank water and soda pop too.



There were a lot of people at this event, all dressed to impress, too, since it was a New Year's Dance. People were so happy and joyful. It was an excellent place to be to bring in the New Year. All people were clean and sober, which was the best part! I am so grateful and thankful to say that I truly enjoyed myself, celebrating this kind of New Year for the second time. . . .

There was a DJ who played a great variety of music for us, from 70s to today's dance and hip hop music. A lot of us danced like there was no tomorrow, with different styles of dancing going on. . . . They had a clean time countdown shortly before midnight. Everyone was on the dance floor at the same time! Wow!

It was so amazing, with so much excitement, cheer, love, joy, friendship, and good times happening. I will never forget this New Year's, one of the best I have ever had.

### **Finding Oneself by Marvin Pratt**

I have so much I am very thankful for and could write about, like being alive, healthy, in school, and employed, or even the birth of my first grandson, but to be honest what meant the most to me over my Christmas break was for the very first time in my life



I know who Marvin Pratt is! This Christmas was special because I got to meet myself with my head held high because of the steps I have taken to find out who I really am.

The greatest gift you can EVER receive is respect, not just from anyone but the respect you have for yourself. When you respect yourself, you will NEVER allow anything less from another. When you respect yourself, you know the difference between right and wrong.

When you respect yourself, you are a better father, mother, husband, wife, and friend. Most importantly, when you master respecting yourself, you'll find that soon comes loving oneself. That is the greatest gift of all. LOVE YOURSELF!

# Mental Intimacy

by Marseills McKenzie

My friend tells me I set my standards so  
high  
There's clearly no way  
I'll ever find the right  
Apple of my eye

I reply you try  
But you will never understand why  
I don't need a woman to please me  
With all her might that's out of sight  
For only one night

I need a soul mate sent from the pearly  
gates  
Sealed and delivered through God's fate  
To help me escape the heartaches of the  
loneliness  
I live to hate

A true gift of companionship  
I shall not waste  
That won't leave me a bitter taste  
Only in a peaceful mental state

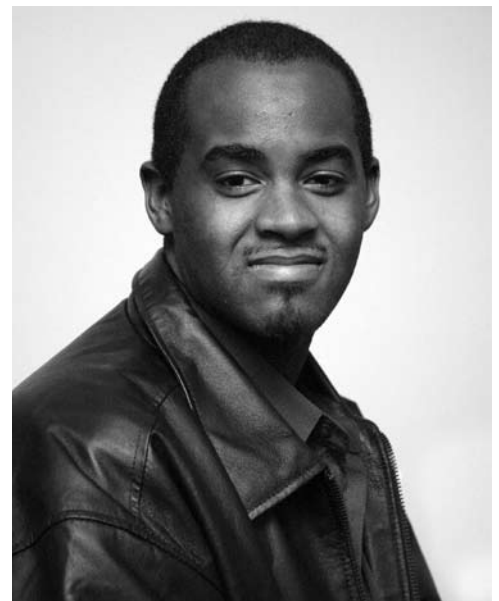
Someone who doesn't fear my kindness  
or wit  
Treats me like I'm her highness  
Knows as a man I may shed tears  
But I will never quit

Someone who knows chivalry is not dead  
Feels like I'm not just trying to put her to  
bed  
Loves that I prefer romance instead.

Someone who believes I'm her great  
force  
Cruisin' through life's course  
Without ever speaking the word 'divorce'

Someone I can bring to meet family  
Before becoming more sacred than a vow  
or a ring  
And knowing her intimately

Someone who sees the good tendencies  
in me  
Won't flee from me  
To let me roam free  
When my heart is key  
She'll realize I'll be all that she needs  
She'll look beyond my C.P.  
Together we'll have supremacy  
While striving for mental intimacy.



# The *Sookie Stackhouse* Box Set

## A Book Review

by Takeyla Benton

“Oh no, not another book about vampires.” That was my response when a co-worker recommended Charlaine Harris’ series of vampire tales. The books had already been adapted to a wildly popular HBO series, *True Blood*, in 2008, so I figured it must be somewhat interesting. So I bought the first box set of seven books and resolved to read them all without prejudice. I was in for a huge surprise.

Like many others, I couldn’t wait until Sunday to watch *True Blood* on HBO. I was enthralled more with the story being told and the way the vampire lore was woven into a reality parallel to the real world. It was a welcome diversion from the predictable reality shows growing like mold on mainstream TV.

When the second season ended, I glanced at the box set of books collecting dust on the corner of my dresser. I was bored and decided I might as well read them. I didn’t want to waste my money and hoped I wouldn’t be wasting my time.

I raced through the first book in no time. Comparing the book to the TV series helped the pace ease along for me in a manageable manner. Of course, the book was different from the series in many key areas, but it was interesting enough that I picked up the second book and continued with my box set. Before long, between work, college courses, and kids, I found myself sneaking off to read these books whenever I could. It was my guilty pleasure and escape into another world through the eyes of the main character, Sookie Stackhouse.

Sookie has depth and real world quirks that make you believe she’s someone you want to see make it out of the crazy situations and get back to her normal life as a barmaid. You may find yourself falling in love with vicious vampires and wishing your buddy was a werewolf or weretiger.

Each book of the seven I have read thus far picks up where the last one left off. With character conflicts and life threatening situations, the mystery plots Harris throws Sookie into are blended so

well into reality that you find yourself questioning what you know is real. Each book takes you on a different

quest to resolve some issue or mystery with Sookie in hopes that she will be able to get back to her normal life. Harris does a great job of adding small details into the story that correlate to real life’s unexplained little mysteries. Sookie has such a distinct personality and voice that you cheer when she succeeds and cringe when she gets stabbed or beaten, which seems to happen quite a lot.

Although these books have not been the best or most cleverly written pieces of literary work, they are amazing in their own respect. Harris does work great magic with details and story lines. It’s a shame that some of the books in the series were rushed and seem to have been missing climactic plots and vital information. However, I would recommend these to anyone interested in a modern twist on old vampire lore. Don’t be afraid to jump on the “vampire fad” because you may find some wonderful details that inspire you to rethink how you view the world.





# *Having Our Say*

## A Book Review

by Helen Montgomery

I got the chance over the winter break to enjoy a great book about Miss Sadie Delany, age 106, and her sister, Dr. Bessie Delany, age 104. Sadie and Bessie were inseparable for more than a century until Bessie's death in 1995.

*Having Our Say* depicts the story of the remarkably energetic yet humorous Delany sisters. The Delany sisters were determined not to let the demons of prejudice from the outside world spoil their chances of getting an education.

Their story is told through the eyes of Amy Hill Hearth. Amy does not change a word spoken by the two sisters, delivering a powerful and truthfully poignant story about how they survived the Jim Crow era.

Although the Delany family had no financial challenges, they still had to endure the disenfranchisement of racial and educational separation. Overcoming the barriers that most African Americans suffered during the Jim Crow era, they both went on to have very successful careers. Sadie graduated from St. Augustine's. She started her first teaching job in 1920 and earned \$1500 her first year. Meanwhile, Bessie worked her way through dental school. By 1925 Bessie had embarked on a practice as New York's second-ever black female dentist.

Both Sadie and Bessie Delany remained unmarried and lived long, healthy lives.



# Inception

## A Movie Review

by Leah LaBarre

Film is much more to me than just another form of entertainment. Movies are an art form, but sometimes the film's viewer needs to think creatively to find the message. Movies run my imagination as wild as when walking through an art gallery: I can't help but to open my mind up to the new ideas represented to me. I have to be in the right mood to watch a particular genre. The tone of a good movie can really change your feelings even after the flick ends.

Have you ever watched a movie so astounding that you couldn't help being anything other than awed by it? It has happened to me. They were extravagant films, and some of them made it to my top-ten list (*Avatar*, *Children of Men*, *Cold Mountain*, *Almost Famous* and a few more). When it comes to being on the number one spot on the list, none of them could quite hide that little voice that says, "Keep looking." Then I saw *Inception*.

Many well-known actors were chosen for *Inception*. Leonardo DiCaprio (*Titanic*; *The Departed*), Joseph Gordon (500 Days of Summer), Ellen Page (*Juno*; *Whip It*), and a few more dashing characters made a perfect fit for this action-packed thriller. Cobb (DiCaprio) and right-hand thief

Arthur (Gordon) have mastered the art of extracting deep secrets from within the subconscious through dreaming.

When offered a deal by a rich corporation to diminish a competitor through an inception—planting an idea that can change the future for good—Cobb can't refuse the only chance he has left to be with his kids in reality. Arthur and Cobb formulate the team to plan the ultimate dream inside the subconscious mind. The team starts to wonder when the secrets of one threaten to end it all.

Usually I have a clue on how the flick I'm seeing is going to end, but as I watched *Inception*, everything that I thought was going to happen didn't. After countless movies, I have never in my life been so blown away with a film. *Inception*

constantly kept me on the edge of my seat, and the script was brilliant. I don't think any movie I've seen can top this unbelievably thrilling film! As soon as the credits began to roll down the screen, that little voice was silenced.

Director and writer Christopher Nolan takes us to the place in our imaginations where we might never wake up! After you watch *Inception*, maybe you'll soon question reality.



## Scrooge Haunted by the Odyssey Spirit

On December 15, 2010,  
Michael Birkley  
visited the Odyssey class  
and brought “Bah  
humbug!” and other  
words of Charles Dickens  
to life.

Robert Auerbach, Rene  
Robinson ('08), and  
Rockameem Bell ('08)  
added music.





