

**Bourne**  
**toWrite...**  
creative writing  
workshops

## Remembering Holden Caulfield

by Victoria Cooper

“Holden.”

“Can you hear me Holden?”

“It’s me.”

Slowly a woman’s face swims into view. I know the eyes and smiling mouth but nothing else. This is not unusual. It happens all the time. Faces coming towards me with stuck on smiles all corny and saying stuff like “grand” and “How you doing?” It depresses me it really does. They come in with brownies and sudoku puzzles. It’s so phoney. It really is.

This one is different. This face has something about it I remember. She has really smart eyes and a cool slow smile that I know.

“Oh so you are awake then huh? I thought so. You’re looking tired Holden, what you been up to?”

I am tired. So tired. This rest home. This God’s waiting room. This hell hole. One minute it’s Tailgate Parties and “Hey Holden, want a hamburger?” Next minute it’s “Game of bridge then old fella?”

Wheezy nurses with too tight pants and silicone gloves never leaving me alone. Asking me if I need the god damn bathroom all the time like I’m some kind of kid. I know they care. I just wish they would leave me the hell alone. Poking their fingers and checking I know what day it is. It’s none of their business. Give me a scotch and soda and shut the door on your way out sweet cheeks. That’s what I want to say; but I don’t say it. I just sit here with my snarky comments; not interested any more.

“So you’re not talking to me today huh? Well that’s okay, I just thought I’d come round with a Swiss cheese sandwich for you. You used to love these?”

She hands me a sandwich wrapped in paper. I look at her face; trying to place the cool smile. She has brown kind hands that look like they’ve worked and loved a good life. I take the sandwich and look up into grey searching eyes. Memories flicker of a young girl sat on a carousel and an electric shock blasts through my crumbling bones.

The sandwich is good. In fact it’s the best goddamn sandwich I ever had. If I was to die right now in this linoleum lined white washed corny joint I would know I’d just eaten the best sandwich of my whole life.

She laughs. A tinkly sound that takes me back to the carousel. “Glad you like it Holden.”

Alzheimers. That’s what I have. Those fat-assed nurses were talking about me the other night. I maybe 89 but I’m not deaf you morons. I know what Alzheimer’s is. I know I swim every day in a world of thick tomato soup trying to get my head out before I lose any more words. But I am not a loony.

“Look what I found Holden?”, she reaches down into her jacket pocket and pulls out a red hunting cap and puts it on my head. My fingers reach up to gently touch it. “Phoebe,” I say. She smiles that cool smile.