

The Love Knot

Newsletter of the Ottawa Romance Writers' Association



MAY 2011

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*"Leave it alone! It's great, and right on target."
-Marshall McLuhan*

This was Marshall McLuhan's reaction when he saw the printer's error in the title of his book. Instead of "The Medium is the Message" the book is still titled today "The Medium is the Massage". My grandfather, a Cambridge academic, wrote a book entitled "From Script to Print", an in-depth analysis of the impact the printing press had on civilization. The printing press not only gave us access to information, it changed the way we think. McLuhan, a student of my grandfather, explored how the new mediums of radio, TV and advertising influenced how we process information. Have we now reached another milestone? The Internet gives us access to almost unlimited information, electronic publishing is challenging the traditional method of buying and reading books, and social networking platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are changing how we interact with each other and express our views and opinions. How do we adapt in this fast changing 21st century and take advantage of the incredible mediums we have at our fingertips to communicate? While we ponder the "big picture" some practical information and advice will certainly come in handy. ORWA's May workshop with Jill Murray, "Cut Through the Noise", will help us understand the *medium*. As to the *message*...?

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (continued)

REPORT ON OUR APRIL MEETING

I am happy to report that our membership now stands at 37. We hope to encourage more new members throughout the year. Members voted in favour of allocating up to \$100 to update the on-line application on our website which incorporates a PayPal payment option. We hope this will encourage and make it easier for those interested in ORWA to join our organization. The new application will be activated in the next few days.

A quick and easy link to our Published Authors page on the website has been created so that we can proudly showcase our published members without visitors having to hunt for the link. During the month a member asked if we could have direct links from our website to their personal blogs. Members are encouraged to create a "member profile" within which a link to a personal blog can be created. To create a profile go to the "Membership" link on the homepage for instructions. The Membership page has a direct link to the list of member profiles.

Our book and tape librarians (Aileen and Cynthia) are preparing listings of the books, tapes and CDs in ORWA's libraries. They will be making recommendations as to which books etc. they feel could be either archived or removed. Their listings will be posted on the Chat loop for members to review. Once agreement has been reached by members, archived books etc. will be available on request. Books on the current list will still be available at meetings. Any books, tapes or CDs recommended to be dropped from the active or archived listings will require a vote from members before action can be taken.

Our workshop schedule for 2011 is almost complete. Elizabeth (Opal Carew) has kindly agreed to give a workshop in October. We are also delighted that Elizabeth has decided to renew her membership. We are waiting for a bio and workshop description from Julia Stanley who I am happy to report has accepted our invitation to give a tax workshop in November. Lindy Williams and I have started a search for an alternate location for the Sabrina Jeffries all day workshop in September following input from members as to their preferences.

Nationals are coming up fast. I will be sending out an invitation in the next few weeks to those planning to attend to get together either electronically or in person to coordinate their schedules and implement a "buddy" system for anyone who will be attending Nationals for the first time.

Following a brief outline of what would be involved if ORWA went ahead with Teresa Wilde's fund raising idea – an ebook of synopses – members were asked to give the project some thought. A volunteer would be needed to chair a committee and oversee the initiative.

Following the adjournment of the business meeting, Maggie Attiwell organized and oversaw the "pitching" workshop which proved to be a stimulating as well as educational experience for both those pitching and those pitched. My apologies to Maggie for having allowed the business meeting and the break to overrun and shorten the time she had available to conduct her very valuable workshop.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

A Chat loop discussion on the merits of the old vs. the new format for Accolades was much appreciated. It helps the Executive to know what members think. The consensus reached was to continue the new Accolades format for now but start our meetings by asking all those present to introduce themselves. We will give this a try for a while and then members can decide whether to continue with the new format or go back to the former.

I know you will all want to join me in congratulating Teresa Wilde in taking the initiative to self-publish one of her books and the success she is experiencing. It does bring up an issue that requires debate. Does ORWA recognize a self-published author and list them on our published author page? I checked with the RWA. Their answer was that they do not as yet recognize self-published authors and do not give them PAN status. However, they also stated that we should be guided by our by-laws and P&P manual. Neither of those documents give any guidance. Teresa is in the vanguard of what I am sure will become more commonplace. I would welcome a discussion on this issue so that we can set in place a policy which will reflect members' wishes as well as show respect and encouragement to all our authors.

The above segues very aptly into a discussion on whether members would enjoy a workshop all about self-publishing. We have a brainstorming session scheduled for August but members have shown an interest in replacing it with a self-publishing workshop. Maggie Attiwell had already suggested just such a workshop topic to me at the April meeting. If we can persuade Teresa, Maggie and any others who have knowledge and or experience with this topic to organize a workshop I think we would all be the beneficiaries. I will be asking them if they are willing, and you, if you are in agreement, at the May meeting.

Until then, I hope you have all enjoyed a very happy Easter and that we all remind Spring that she "sprung" weeks ago and would she please, please get on with it.

Hope to see as many of you as possible on May 1.

Malena Abel

President

"How can you squander even one more day not taking advantage of the greatest shifts of our generation? How dare you settle for less when the world has made it easy for you to be remarkable."

Seth Godin, from Seth's blog

Current Releases



OPAL CAREW
TOTAL ABANDON
St. Martin's Griffin
April 2011



OPAL CAREW
THE KING AND I
Samhain
April 2011



RIZZO ROSKO
MATE OF THE WOLF
Siren-Bookstrand
March 2011



SHARON PAGE
BLOOD WICKED
Kensington Aphrodisia
February 2011

Upcoming Releases

DEBBIE MAZZUCA
WARRIOR OF THE ISLES
Kensington Books
May 2011



LINDA POITEVIN
SINS OF THE ANGELS
Ace Books
October 2011

Upcoming Workshops

May 1st – Cut Through the Noise! With Jill Murray



Jill Murray will help you ***Cut Through the Noise*** and build your "online platform" without losing your mind. Blogs, websites, Facebook, Twitter, forums, message boards, online tours, podcasts -- authors, illustrators and performers are being urged more than ever to build online platforms and personal brands, not just for marketing, but as the base of our careers. But how much do we need and what can we realistically expect

to achieve online?

[Jill Murray](#), a YA author with over 11 years experience building web sites and marketing plans for Canada's biggest (and smallest!) media and cultural institutions shows you how to start building the "web presence" that works for you.

June 12 - Social

This year's event will be held in Chelsea, QC. Come out to enjoy some fun in the sun and celebrate the many successes of our members, as well as pay tribute to the hardy souls who have volunteered their time to ORWA.

Articles

If the Self-pub Shoe Fits

Self-publishing tips and tricks from Teresa Morgan,
author of *Cinderella and the Sheikh*

by Teresa Morgan

Tell us a little about your writing history

For years I told people that the first book I wrote was in 2004, after I took a writing course at Algonquin College in Ottawa from the amazing Joyce Sullivan. (Best writing teacher ever.) It was called *Strange Academy*, and it won the ORWA contest that year.

But recently I was going through my things and I found the draft of that failed Sci Fi Noir thriller starring a female Han Solo and her immortal sidekick who looked like a fourteen year old kid. Then I found the YA novel I'd written for the creative writing course in my last year of university (Why the crap did I stop writing for ten years?).

And then I found the craptastic plot-hole riddled Agatha Christie knock-off I wrote in high school. So now I say that *Strange Academy* was my fourth first book. Since *Strange Academy*, I've completed seven more manuscripts in three genres, including the book I self-pubbed, *Cinderella and the Sheikh*. I got my agent a couple years ago. We're shopping around YA and paranormal romance.

Did you send *Cinderella and the Sheikh* to traditional publishers?

I don't like the term "traditional publishers" much. Self-publishing is very traditional. It was common in Shakespeare's day. John Milton, who wrote *Paradise Lost*, self published his *Areopagitica: A speech of Mr. John Milton for the liberty of unlicensed printing to the Parliament of England* in 1644. I studied *Areopagitica* in Literature class in university.

Back to the actual question... Not many mainstream publishers do sheikh books. In fact, there's only one. I pitched *Cindy* to a couple of Silhouette editors at the New Jersey conference in 2007, and you should have seen their eyes bug out when I said the title.

But it wasn't right for the Desire line. So I sent it off to Mills & Boon (They're the branch of Harlequin that does the Presents line, which is edited in England). It wasn't right for them either.

And I can see why now. It has too many love scenes, my sheikh doesn't really want to be a sheikh, and the heroine's kind of snarky. Writing category romance is very much about fitting in to the existing line, which is an impressive skill. I'm not sure it's a skill I have.

I thought hard about a certain electronic press where Cindy would have looked very good. My agent would have submitted it for me, no problem. I held off because I didn't hear about anyone making their PAN money from that press unless they were writing erotica.

But I have sheikh books in me. I can't really explain it, except to say that I think they're as close to paranormals as you can get without being paranormal. Plus sheikhs are the only romance heroes with a condom named after them. (Trojans, you say? Remember Troy's walls didn't hold...)

What made you decide to self-pub?

I heard about Amanda Hocking and Julianne MacLean's books setting the world on fire. Totally impressive. That wasn't what made me do it. It was the other stories. The ones from people having smaller successes. A few hundred copies a month. Making a couple thousand dollars.

The stigma of self-publishing has been that you sell a hundred copies to your friends and relatives. That wasn't for me. If alternative publishing was still like that, I wouldn't have done it. In fact, I was so concerned about it that I didn't tell my friends that my book was available until a few days after I sold my first copies. I wanted my first copy to be bought by someone who didn't know me.

If I'm just pleasing myself and not a publishing house who has made an investment in me, I can choose to promote or not promote as I please. I don't have to answer to anyone, and instead of spending my time on that when I just want to write another story, I can just write.

One of the things that was a big deal for me was the cover being in my hands. My choices. My say-so. And I made up my mind that my cover would have the look of a print book, not an eBook. When my designer asked what I wanted, I sent her examples of what I didn't want, too.

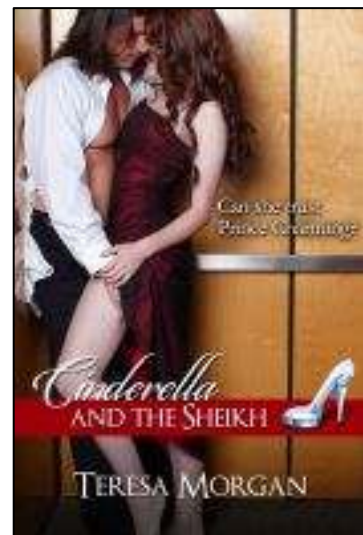
Did you hire an editor?

No.

How did you find your cover designer? (love the cover!)

Someone on one of my loops posted her website (<http://www.gwenhayes.com/>), saying it had been done by Kim Killion of HOT DAMN! Designs (and I hesitate to give out her name, since I'm afraid Kim will get so busy she won't have time for the other covers I want her to do!).

By the way, Kim's having a great contest where you can win breakfast in bed with Brooks Johnson (my hot sheikh cover model) at this year's RWA conference. You can check it out at <http://www.hotdamndesigns.com>.



Did you do the formatting yourself?

Yes. I can make Microsoft Word sit up and beg (anyone can make it roll over and play dead), so no problems.

Smashwords formatting is harder than Amazon formatting, but Smashwords is the only way to get into Barnes and Noble if you're Canadian like me. Smashwords provides clear instructions to follow. It's a 64 page manual, though. So you have to be patient and thorough. Or you can hire someone.

How did you choose your price point?

On Amazon.com, if you choose less than \$2.99, you make 35%. \$2.99 and up, you can choose to make 70%. \$2.99 it is. At \$2.99, it's still cheaper than 90% of the other sheikh books out there.

How are you marketing and promoting C&TS?

As for marketing, I wrote the best back cover copy I could for Amazon and Smashwords, and I've got that great cover, which is my not-so-secret weapon. Plus I got my high concept in my title, which I think is one of the best things you can do for a book, especially when you're targeting the Silhouette Desire crowd. I'd never, never write a sheikh book without the word sheikh in the title (Plus that makes it easy for the Amazon search engine to find.).

My target market is probably much smaller than it is for paranormals or mysteries or YA, but that's balanced by the fact that not as many people write sheikh books. Right now, I am the only self-published sheikh romance author in the world as far as I know. A good spot to be in.

I truly believe that writing a great book is the best marketing of all. If you write a book that readers love, they will take the time to review it (Soooo important on Amazon!) and they will tell their friends or hit that 'Like' button for Facebook. Write a book that readers want to talk about; that's the best marketing you'll ever do.

Now, for promo, I'm sure many published authors will want to shoot me, but, uh, well... none. Cinderella has to fend for herself.

But there's a difference for me, you understand. I'm not trying to build a career as a sheikh book author. I'm focused on other things right now. I don't have to sell thousands of copies so my publisher will give me another contract. My investment is very low. Every dollar I make on this book is a dollar I never expected to have, since Cindy was a dead book a month ago, gathering virtual dustbunnies in the back corner of my hard drive.

Well, I lie. I am doing some promo, but only promo that will make me money. I've written a sheikh novella, Handcuffed to the Sheikh (See what I mean about getting your high concept in the title? People know right away if they want to buy your book or not.). I'll put H2tS up on Amazon for \$.99 so that people can sample my writing for a cheaper price, I'll put an excerpt from Cinderella at the end, and I'll let the two cross-pollinate each other.

What surprised you the most about the process?

That people found Cinderella. I didn't do promo, I didn't tell my friends and family. And I've climbed steadily up the sales list. I can't wait to wake up tomorrow and see where I am on it!

What are your goals for the book?

Originally, to make my cover money back. I did that in ten days.

I kept my goals modest because I wasn't super sure that my target market:

- bought books off Amazon, since Harlequin's main distribution is through their books club and grocery stores; and
- owned Kindles.

Now, I'd just like to see Cindy be a steady seller for me.

Okay, okay, that was another lie. I'd really like to see her in the top spot if you search Amazon for "sheikh" under the romance category and then you sort by "Bestselling." That would be the Oreo bits in my Blizzard.

How will you judge it a success?

It's a success already, to me. I've made my investment back, and I feel better about writing. I've been in the dumps a bit over the last little while. I think the last two years in publishing has been the winter of our discontent, all around.

The sun has just come out. Authors have power now. You can write what you want, the best book that you can, and there's a market for it even if you can't get a mainstream house to invest \$90,000 to publish it.

I wrote the Handcuffed to the Sheikh novella over a weekend. 8,000 words poured out of me in two days. I can't remember the last time that happened to me. I feel like I did when I first started writing.

But I wouldn't say no to some fan email.

Do you plan to self-pub more books or do you still have your eye on the traditional publishing route?

That's not an either/or thing! I'm still aiming for mainstream publishing and I am definitely self-publishing more books. The Handcuffed to the Sheikh novella will be out next month (I'd better order that cover from Kim before this article gets out and she's in hot demand!). I plan to do one of my funny YA paranormals, and I'm even going to do some non-fiction based on my very popular Demon of the Week blog: teresawilde.wordpress.com.

Self-publishing is going to be part of my publishing mix. I think that's the best option for any writer these days: mainstream publishing to help you find new readers, plus alternative publishing to earn you extra cash on the side.

What advice would you give someone considering self-publishing?

Well, next time I won't be in such a hurry to get my book out there. I don't regret that, but it made me make some mistakes. In the first version I

uploaded, I had a couple typos. I fixed that version the next day--self-publishing is very agile. Oh well, I guess there's four collectors' edition copies out there somewhere.

Also, I would upload my book and set it to release in a few weeks. You see, Kindle books depend on the Amazon search engine. I'm a bit new at this, but I figure the closer to the top of the search results for your chosen keywords, the more people will see your book. And the more people see your book, the more people will buy it because your cover and marketing writing will grab them by the jugular, right?

You can sort your Amazon search engine results by several criteria. Go to Amazon, search on something and check it out in the top right corner. The options are: Relevance; Bestselling; Price: Low to High; Price: High to Low; Avg. Customer Review; and Publication Date.

I can only control a couple of these options. Price and Publication Date. By setting a publication date a few weeks in the future, you'll appear at the top of that list for a few more weeks. By setting a low price, you'll appear closer to the top in Price: Low to High. I suppose you could set a high price and appear at the top of High to Low instead, but I'm not sure that's a spiffy sales tactic. The other options, you don't control.

Relevance is the default. If I could figure out why the amazing Emma Darcy's *Traded to the Sheikh* is more relevant to the word "sheikh" than my book, I'd be laughing. Amazon doesn't give that info out, though. I did count the number of times the word "sheikh" appeared in my cover copy and hers, and that's not it.

(Note: In the two days since I wrote this, Amazon has decided *Cinderella and the Sheikh* is Relevant. I appear on the first page there now.)

I would also tell writers who are going to self-publish to be patient. I've fought the urge to change my price to \$.99 to sell more copies, to do this that and the other thing and holy crap I didn't sell a single copy for TWENTY-FOUR HOURS MY LIFE IS OVER!!!

With self-publishing, you get your information in real time, so you can obsess just like mainstream published authors do, but with the added (dis)advantage of being able to change prices, generate coupons, change your cover copy, and many other obsessive compulsive things. Just take an aspirin and lie down until the feeling passes. For the first month at least. Then you will start to know how the experiment is going.

Teresa Morgan/Teresa Wilde is the author of seven unpublished YA and Romance novels and one alternatively published sheikh book with a cover that's hotter than Sahara sand at noon (Look for it on Amazon.com and Smashwords). She's been to Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and Morocco on 'research' trips.

You can find Teresa Morgan at teresamorganauthor@gmail.com or on Facebook (Teresa Morgan-Author), or visit Teresa Wilde's *Demon of the Week* blog: <http://teresawilde.wordpress.com/>



Interview with Kensington Editor Megan Records

Compiled by RR Smythe

This article was first published in YARWA's March 2011 Edition of The Scoop. Shawntelle Madison, Editor

As an editor, what types of stories are you looking for at this time?

I'm looking for YA and romance. Occasionally I'll look at women's fiction that is Jane Austen related. In YA, I lean towards dark paranormals or light contemporaries, authors like Stephanie Perkins, Libba Bray, Julie Kagawa, Meg Cabot, Maureen Johnson, etc. Generally there is at least a small romantic storyline. Stuff like ROOM doesn't particularly interest me. I haven't found straight historical YAs that I love, but I'm certainly open to them.

Kensington has started K Teen. Could you tell us about it?

We are super excited about K Teen! Right now, we are planning to publish a book a month, and are looking for pretty much everything. We have 7 editors actively acquiring.

What have you seen too much of lately, if anything?

I've seen a lot of fairies lately. I'm not against it, but with things like vampires and fairies, even the strongest manuscript is going to have trouble standing out, because there are so many already in the marketplace.

What is your favorite part of being an editor? Least favorite?

Favorite part: falling in love with manuscripts, getting to read books before everyone else does, and hearing someone gush about a book I worked on. Least favorite: falling in love and not being able to work on a project, having to let go of authors because of lack of sales.

Describe your dream author? And of course....the author from Hades?

Dream authors turn their books in on time, have reasonable expectations, and of course, write fabulous books! Authors from hell can be described using one or more of these: diva, drama queen, nag, or whiner.

What do you read for pleasure? Name three of your all time favorite books or authors.

I'm lucky because I work on the same genres I read for pleasure! YA and romance. As I have currently have over 600 keepers, narrowing it down to 3 is so hard....I'll go with J.K. Rowling, L.M. Montgomery, and Meg Cabot.

Tell us about a few titles you have coming out you are excited about.

Book gushing! My favorite part! Two projects I'm over the moon about are AWKWARD by Marni Bates (Jan 2012) and TOUCHED by Corrine Jackson (not yet scheduled).

Here's back cover copy for AWKWARD:

I'm Mackenzie Wellesley, and I've spent my life avoiding the spotlight. But that was four million hits ago...

Blame it on that grade school ballet recital, when I tripped and pulled the curtain down, only to reveal my father kissing my dance instructor. At Smith High, I'm doing a pretty good job of being the awkward freshman people only notice when they need help with homework. Until I send a burly football player flying with my massive backpack, and make a disastrous—not to mention unwelcome—attempt at CPR. Just when I think it's time for home schooling, the whole fiasco explodes on Youtube. And then the strangest thing happens. Suddenly, I'm the latest sensation, sucked into a whirlwind of rock stars, paparazzi, and free designer clothes. I even catch the eye of the most popular guy at school. That's when life gets really interesting....

And here's a quick little blurb about TOUCHED:

Seventeen-year-old Remy O'Malley has always been a freak; unloved, unlovable and freakish of all, she heals people with touch, though her power comes at a steep cost. Every illness or injury she cures becomes her own. The pain she can handle, but she worries a day will come when she won't recover from healing some great and terrible damage. Living in a household with an abusive stepfather, she has healed untold numbers of broken bones, burns and bruises-- her mother's and her own—and then one night her stepfather goes too far.

Sent to live with her estranged father and his ready-made, all-too-perfect family, she is no longer sure of her equilibrium. Enter eighteen-year-old Asher Blackwell. Scarred and dangerous, he knows more about her abilities than she does, and she can't resist wanting to know everything about him as he opens up an unknown world to her.

Don't they both sound awesome?

How does one submit to you and do you accept equeries? Agented or unagented? Do you twitter or facebook or blog?

I prefer equeries, and both agented and unagented authors are welcome to submit. I am on Twitter (@meganrecords), which I use frequently, and on Facebook, which I use rarely.

Will you attend any conferences this year?

Yes, I'm attending RWA, RT, and NEC RWA in Salem, MA.

In a year, what is your typical percentage of signing new writers?

I usually get around 300 submissions, and of those I sign 4 or 5 new authors.

...and our new question section- an absolute take off of inside the actors studio-adapted for books (how's that for a switch) INSIDE THE EDITORS STUDIO

Tell us your favorite movie:

North and South (the Richard Armitage version)

Tell us your favorite protagonist-hero or heroine, your choice.

I'm going to go with Anne from the Anne of Green Gables series

What is your favorite word or phrase?

I use the word AWESOME entirely too much. Also, pamplemousse, the French word for grapefruit, because it's fun to say.

Least favorite word or phrase?

Moist. Never liked that word.

If you weren't an editor, you would be a _____.

You mean I should have had a back-up plan?!? I'm going to say computer programmer.

Favorite quote?

A room without books is like a body without a soul.--Cicero

Also...there's the intangible voice. What type of voice hooks your attention?

One that makes you laugh, cry--in your own words. The only consistent thing about the voices I like is that there is something in them and in the characters that I can relate to. They suck me in and make me want to read faster and slower at the same time.

About Megan Records: Megan Records has a B.A. in English and a M.S in Publishing. Before Kensington, she worked at an educational publishing house. Now, she's found a job that actually pays her to do what she was already doing in her spare time—reading. For reading recommendations, tips for aspiring authors, and random comments from daily life as an editor, follow her on Twitter @meganrecords.

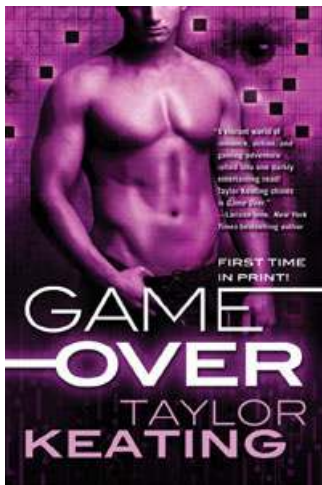
Conquer Your Fantasy World

by Taylor Keating

The following was originally published in the Spring 2011 edition of Lovelights, the newsletter of RWAC, the Romance Writers of Atlantic Canada. Michelle Helliwell, editor.

I'm all about conquering and domination, and quite possibly bending people to my will.

There's a place for people like me. It's called prison, which was invented for the benefit of society. But even inside prisons societies form, and much like prisons, we can live in them or outside of them, but we can't escape them. No matter who we are or how misogynist we might be, our society shapes and defines us.



It shapes and defines our writing as well. Man is, by nature, a social being. Our characters can't live in isolation. If they do they won't meet and fall in love, and as romance writers, we'd then have no story. The circumstances our characters live in are where we, as writers, find their goals, their conflict, and their motivation. How closely the reader can identify with these circumstances is directly proportionate to how willing they will be to suspend disbelief.

In fantasy, suspending reader disbelief is crucial. What we write doesn't have to be probable. It does, however, have to be plausible. Making it plausible means establishing rules for our characters to either live by or defy, and rules are generated by society. The rules of our story's society should be ones which the reader finds easily identifiable. So how does your reader view his or her world?

When the movie Final Fantasy – the Spirit Within first came out, I was eager to see it. I remember how disappointed I was in the ending because it wasn't happily ever after, even though I'd known it wouldn't be because the video game came from Asian developers. I also remember the debates the movie sparked worldwide over western society's expectations versus eastern society's values. And I was surprised at how difficult I found it to let go of my personal expectations.

It isn't that I don't understand the whole concept of honor, and of sacrificing oneself for the greater good. I get that. But if my village ever needs a princess to feed to a dragon and I draw the short straw, in my rose-coloured world there had better be a prince at least making an effort to ride to my rescue.

Just saying.

So, when Taylor Keating chose a post-apocalyptic world for the heroine in Game Over to live in, we knew we needed a world the heroine, River, could love and feel loyalty to. That meant it had to be a world filled with hope.

River's desire to help it rebuild is the catalyst for the story. The conflict is that the hero comes from a world that's in a steady state, a sort of utopia, and when he looks at her world, he sees nothing but darkness and despair. He wants to take her away from all this. She, however, has no intention of leaving.

We wanted the reader to understand River's values and beliefs, and why she would feel such loyalty to a home that really isn't hers. We needed this to be a world the reader could also identify with, so we never strayed too far from what we know.

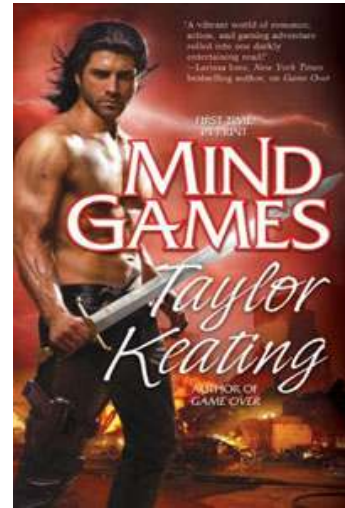
After that, we let our imaginations take over.

Fantasy isn't about creating the fantastic. It's about using imagination to build the believable. If we want it to be believable, we have to convince the reader. And convincing the reader means imposing a set of rules on our story world that he or she will understand.

For Game Over, we chose a heroine with the ability to grow certain things and gave her a plausible reason to want to do so. We built her a world that needed both her and her abilities. We had her born to it so it would shape her. We added a hero whose own world wasn't so different that he couldn't identify with hers.

And then we stood back and allowed them to conquer it.

Taylor Keating is a pseudonym for two Atlantic Canadian writers. Mind Games, is Book 2 in Taylor Keating's Guardian series, is a June 2011 release. Book 3 will be available in December 2011.



Q & A with Stacy Boyd, Sr. Editor for Harlequin by Cassandra Carr

The following article originally appeared in the April (Q2) edition of the Passionate Ink newsletter. Cassandra Carr, editor

Q. What is hot in Desire right now?

A. Alpha heroes with a heart of gold! Also, traditional romance themes, such as nights of passion that lead to pregnancies, secret babies, Western settings, and marriages of convenience, do really well for us, especially when they come with a twist. A surprise in the plotline, in the story's execution, in the character development, or even in the author's style and voice can really make a writer stand out from the crowd.

Readers also seem to favor some of our newer authors who have experience writing ebooks and/or erotica. We'd love to have more submissions from writers with these backgrounds!

Q. What are your pet peeves as an editor/publisher? What are some "don'ts" that authors would be wise to take heed of?

A. It's easier to say what I *do* like to see:

#1: A really great first line, first paragraph, first chapter. I want to be invested in the characters, their conflicts, and/or the premise right away.

#2: Lots of sensual tension and romantic conflict. There should be strong and believable reasons that the hero and heroine are at odds, as well as believable sensual attraction that makes them want to resolve their differences.

#3: A sexy, powerful alpha hero with a core of vulnerability.

#4: Surprises. I love when writers play with the genre and make me feel like I've never read anything like their book before. Two authors who do this very well are Maya Banks and Jill Sorenson.

Q. What makes for a successful author with Harlequin Desire?

A. Successful authors in Desire tend to write quickly, consistently, and well. They know the genre; create believable, engaging characters; and have a strong relationship with their fans. Our more established authors write anywhere from 3-5 books a year for us. An important part of being so prolific is meeting deadlines or letting me know when problems arise. Our writers use editorial feedback to revise and make their stories stronger. They provide all the ancillary materials needed, such as title ideas, art ideas, mini-stories, novellas and other special projects. Overall, Desire writers are a creative, flexible, talented, and extremely professional group.

Q. Will a bad query letter kill any chance of getting looked at? How about a synopsis? What's a good length? What elements make the story stand out for you?

A. Yes, a bad query letter can kill your chances of having your work requested. The mistakes I've seen most often are: typos and grammatical errors, an obvious lack of knowledge about the publisher or genre, and story elements that are confusing or don't seem marketable.

A good query letter, however, can make you stand out. I've had query letters convince me to give a manuscript much more time than I might have otherwise. Elements that can make your query letter a great introduction to your work: a brief explanation about why this publisher or editor is the right one for your work, a brief summary of your work that sells it to the editor (think of this part as your back cover blurb), and a brief bio that includes your publishing experience and/or reader platforms (i.e., do you have a popular blog, or a newsletter, or a digital publishing history).

For synopses, I prefer 3-5 pages, if possible, and it should touch on the most important elements of your story. I like to know about character motivation and conflict, how the plot plays out, how the romance develops, how the story ends, and don't forget the black moment!

Q. Is there advice you'd like to give to our readers, who are all either published and looking for another publisher to write for, or who would like to be published?

A. Read as much as you can, write what you love, keep honing your craft, and maintain an attitude of persistence and professionalism. It also doesn't hurt to start building your network of fellow writers and readers even before you publish, or while you're looking for a new publisher. There is a wealth of information to be found on Twitter, Facebook and other writers' websites.

If you're interested in writing for Desire, you can find our guidelines on eHarlequin.com, and you can speak with our authors, readers, and editors by following us on Twitter (@DesireEditors) or "liking" us on Facebook (facebook.com/harlequindesire).

Amanda Racette Twentyfive writing as Cassandra Carr

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The Muddle of the Book

by Karen Harper

The following article appeared originally in the April 2011 COFW Newsletter, Write From the Heart.

For several years I have been writing both historical novels set in Tudor England and romantic suspense set in modern day America. Published since 1982, I have written over 50 novels. But in creating each one, my biggest challenge is in writing a strong middle of the book, which I have come to think of as the muddle of the book. Each time I have to say to myself, "No sagging middle!" –and I'm not talking about middle age spread or the need of a diet. The middle of the book must be lean and mean—it must move!



The problem is that, by the middle of the novel, I'm juggling a lot of characters, and in my romantic suspense novels, more than one character who might be the villain. I've worked hard to get off to a grabber beginning. I pride myself with those to get the reader immediately involved in the story and the main character's dilemma. I often know what the exciting, rewarding ending of the book will be—ah, but to get there with flair and excitement, that's the task.

In a romantic suspense, it usually works to add something shocking, another death or murder, or to be certain the heroine is in a real mess in the middle of the book—and, of course, in a tense relationship with the hero. Forbidden love, but they must still work together? A tough past between them, but they need each other to solve the crime or stay alive?

Revealing a secret a main character has been hiding can give some oomph too. My agent likes to say, "All main characters are harboring a secret." But even if you're writing a "straight romance," some jolt to the hero and heroine's relationship can work wonders for the middle.

In the romantic suspense novel I'm writing now, RETURN TO GRACE, book #2 in my new Amish trilogy, a key character who could be the murderer in rural Ohio Amish country goes missing—simply vanishes. No sign of a struggle, his car in the garage. Although this man was trying to take over Amish farmland, the Plain People willingly go out on a foot search in snowy, hilly terrain for him. The mystery of how and why he's gone missing; the suspense of the search for him; and the reader's being surprised the author would 'get rid of' one of the prime suspects, hopefully ups the ante and carries the reader through what could have been a sagging section of the book. And, of course, this new problem pulls the reluctant-to-trust-each-other hero and heroine even closer.

This winter I was on an author panel at SleuthFest, a Mystery Writers of America conference, in South Florida. The panel was called "When You Get To The Middle." We discussed the danger of going overboard at this point with throwing in too much, such as new characters. If controlled, this can work but

is dangerous, as is the tendency to toss in another subplot. Don't try to get through the muddle of the book by cluttering it up.

If you're really stuck in the muddle, it helps some authors to go to the end and write "backward" to the middle. I reread my synopsis, even if I've deviated from it, to see if I'm generally on track or have missed something to spice up the middle. I look at my list of "Escalating Events" which can push my character arcs along or turn up the tension. (No, I don't like writing synopses either, but they are necessary. My contracts ask for a short synopsis so my editors get a general idea of the novel, and I get ¼ of my advance money when they OK it. Also, they often do the cover art and cover copy from this early outline.)

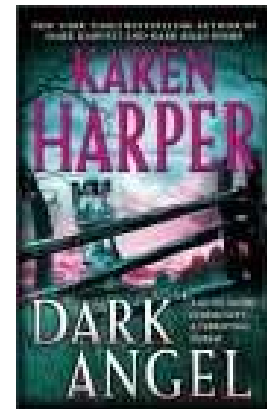
Can a secret your hero or heroine has been hiding be revealed in the middle and that will provide a twist or turn and propel the action onward? Can it be the muddle where the hero and heroine take their relationship to the next level? If so, don't deflate the tension between them until later. Each writer needs to find a way to navigate the middle of her individual vision for her novel but must stay aware that if a book bogs down, it's probably going to be there.

One danger for as yet unpubbed authors is that they have spent so much time polishing a great beginning of their novel that the middle stands out as much weaker and rougher. I've heard editors say they are sometimes shocked at the difference between that fabulous opening section that has been smoothed out by time and critique groups and the muddled middle.

Something I've noted again and again, including right now when I'm in the muddle of a novel, is that, while I write that section, I try to keep my outer world very organized—as if that would help control the book itself. I drive my husband crazy over-cleaning and over-arranging things. I straighten my desk, clean out a cupboard, the car's glove compartment—anything to control something when the middle of the book seems messy.

The reader needs an extra boost in the middle, so it's worth working hard for. Keep the reader turning the pages! Being aware of this whether as a writer or a reader is fascinating. They say, once you're a writer, you never really read only for pleasure again, that you're always looking at how the story is constructed. And propping up a possible sagging middle will keep the reader (and editor!) whizzing through the pages, unable to put that book down and looking for the next one.

New York Times and USA TODAY bestselling author Karen Harper is a founding member of two RWA chapters, COFW and SW Florida Romance Writers. Her most recent releases are DARK ROAD HOME, DARK HARVEST and DARK ANGEL, which are lead-ins for her new Amish Romantic Suspense Trilogy beginning in August with FALL FROM PRIDE. Her recent historical novels are THE QUEEN'S GOVERNESS and THE IRISH PRINCESS. She's looking forward to RWA National in The Big Apple.



Paranormal Investigations

by Heidi C. Dalquist

The following article first appeared in the January - March 2011 issue of Out of This World, the newsletter of the Fantasy, Futuristic, and Paranormal Chapter. -Jennifer Ranseth, Editor.

Across millennia one immortal being has stirred breathtaking fear in humans. Demons. You may shake your head and say, "How can I believe in something that doesn't exist?" Well, just because you can't physically see demons doesn't mean they aren't real. Atoms exist but we can't see those with the naked eye. According to Tabletalk Magazine (2007), over two-thirds of Americans (67%) believe in the devil and 35% claim to have had an encounter with a demon.

Demonology is a broad topic and many fantasy and paranormal romance writers have incorporated demons into their work in recent years. So before you brush aside the concept of adding demons to your manuscript, take a quick look at what they are according to the field of parapsychology. You may decide demons would be an interesting topic to add to your plot. I did!!

What exactly is a demon?

According to Christianity, demons are fallen angels. Under the leadership of Lucifer, a.k.a Satan, they conspired against God in the Heavenly Kingdom and waged war in an attempt to overthrow God. Archangel Michael and other angels defeated Satan, and then banished him to roam Earth. Satan and his demons are defined as inhuman spirit beings. This means they have never been born human. Demons hate humans. Their goal is to deceive humans and corrupt us so we turn away from God and commit sin.

Revelation 12:9: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

Many other religions also acknowledge demons. In Japanese folklore, a demon is referred to as oni or Yokai. In the Jewish religion, a demon is known as Djinn. In metaphysical circles, demons are spirits of malicious intent who reside on lower planes and their intent is to cause trouble.

Are demons and ghosts the same thing?

No. The major difference between ghosts and demons is that demons were never born human even though they are a nonhuman spirit entity. A ghost is a disembodied spirit of a human or animal. They were born on Earth. A demon was never born. However, demons are spirits and will sometimes masquerade



as a ghost to confuse humans. They do this on purpose. It is important to note that human spirits do exist. A human spirit is a spirit that has an intelligent communication with the living and was born human.

Is it possible for demons to appear as humans?

Yes. Demons are notorious for their trickery. They love deceiving humans and causing intense turmoil. When a demon does appear as a human it's only on a limited scale. They never look complete when they do appear. For example, parts of them seem to be missing such as arms, legs, eyes, etc. What is The Law of Recognition?

Ed and Lorraine Warren (Demonologists who investigated the Amityville Horror.) developed the Law of Recognition. If a person requests in their mind that something supernatural happen, they are believed to open a door and invite a demon in.

Can demons possess a human?

Yes. However, it is extremely rare. A demon is more interested in scaring us and influencing our feelings and thoughts for a limited time. Possession of a human requires explicit permission.

What are a demon's characteristics?

In Greek, "demons" are referred to as wise spirits. However, in Christianity and other major religions, "demons" are not viewed in a positive light, even if they are wise. Demons are vengeful toward humans. Maybe this is because they are envious of us. What do you think?

Demons are known for inflicting wounds on humans such as bites, scratches and welts, but they inflict serious harm on a humans mind by creating anxiety and fear. Foul odors such as sulfur and scratching or growling sounds are indicators a demon is present and not a ghost or spirit. If you encounter a demon, do not attempt to banish it without professional help.

This article only brushes the surface and provides a brief understanding of demons.

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10 Ways to Know You're a Writer

by Carla Swafford

The following article appeared in the April 2011 Magic Moments, the newsletter of Southern Magic. Editor, Lisa Dunick.

You know you're a writer when....

10. You have a reputation at your day job of being a workaholic. What other reason would you grumble and talk to yourself as you type on your computer during lunch?
9. You write your child's excuse for an absence and the teacher begs for the last three chapters. She wants to know how it ends.
8. You stir up trouble wherever you go. A story is only as good as the conflict.
7. You get pulled over for a ticket and the officer finally tells you no more questions.
6. You hear some good juicy gossip and then start thinking of a way to use it in a story. "I swear, your honor, I changed their names."
5. You keep paper and pen on the nightstand. Did you know your relatives think you have a kinky sex life because of it?
4. You eavesdrop in conversations, swearing it's research. It has nothing to do with the deep spine-tingling voice or his five-foot wide shoulders.
3. You have problems handling small talk. You're always looking for motivation in the dialogue.
2. You catch yourself wanting to take notes while someone chews you out. "She bobbed her head as one hand waved in the air...."
1. You critique your spouse...in bed. "But, baby, there has to be better reason for us to do it now."

Carla Swafford is a member of Southern Magic in Birmingham. You can find her at romancemagicians.blogspot.com with 17 other writers.



Editor's Message

Write a Love Knot Article

I am actively seeking article submissions from ORWA members. Since the Love Knot is electronic, there are no specific word count requirements. An article can be as long or as short as the topic requires. **Our articles are shared with all RWA chapter newsletter editors so writing an article is a good way to get free publicity.** Be sure to include a short signature line with the address for your website or blog.

If you have any articles or announcements you'd like included in our newsletter please forward them to me at ykarenes@yahoo.ca by the 20th of the month.

Thank you!

Karen Smock, Editor



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