

**"It's
Not
About
the SEX"
My ASS™**

Confessions of an
ex-Mormon
ex-polygamist
ex-wife

“It’s
Not
About
the **SEX**”
My **ASS**™

Joanne Hanks
as told to Steve Cuno

© 2012 Joanne Hanks and Steve Cuno. All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the authors.

While the authors have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy of completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim and implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose.

ISBN: 978-1-105-99740-2

To my best friends, my daughters, who have been in the front car of this roller-coaster ride with me, hands raised high and laughing through the screams.

Contents

Author's Note 1: I Didn't Make This Stuff Up	9
Author's Note 2: Quick Primer on the Book of Mormon and Other Mormon Scriptures	10
Chapter 1: Trouble from Below	11
Chapter 2: Coveting Fanny	16
Chapter 3: The Self-Elected Elect.....	23
The righteous Mormon woman persona.....	24
I, doormat	26
Swept off my feet	28
Welcome to the end of the world	29
Behold the Handmaid of the Lord	32
Chapter 4: Into the Protective Bubble	33
Jim Harmston, Prophet of God.....	34
Harmston starts the TLC, God OKs polygamy	36
Chapter 5: Judith Makes Two	39
Wife-hunting as a couple	40
Judith, her boobs, and her other sisters, too.....	43
Throwing a wedding bash for my husband.....	46
Chapter 6: And Ginger Makes Three	50
Booted by the Mormons	50
Life with Judith.....	53
Wife Number Three catalyzes a revelation.....	56

Chapter 7: And Catherine Makes Almost Four	63
Chapter 8: Threesomes and Other Penetrating Matters	68
The Revelation on Threesomes.....	68
Sexual predators	70
Racism.....	74
Well, well, well, if it isn't welfare	76
Séances	77
Re-Probates.....	80
The men mark our territory.....	85
Cursing Bill Clinton.....	86
Chapter 9: I Doubt It	91
My husband went to the Garden of Eden and all I got was this lousy apron.....	96
A not terribly secret ceremony.....	100
Chapter 10: Celestial Stud Service	102
Diminishing importance.....	105
A step-by-step guide to the Second Coming.....	109
Cookies for Jesus.....	112
Sewing for Jesus	114
Chapter 11: Jesus Returns and Destroys the World (And How You Managed to Sleep Through It)	117
No sense in letting all that food go to waste	122
No bath water, no baby	124
“All of these people are loony”	127

Chapter 12: Afterlife	131
Frumpy in Park City	132
A farewell to magic underwear	133
My savior, George Carlin	135
My parents deserve a medal.....	137
Full circle.....	139
Fifteen minutes of infamy	140
Divorce	144
Learning to be me.....	147
Appendix A: The Cult Demarcation Problem	151
The demarcation problem	154
Human nature	155
Appendix B: The Mormon Revelation on Polygamy	157
Acknowledgments	170
The Authors.....	171

Author's Note 1

I Didn't Make This Stuff Up

This is how it happened, to the best of my knowledge and memory. Some of the people who show up in these pages may see things differently. Fine. Let them write their own book.

Everyone you'll read about is real, though I have changed all names with the following exceptions: my ex-husband, Jeff; James Dee Harmston, leader of the polygamist cult in Manti, Utah, known as The True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last Days, or TLC for short; Harmston's "First Wife," Elaine Harmston; and Arvin Shreeve and Laura Brokaw, whose convictions are a matter of public record.

Late-night comedian and talk show host Johnny Carson once defined comedy as "pain plus time." In that spirit, I chose to write about my experience with humor and satire. Above all, I didn't want to whine like a piteous, helpless victim. Though surely I was to an extent, at some point everyone must take personal responsibility for the decisions he or she makes.

In particular I want to make it clear that I in no way wish to vilify my ex-husband. He didn't drag me into polygamy. I walked into it with him of my own free will.

Quick Primer on the Book of Mormon and Other Mormon Scriptures

Mormons and Mormon-related splinter groups place these books on a par with the **Bible** (which they accept as “the word of God as far as it is translated correctly”):

Book of Mormon—A Bible-like account of the descendants of a group of Israelites led by God from Jerusalem to the Americas around 600 BCE. Mormon founder and prophet Joseph Smith Jr. said that an angel led him to the hiding place of the sacred history, which was inscribed on gold-like plates, and that he translated it “by the gift and power of God.”

Doctrine and Covenants—A compilation of revelations from God to Joseph Smith Jr., with a few additions by his successors.

Pearl of Great Price—Contains an autobiographical sketch by Joseph Smith Jr. and writings of Moses and Abraham, as revealed to Smith.

In addition, Mormons give near-scripture status to the **teachings of Joseph Smith**, whom they revere as a prophet. **Statements by his prophet-successors** “when moved upon by the Holy Ghost” also carry weight.

Chapter 1

Trouble from Below

And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent ... then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him ... And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified.

—*Doctrine and Covenants 132:61-62*

Unbuttoning my blouse, I stepped into the bedroom. I heard him moan with anticipation.

I dropped my blouse to the floor. Then my bra. He moaned again, louder this time.

I slipped under the covers.

The sound of the bedsprings was a rhythmic song of passion, building to a crescendo as if to shake the plaster from the walls. Harder, stronger, louder, with each thrust of his massive frame, he gasped and moaned with unrestrained pleasure. Then, no longer able to contain himself, he let out a scream of ecstasy and relief. It exploded against the thinly insulated bedroom ceiling. Right below where I had crawled into my bed.

It was a passionate scene, but I wasn't in it, you see. I was alone in my bedroom. The sounds I heard were coming from the bedroom below, where my husband was having sex with Judith, my "sister-wife."

It was one thing for him to have sex with another wife in my house. After all, he had my permission. But did he have to do it there, right under the room where I was trying to sleep, where I was trying to ignore the whole thing, where I was trying to pretend that it didn't shred my heart anew each time, where I was trying to pretend that I believed it was God's will, where I was trying to pretend that it didn't bug me that at just 17 my sister-wife was a full 16 years younger with way bigger boobs, and did he have to scream loud enough for God, angels, all the neighbors, any spacecraft that might be passing by the planet—and me—to hear it whether or not we wanted to?

I had to do something. Something mature. Something befitting the righteous, meek, and humble Handmaid of the Lord that I strived to be. Something dignified, that wouldn't cause the Holy Ghost to flee our home. After all, I sure as hell didn't want to be burned at the coming of Jesus. It was bad enough feeling burned at the cumming of my husband.

I desperately sought inspiration for the right way to handle this delicate situation.

Inspiration struck. I marched to the center of the room and stomped on the floor.

From—if you'll pardon the expression—the mounting crescendo in the room beneath my feet, I could tell that my one meager stomp had had no effect. In a moment like this, I would need to call upon all that I had learned throughout my life and my marriage about effective interpersonal

communication with my spouse. In other words, I was going to have to stomp lots of times and lots louder. STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP, went my foot. It ached for weeks.

The subtlety of my approach paid off, as evidenced by the fact that now all I heard was crickets.

A moment later there was another sound. It came from the stairs. I counted seven clomps. There were 14 steps, which meant he was taking them two at a time. A moment after that he appeared red-faced in my bedroom doorway, his long-armed, long-legged magic underwear with the special marks twisted hurriedly on.

He apologized. They hadn't meant to distress me.

I am an artist. I paint murals and landscapes. People admire how my mind conjures up pictures and directs my hands to reproduce them on canvas. It's a skill I'm lucky to have. The problem is, the vivid movie screen inside my head has no OFF switch. When my mind cooks up a picture I'd rather not see, I am powerless to remove it or even look away. So with every moan, bed creak, and shake of the wall, my mind added brushstrokes in vivid detail to a non-erasable mental picture of the four of them—my husband, my sister-wife, and her enormous boobs—going at it. I might as well have been right there watching.

I felt rage, but also guilt. Like I was some sort of voyeur.

I knew the score when I agreed to polygamy. We repeatedly told ourselves and emphatically preached to all who would listen that polygamy was a commandment from God.

"It's not about the sex," we constantly lectured the morbidly curious. It was about building God's kingdom on earth. It was about saving desperate single women from unworthy men who could give them no kingdom in the hereafter. We were fulfilling a higher calling.

I felt bad. I knew that I should have kept quiet and not disturbed their privacy.

But what about *my* privacy?

The New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage, as we in The True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last Days called it—as did the mainstream Mormon Church—was God's higher law. If you wanted to go to heaven, you had to be a polygamist. Yet all the same, there were times when the higher law struck me as a bit kinky.

During moments of doubt, I knew I was blowing it in the worthy handmaid department. In the Old Testament, Jacob's wives never showed jealousy toward one another. Oh wait, yes they did. But in the early days of the Mormon Church, Joseph Smith's and Brigham Young's wives didn't get jealous. Oh wait, yes they did.

No matter. We were The Elect. I could do better. I would do better.

If you sense in me a house divided, you are not wrong. I gloried in an inner conviction that we were following God's true plan. But inside I ached, because what God demanded of me was awful and it cut deep. How I thought a worthy handmaid *should feel* and how I *really felt* were constantly

fighting it out within. More often the first, but sometimes the second, prevailed.

I tried to draw strength from my husband's certainty. He knew—*knew*—that we were on the Lord's path. He told me that the Spirit manifested to him the rightness of our course by lifting his heart. And, I surmised but didn't say, from time to time by lifting his other part.

He returned to my sister-wife's room—it was still her night with him—and I spent another sleepless night on my own. Using my fist to pound a spot for my head into my pillow, I muttered to no one in particular, "It's not about the sex, my ass."

The next day, the three of us wordlessly relocated my sister-wife to a bedroom at the other end of the house.

Chapter 2

Coveting Fanny

And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph ... if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed saith the Lord; for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law.

—*Doctrine and Covenants 132:52, 54*

“The revelation says I must submit or be destroyed. Well, I guess I’ll have to submit.”

—*Emma Hale Smith, wife of Mormon prophet and founder Joseph Smith*

I might not have a story to tell if, back in 1831, a 26-year-old man had managed to keep his hands off of his wife’s attractive 15-year-old housekeeper. But manage he did not, and his wife found out.

Even in those days, a philandering husband was nothing new, but the excuse he foisted on his increasingly furious wife could have won him a prize for originality. As he kept having trysts and his wife kept finding out, he assured her that he in no way desired to have sex with other women. Surely his wife did not believe that he derived the least pleasure from it. On the contrary, he had only risen to the occasion—against his will, mind you—under strict command from God.

In fact, under *threat* from God. You see, the man had valiantly told God no. Honest he did. But—ask Jonah—telling God no rarely goes well. On at least three separate occasions when our reluctant hero attempted to resist orders to bed yet