



KRISTIN CAPP

# Readers Write

## BORROWING

I HAVE NO CHILDREN. I'VE BEEN contentedly single for most of my childbearing years, and I haven't really wanted kids. People have told me I'd make a good mother, but being good at something and wanting to do it are two different things. A few years ago I found out that I suffer from endometriosis, the top cause of infertility in women, so I probably couldn't get pregnant even if I tried.

I've chosen to borrow other people's children instead. My two best friends and my sister have all invited me into their homes after the births of their first children to help with chores and offer support where I could.

Three times I have washed bottle nipples with tiny brushes, changed diapers, felt spit-up run down my cleavage, fished boogers from tiny nostrils, patted out burps, sung lullabies, slept with a newborn on my chest, and stared deeply into a baby's eyes. Three times I have fallen in love. Three times I have returned to my own home, heartbroken.

I live hundreds of miles from the children I once helped care for. This distance sometimes feels like a physical ache. Though I have not shepherded a child into this world, I have learned one of the lessons of parenting: how to love and let go.

Jennifer R. Myhre  
San Mateo, California

IN THE EARLY SEVENTIES I LEFT ACADEMIA for life in the country. I bought a raw piece of land and struggled to build a cabin, till a garden, and put up fences. I made friends with the locals, particularly Clyde, an older farmer with a hair-trigger smile. I'd drop by his place and help him with his projects just to be entertained by him. When I mentioned I was going to fence my meadow, Clyde offered to come over and drill the post-holes for me. I was thrilled. After that we regularly helped each other repair barns

and care for animals. No money was ever exchanged.

I had been raised never to ask for anything; borrowing had always caused fights in my family. As Clyde and I went on helping each other, I felt obligated to keep it fair between us, and I pointed out that I had many more needs than he did. Clyde smiled and said, "If you need something, ask. If I can help out, I will. And if I need something, I'll ask. You can help me if you can. But don't ever keep track."

We helped each other for the next thirty years without issue.

J.W. Lawrence  
Friday Harbor, Washington  
(end of excerpt)

READERS WRITE asks readers to address subjects on which they're the only authorities. Topics are intentionally broad in order to give room for expression. Writing style isn't as important as thoughtfulness and sincerity.

Because of space limitations, we're unable to print all the submissions we receive. We edit pieces, often quite heavily, but contributors have the opportunity to approve or disapprove of editorial changes prior to publication. (If you don't want to be contacted regarding the editing of your work, please let us know.)

We publish only nonfiction in Readers Write. Feel free to submit your work under "Name Withheld" if it allows you to be more honest, but be sure to include your mailing address so we can give you a complimentary one-year subscription if we use your work, as a way of saying thanks. Occasionally we will choose not to publish an author's name or will use only a first name and last initial. While we don't question the truthfulness of the writing, we must be sensitive to considerations of libel or invasion of privacy. If you've already changed the names of the people involved, please say so.

Send your typed, double-spaced submissions to Readers Write, The Sun, 107 North Roberson Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27516. Please include your e-mail address and phone number. If you cannot type, please print clearly. We're sorry, but we can't respond to or return your work, so don't send your only copy unless you don't want it back. Because we must wait until the last minute to make our final selections, we are unable to answer questions regarding the status of submissions. If your work is going to appear, you'll hear from us prior to publication.

UPCOMING TOPICS	DEADLINE	PUBLICATION DATE
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