

The Love Knot

Newsletter of the Ottawa Romance Writers' Association



NOVEMBER 2011

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*You must pay taxes, but there's no law that says you
have to leave a tip!*

Morgan Stanley advertisement

At November's meeting we will be holding the workshop a lot of members have been looking forward to. Julia Stanley will be answering your questions and helping guide you through the complexities of filing a tax return and helping to ensure that you don't leave a tip! Albert Einstein, with his enormous and unique intellect, when asked about filing tax returns is quoted as saying "This is too difficult for a mathematician. It takes a philosopher." Well, I don't suppose many of us have a philosopher handy, but we will have an expert which I think will be a lot more useful and practical. We can safely leave the Einsteins of this world to ponder the profound implications of taxation while we tackle the more mundane but infinitely more relevant issue of how to ensure we satisfy the tax man while holding on to as much of our money as is legally and morally possible to do! I think Julia Stanley will get our undivided attention!

REPORT ON OUR OCTOBER MEETING

We had a very productive meeting in October. As of September, ORWA has a healthy bank balance of \$6,144.73. I was able to report that the Sabrina Jeffries all day workshop was very successful. The revenue generated from the 31 members and 4 guests attending was \$444.11 resulting in a net outlay for the workshop of \$849.14. Worth every penny! Thank you to all those who helped make it such a great day. The 2011 workshop schedule is complete with a balance in the workshop budget of \$718.88. The Self-Publishing Committee's report was presented and members voted to create a new award to be called The Indie Self-Publishing Award. For those members who were unable to attend the meeting, a copy of the motion voted on and approved, and other motions approved at the meeting, can be found in the October meeting minutes posted in the files section of the chat loop. On behalf of the Executive I would like to thank the Committee (Karen Smock, Maggie Attiwell, Coreene Smith) for their insight and ideas and to our members for a very productive discussion. Other motions approved by members at the meeting included a motion to suspend the First Impressions contest for 2012; to accept the offer of the pro bono services of an experienced CA to audit ORWA's books for the 2011 year, and to approve the expenditure of up to \$300.00 to reserve a banquet facility at the Loch March Golf & Country Club for our 2012 Brunch. And last but definitely not least, our thanks to Opal Carew for taking the time out of her busy schedule to share her experiences and knowledge which have made her such a successful writer.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

The Executive will be presenting the criteria to qualify for the new Indie award for members discussion and approval. And **YES**, we will be asking members to step up to the plate and offer their services to ORWA in any manner or position they can. We had a shaky start to the year but with the great support and input from members we are ending the year with a vibrant, committed group, a healthy bank balance and a positive future. It just goes to show how successful we can be when we put our minds and hearts into it. We have momentum, Ladies. With your support we can keep the momentum going forward. Thank you.

Malena Abel
President

Did you ever notice that when you put "THE" and "IRS" together, it spells "THEIRS"!

Unknown

Current Releases

LINDA POITEVIN
SINS OF THE ANGELS
 Ace Books
 September 2011



AMBER CAREW
SECRET WEAPON
 St. Martin's Press
 September 2011

AMBER CAREW
SPELLBOUND
 September 2011



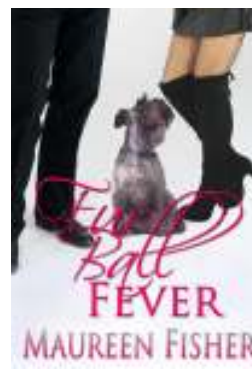
AMBER CAREW
VIRGIN WANTED
 September 2011

OPAL CAREW
THE COMMANDER'S WOMAN
 Samhain Publishing
 August 2011



AMBER CAREW
THE CINDERELLA OBSESSION
 August 2011

MAUREEN FISHER
FUR BALL FEVER
 August 2011



MAUREEN FISHER
THE JAGUAR LEGACY
 August 2011

Upcoming Releases

AMBER CAREW
I DREAM OF GENIE
 November 2011

AMBER CAREW
CHRISTMAS ANGEL
 November 2011

OPAL CAREW
PASSION PLAY
 November 2011

AMBER CAREW
IN TOO DEEP
 November 2011

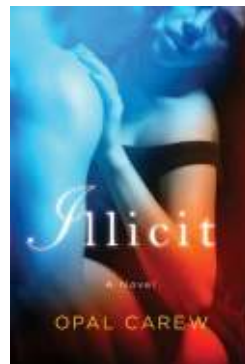
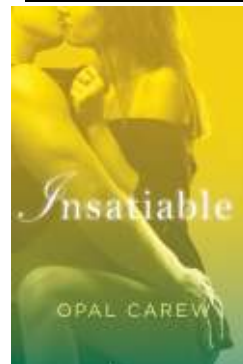
COREENE CALLAHAN
DRAGONLURE
 Amazon Publishing
 December 2011

DEBBIE MAZZUCA
KING OF THE ISLES
 Kensington Books
 January 2012

KALLIE LANE
DARK ABANDON
 The Wild Rose Press
 February 2012

OPAL CAREW
INSATIABLE
 St. Martin's Press
 February 2012

OPAL CAREW
ILLICIT
 St. Martin's Press
 July 2012



Upcoming Workshops

November 6th, 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Tax for Artists with Julia Stanley, CA

There are a variety of expenses writers can claim on their taxes. This workshop will provide an overview of what is allowed and what isn't.

Julie Stanley, CA, is a manager with [Ginsberg Gluzman Page & Levitz](#), LLP, where she has gained a wide range of experience. She has worked with not-for-profit organizations, small businesses and medical professionals. Julie first joined GGF&L in 2002 as a co-op student and after graduating from Dalhousie University with a Bachelor of Commerce, she continued on to obtain her Chartered Accountancy designation. Julia is involved in the Ottawa community through her positions as Treasurer with the Council for the Arts in Ottawa and the Nepean Concert Band.

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December 4th, 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Brainstorming: An Interactive Workshop

Don't know how to start or don't know where to go next? Brainstorming can help you uncover new ideas and move your writing in unexpected directions.

We'll look at some Brainstorming tools before dividing into small groups. You can bring a current work or problem to the session, or learn about brainstorming and aid other writers!

Articles

Interview with Ann Leslie Tuttle, Senior Editor Nocturne Harlequin

By Cristal Ryder

The following article first appeared in Passionate Ink's Q3 newsletter Cassandra Carr, editor.

I'm delighted to have Ann Leslie Tuttle, Senior Editor of Nocturne, Harlequin; with us to speak about a new line being launched called Cravings. She is looking for submissions and very excited about the new line.

Tell us a little bit about yourself and your role with Cravings.

I've been with Harlequin Books for almost 15 years and I've worked on the Nocturne line from its launch in Fall 2006. I'm excited to be heading up the line of Cravings digital books. The Cravings titles grew out of Bites and should be fast-paced paranormals with strong erotic fantasy and danger elements. We've already bought several new voices for the line, including Katie Reus, Mina Khan and Laura Kaye, and look forward to introducing their stories in the coming months as well as novellas from established Nocturne writers like Bonnie Vanak, Caridad Pineiro, Olivia Gates and Stephanie Draven.

What is Nocturne all about and specifically Cravings?

Nocturne is looking for stories that deliver a dark, very sexy read that will entertain readers and take them from everyday life to an atmospheric, complex, paranormal world filled with characters struggling with life and death issues. These stories will be fast-paced, action-packed and mission-oriented, with a strong level of sensuality. The hero is a key figure--powerful, mysterious and totally attractive to the heroine. In fact, both main characters are very powerful, and their conflict is based on this element. The author must be able to set up a unique existence for the characters, with its own set of rules and mythologies. We are looking for stories of vampires, shape-shifters, werewolves, psychic powers, etc. set in contemporary times. Starting in 2013, the stories will be increasing their word count to 80 to 85,000 words. Cravings is a line of erotic paranormal digital books that range in length from

15 to 25,000 words. Like Nocturne, they feature a complex and atmospheric world and characters struggling with life-and-death issues, but there is additional focus placed on the erotic component. We believe this digital line provides a great opportunity for established and new writers to explore more erotic situations and different fantasy scenarios.

Guidelines say explore any and all sexual scenarios, but is there any definite no-no's?

There are no definite no-no's at this time. In fact, authors should feel comfortable exploring any and all sexual scenarios and shouldn't shy away from graphically sensual situations. The short stories should contain many erotic scenes that compel and bind the characters together.

What do you look for in a paranormal romance?

We are looking for stories of vampires, shape-shifters, werewolves, psychic powers, etc. set in contemporary times. Stories should deliver a dark, highly sensual read that will entertain readers and take them from everyday life into an atmospheric, complex world filled with characters struggling with life-and-death issues. A strong alpha hero is of utmost importance. While action-packed and mission-oriented, the scope of these stories should be more contained, with additional focus placed on character development and erotic situations. All stories should be capable of standing alone; all loose ends need to be tied up, and the relationship between hero and heroine should resolve itself in a satisfying manner.

Are you accepting full manuscripts on submission?

Yes and they should be sent to us electronically.

From submission to release, what time frame can an author expect?

It will vary as the line develops but right now I'm still looking for books for the latter half of 2012.

What would make a submission stand out, specifically for Cravings?

The voice is key. I'm looking for stories that are evocative and well written. Although the sensuality is a major component of these stories, the characters need to be three-dimensional and sympathetic.

Can you share some automatic "no's" for a query?

Grammatical errors and misspellings are certainly a turnoff and it's important that the author show an awareness of the market and the specific needs of the Cravings line.

What common mistakes do you see with submissions?

Manuscripts that do not show an awareness of the needs of our line; manuscripts that are low in sensuality; manuscripts that do not feature sympathetic and well developed characters and premises that are clichéd.

Is there a plot you're dying to see come across your desk?

I'm always hoping to be surprised and come across a plot I never could have imagined.

Anything at all you would like to add?

I'm very eager to find new and established writers for this line and hope to see submissions from your members.

Amanda Twentyfive, writing as Cassandra Carr "It's a job. It's not a hobby." -- Rosellen Brown
Talk to Me, out now from Loose Id - a Night Owl Reviews & The Romance Reviews Top Pick!
Uniform Behaviour, out now from Andrews UK! Head Games, coming November 2, 2011 from Siren Bookstrand
Caught, coming December 13, 2011 from Loose Id

Website: <http://www.booksbycassandracarr.com>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/AuthorCassandraCarr>

Twitter: http://www.twitter.com/cassandra_carr



5 Ways to Get Your Inner Critic to Shut Up

By Daphne Gray Grant

Daphne Gray-Grant is a writing and editing coach and the author of the popular book [8½ Steps to Writing Faster, Better](#). She offers a brief and free weekly newsletter on her website. Subscribe by going to the [Publication Coach](#).

One of my 17-year-old daughters sometimes slaps the side of her own head and says, "stupid, stupid." I don't think anyone -- particularly not one of my kids -- should ever call themselves stupid. But I see writers doing it all the time.

Admit it. You're probably your own harshest critic. By your standards, your writing is never interesting enough. Or persuasive enough. Or well organized enough. In fact, while you're in the middle of the act of writing a voice inside your head is often saying things like: "My boss is going to go crazy when seeing this article." Or, "why would anyone want to read this piece of dreck?" Or, "my sources are going to be so pissed off when they find out which quotes I've used."

Don't you think it's time to tell you inner critic to shut up? Here are five tips for quietening that supremely unhelpful voice:

- 1) **Stop thinking about HOW your work is going to turn out** and focus instead on WHAT you are writing. Your job as a writer is to write. When you write, write. When you edit, edit. Don't ever mix up these two entirely separate tasks or you are dooming yourself to remain a slow, pained writer.
- 2) If, like many people, including me, you have a hard time stopping yourself from editing while you write, **resolve to make writing without editing your next project.** (I stopped editing while I wrote about 10 years ago and it changed my life.) Try turning off your monitor (or, hanging a dishtowel over it) so you can't see what you're writing. If that seems too drastic, here's a trick I found on [Richard Shackcloth's blog](#) (which, sadly, seems to be dormant now): use a hashtag # whenever you spot something you want to fix later. (I love that he describes this as a promissory note!) Furthermore, if something specific occurs to you that you're afraid of forgetting about then write #note:

and explain what you want to remember. For example: #note: make sure the VP is really okay with this. Or #note: check spelling. By making this promise to your inner critic you should be able to persuade him or her to become silent.

3) **Write with a loud timer clicking in the background.** This advice initially seemed counterintuitive to me and I always did my pomodoros with a silent digital timer tracking the minutes. But recently I've discovered the joy of what a friend of mine likes to call "the wall of sound." Something about the ticking not only serves to remind me that I need to be writing (this keeps me off email and the Internet) but it also serves to distract part of my brain so that I simply don't have the mental RAM for self-criticism. You can find "noisy" timers on the Internet or get a kitchen timer from a dollar store.

4) **Use Write or Die.** I've written about this website before and urge you again to try it. Simply enter your desired word count, and your self-imposed time limit into the fr/ee software and when you stop writing for more than 10 seconds you'll be "punished" with a screen that changes colour and, following that, by a loud, unpleasant noise. This turns writing into a game, which is a great way of silencing your inner critic. (Critics abhor games.)

5) **Put an elastic band on your wrist** and snap it every time a self-critical thought goes through your head. For a split second you will have left behind worries about your writing and shifted them to the (mild) pain on your wrist. This creates the space for you to refocus on your writing.

Remember, your inner critic will have plenty of time to comment when you begin to edit. And at that point those comments may even be useful. But when you are writing, your inner critic should shut the heck up.

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Short Fiction Markets

Compiled by Sunny Cole

The following article was first printed in the Oct 2011 issue of MRW Interpretations (Midwest Romance Authors.)

If you'd like to be able to afford a conference, consider writing short fiction. Quicker gratification, and the money spends the same.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magazine>

Some of the more popular print magazines:

Woman's World Magazine

Woman's Day

True Confessions

True Story

True Love

True Experience

Family Circle

Redbook Magazine

Guideposts Magazine

And there are literally hundreds of online magazines.

<http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/magazines/>

Don't overlook the greeting card market as well!

Be prepared for pop-ups, but here are some links to writing greeting cards.

<http://www.motherearthnews.com/Modern-Homesteading/1977-01-01/You-Can-Make-Money\ -Writing-Greeting-Cards.aspx>

<http://www.howtoadvice.com/GreetingCards>

<http://www.fictionfactor.com/guests/greetingcard.html>

Info From Cindi Myers on Short Story Markets – Compiled by Sunny Cole

White Cat Magazine pays five cents a word for short stories for its new web publication. While the focus of the magazine is primarily on suspense stories, they're open to short stories in all genres except erotica. Short stories should be no more than 2,500 words. They pay a flat rate of \$25 for flash fiction to 1,000 words. Find all the guidelines here.

http://www.whitecatpublications.com/?page_id=225

Penumbra is a speculative fiction ezine launching in October. Produced by the editorial team at Musa Publishing, Penumbra pays five cents a word for short stories to 3500 words. Each issue will be built around a theme, but editors are open to a wide variety of stories, from dark fantasy to horror and science fiction. Humor is welcome, and a variety of themes. Right now, they're particularly looking for stories with the following themes: the arts, sports, & Shakespeare. <http://musapublishing.blogspot.com/p/penumbra.html>

Penumbra is a part of MUSA. Musa Publishing is open to submissions of contemporary and historical romance, erotic romance, horror, historical fiction, mystery, all kinds of speculative fiction including fantasy, science fiction and paranormal and YA. They're open to all lengths of stories. Check out their detailed submission guidelines here.

<http://musapublishing.blogspot.com/p/submissions.html>

If you write male/male romance, **Dreamspinner Press** is interested in short stories for a number of upcoming anthologies on various themes, including vacation and Christmas stories. Find all the details here.

<http://www.dreamspinnerpress.com/store/pages.php?pID=7>

Aspen Mountain Press is actively seeking speculative fiction for a new speculative fiction line., Aura. The editors are looking for "science fiction, both hard and soft; fantasy, from epic to urban and in between; horror, all types; Steampunk; cyberpunk; dystopian stories and anything else that falls beneath the wide SF umbrella." They're not interested in erotica for this line. Romantic sub-plots are fine, but the romance shouldn't overwhelm the rest of the story. Short stories to 20,000 words will be published as Aura Flash and novels may be up to 100,000 words. They're open to both new material and previously published backlist. Find all the guidelines here.

http://www.aspenmountainpress.com/aura-submissions/info_12.html

One Buck Horror is looking for classic horror short stories. If you have a horror story of 3000 words or less, Editors Christopher Hawkins and Chris M. Hawkins would be interested in hearing from you. They pay 5 cents a word for horror stories set in any time period or locale. Stories should be "scary and

compelling.” Find the submission guidelines here.

<http://www.onebuckhorror.com/submissions>

Unsent Letters is an interesting blog and book project. You’re invited to submit your letters for possible inclusion in the second book collection of letters or the regular blog posts of letters. The letters should be written to a real person or event and express authentic emotion. Though the editors prefer “real” letters, they’re open to fiction, as long as it sounds real. Payment is \$25 to \$250 per letter. For more information, see their guidelines.

<http://ourunsentletters.com/submissions/>

Sunny Cole is a multi-published author. Her last sales were a romantic suspense to Carina Press as Bobbie Cole and a male/male romance to Resplendence Publishing as Cash Cole. --submitted by Sunny Cole, editor for MRW Interpretations

Bobbie Cole & Lyn Cash ~ laughs & love in every book ~ <http://authorlyncash.blogspot.com/>

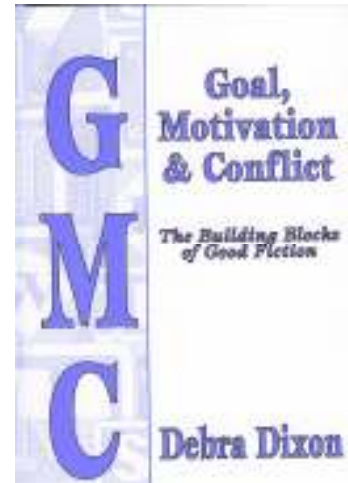
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GMC Goes to the Movies: Runaway Bride

By Deborah Hale

The following article was first printed in the Fall 2011 issue of Lovelights, the newsletter of the Romance Writers of Atlantic Canada. Michelle Helliwell, Editor.

Is there a better resource for an author to learn the essentials of storytelling than Debra Dixon's *Goal, Motivation and Conflict*? For over than twelve years and more than twice that many books, GMC is the one I return to again and again to help me figure out if a story idea is viable, to chart what my characters want, why they want it and what is going to stand in their way. When a story goes off the rails, I often seek and find the answers to its problems in those pages – relearning important concepts I've forgotten and deepening my understanding of others.



While I've found the examples Dixon uses from several films very helpful, I often wish she had included more romantic ones, since our genre must handle conflict in a unique way that is not always easy to grasp. So, I decided to analyze some of *my* favorite romantic films, using GMC as my guide. It was a great learning experience – one I'd like to share with other authors. I'd like to start with *Runaway Bride*, a 1999 romantic comedy directed by Garry Marshall which reteamed Richard Gere and Julia Roberts.

This film tells the story of serial runaway bride, Maggie Carpenter and misogynistic columnist Ike Graham. After Maggie leaves her third groom at the altar, Ike learns of it and writes a story that includes several factual errors, for which he is fired. In an attempt to set the record straight and jump-start his stalled career, Ike decides to write an in-depth story about Maggie for GQ magazine. He goes to her small town in Maryland where he finds her preparing to wed her fourth fiancé.

That little introduction gives you Ike's external goal and motivation. He wants to get a story, which won't be as good if Maggie doesn't run again. So he

needs to make her run from another wedding. Maggie's external goal is to go through with her wedding.

These are totally opposing goals which seem to make it impossible for Maggie and Ike to ever get together. Maggie doesn't want to fall in love with Ike. How can she marry another man if she does? Ike doesn't want to fall in love with Maggie. How can he write his scathingly misogynistic story if he's all goo-goo eyes? Ike and Maggie's external goals are tangible actions/accomplishments of which both are highly aware.

Their internal goals are emotional needs, life lessons or growth they need to make. Like most characters, Maggie and Ike are only vaguely aware of theirs. Often the external goal may be a vehicle for accomplishing the internal goal. In Ike's case, his internal goal is to rediscover his lost inspiration. He senses that writing an article about Maggie may help...it will, but not in the way he expects. Maggie's internal goal is to find somebody to love and take care of her. Marriage to Coach Bob seems to fit the bill...but there's more to it than that.

The decisions characters make and the actions they take in pursuit of their goals create the story's plot. Smaller subgoals build toward the larger one. To write his story, Ike must go to Maggie's home town. He must interview her friends and family. He must try to figure out what makes her run. These smaller goals should help change the character by instilling confidence or doubt. In Ike's case, they make him begin to realize Maggie is not the heartless jilt he believed her to be.

Smaller goals create consequences that move the plot forward. The consequence of Ike coming to town is that Maggie tries to stop him from talking to her friends. They engage in a battle of wits. Eventually, Maggie realizes she can't stop Ike, so she decides to cooperate in exchange for money to buy a beautiful wedding dress. This is a big risk for her, given her unspoken attraction to Ike and her habit of running from relationships.

In the accomplishment or failure of smaller external goals, the characters gradually move toward accomplishment of their internal goal. As Ike learns more about Maggie, he must reexamine his preconceived ideas about her. He

gradually goes from prosecutor to defender. As Maggie tries to prevent Ike talking to her old fiancés, she must face the consequences of her actions, the fact that she has hurt people she once cared about. She begins to see that she has a problem, that she is exchanging her needs, interests and desires for love.

Motivation is the emotional reason why the character wants his/her goal. The writers of the Runaway Bride made sure to give Ike and Maggie larger than life motivations so they cannot back out when the going gets tough. If Ike's motivation to write a story about Maggie was because his editor assigned him to it (a common motivation in real life) the film would lack punch and Ike could walk away when he started to find himself falling for Maggie. The loss of his job and reputation raise the stakes and make Ike willing to go around town with his bad dye job and risk falling under Maggie's spell rather than back off. GQ has a deadline and the reading public is notoriously fickle. If he doesn't reestablish himself quickly, he is toast as a journalist. Ike's motivation gives his goal urgency. Maggie is motivated to go through with her wedding because she wants to prove she isn't the screwed-up monster Ike paints her to be. This is strong motivation for Maggie because she yearns so desperately to be loved. If Ike's right and she is a terrible person, who will ever love her?

Just as the characters big goals can be broken down into smaller subgoals, every action or decision the characters make must be well-motivated. Why does Ike go to Maggie's hometown? Because he wants to interview the people who know her best and find out what makes her run. Why does Maggie dye Ike's hair like a rainbow clown?

Because she wants revenge for the humiliating article he wrote about her and to make him too embarrassed to be seen around town. Why does Maggie agree to cooperate with Ike? Because she's smart enough to know he'll get the story anyway. This way she makes sure he gets the facts...with her spin on them, and she will get the money for a great wedding dress.

The internal goal, motivation and conflict are the emotional components of the story. Why does Ike want to rediscover his inspiration? Because he needs it to write, and, as we've seen with his external motivation, his writing is all he has.

Why does Maggie want someone to love her so desperately that she'll totally make herself over to be some guy's idea of a perfect woman? Because her mother died young and her alcoholic father needed her to take care of him. She had to provide what he needed, rather than the usual parent taking care of the child, so she associates love with doing and becoming what the other people need and want rather than what she needs and wants.

As is often the case with romance films and novels, in **Runaway Bride** love and attraction are a source of conflict. Remember conflict isn't all about fighting and the character's goal is not to fall in love...well, Maggie's sort of is but not quite. She hasn't really fallen in love with the men she's been engaged to, she sought love from them – key difference. So Ike's growing sympathy with and attraction to Maggie stand in the way of his big story. And his story, if he writes the piece he planned, would blow any chance of a relationship with her. What's a guy to do?

Meanwhile, Maggie's attraction to Ike imperils her goal of going through with her wedding to Coach Bob. If she jilts a fourth guy, then she is screwed up and possibly unlovable. If she goes ahead with the wedding, it will destroy any possibility of a relationship with Ike. So every time these two are on screen together, they are fighting their mutual attraction, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. To further complicate matters, each wants to encourage the other's feelings. If Maggie gets a crush on Ike, it may break up her engagement and give him his story. If she can make him like her, he might back off. So they do some flirting, each trying to attract the other without getting burned themselves. Talk about walking a tightrope without a safety net!

Debra Dixon says the purpose of conflict is to test the characters. She also says that cowards and courage make for great conflict. Ike and Maggie are emotional cowards. He hides behind his mask of cynicism. She hides behind her pattern of conformity and attention-seeking. If they are to connect emotionally, those old masks, roles and patterns of behavior aren't going to work. They will have to (gulp!) change. Take some risks. Find their courage.

Dixon claims the strength of a story is in the villain, but many romance films and novels don't have villains. They have two nice but flawed people trying to figure out how to make love work. So for romance writers, the strength of our stories is in our internal conflict. That is the battle the character fights with herself. Part of her – her flaw or problem is the villain. Her mistrust, bitterness, self-doubt, mistaken ideas, fear must be as big and tough and smart and cunning and ruthless as any moustache-twirling bad guy in a black cape and top hat. The harder her flaw is to overcome, the tighter hold it has on her, the more painfully it punishes her early efforts to break free, the more gripping your romance novel will be. Readers will say to themselves, "Yeah, she loves the guy, but does she love him enough to do the hardest thing she's ever had to do?"

Runaway Bride is not without external conflict, which the writers escalate, continually raising the stakes. Ike writes his story about Maggie, humiliating her. She writes a rebuttal that gets Ike fired. Ike comes to town looking for a story. Maggie tries to drive him away, thwart his efforts. Ike charms his way into her friends' confidence. Maggie offers to cooperate, using charm to thwart him instead of hostility. Ike takes her dress shopping and stands up for her. Maggie points out his attraction (reading the paper upside down).

Meanwhile these events force Ike and Maggie to confront their internal conflicts. These are the battles they wage against themselves as they change and grow. Ike wants to recover his inspiration, but his cynical attitude and lack of meaningful personal connection gets in the way. So Ike fights a battle within himself – cling to his old ways and stay emotionally safe but barren? Or open himself up to love and possible heartbreak...and the whisper of his Muse? For a long time Maggie has been fighting a losing battle between wanting love and fearing the straightjacket of the role she traps herself in to get it. Can she learn to risk life without a man to love and define her? She thinks she might have found the solution in Ike, but that's only a stop gap, not going far enough.

Only when Maggie runs away from her wedding with Ike do they both confront their deepest fears – his of abandonment and hers of being alone. Only by

doing that can Maggie learn to discover who she is without a man to define her. Ike learns to abandon blame and bitterness in favor of understanding and forgiveness. Having overcome those internal conflicts, when they encounter one another again, they are ready to commit to one another and find their "happily ever after."

If you are having trouble grasping some of the concepts in *Goal, Motivation and Conflict*, I suggest you grab your favorite romantic film and watch it carefully with GMC as your guide!

*GMC helped Deborah Hale structure two very different stories that will be released in the coming months – the scandalous historical *Confessions of a Courtesan* and the inspirational Regency *The Captain's Christmas Family*. To read more of Deborah's writing tips, visit her website www.deborahhale.com. –*

PRESS HERE

By Damon Suede

The following article first appeared in the October (Q4) 2011 edition of Pot of Gold, the newsletter of the Rainbow Romance Writers.

Marketing fiction can feel like hosting an all-you-can-eat barbecue where the guests never stop arriving, the kitchen never closes, and the chef is the cow. Moo!

Promoting your own work can devour hours. Publishers, bloggers, critics, readers, and retailers all need tidbits only you can supply and every minute you aren't writing feels like a waste. Most writers cannot afford a publicist to handle the nitty-gritty of these chores, yet the idea of being their own publicist makes them queasy.

Still, an urgent demand for a squib, a photo, a logline can derail your entire day (and the day's writing). Who hasn't scrambled around looking for a bio at the right length or frantically reformatted a headshot for a conference which needed it yesterday?

Last minute is always too late.

The other side of the equation proves the point. Have you tried to link to an author's site without being able to locate a banner and a site description? Or worse, ever needed info about a series and had to scrounge through reams of blog posts trying to find simple facts about chronology or awards? Forcing visitors to hunt for those basics discourages the promotional reciprocity that we need to cultivate. And that is bonkers!

Here's the deal: Every working author needs their relevant details gathered in a single convenient location for easy access by fans, webmasters, reviewers, bloggers, and retailers. Online press kits (OPKs) have become standard operating procedure in most industries and following suit can only help the romance community.

Don't make people work to get the word out.

The truth is, you already HAVE an OPK even if you don't know it... The pieces may lie buried in folders and notes that aren't immediately to hand, but every working writer keeps a stack of press clippings and advertising banners and headshots and possible blog topics. If you're like me, this stuff clutters all your desktops, physical and digital.

My OPK saves my butt at least 4 times a week, sometimes twice that. As new material comes in I immediately slide it into the relevant place on the page, and when I get a request I shoot them the necessary materials AND a helpful link. Folks can just find the data on the page themselves, but I'd rather save them a step. By linking to my OPK in our correspondence I ensure they know where to look next time.

Help folks blow your horn.

Inevitably, the OPK serves as a resource for me AND the outside world saving time on both sides. Much of the content appears elsewhere on my website and social media pages, but gathering it in one easily-accessed place saves me a helluva lot of time when I'm on deadline and can't remember where I put that 150x150 avatar a reviewer needs.

If you're starting from scratch, just tackle it in baby steps. Begin with a few elements you have right in front of you, then supplement as time permits. Focus on the simple bits which often prove the most powerful and necessary: alternate lengths on blurbs & bios, links to your communities, cover art. Anything will be more helpful than nothing. My online press kit started small: a couple bios, social networking links, and a basic banner. The earliest iteration consisted mainly of stumps and spaces because my first novel hadn't even released and I had no cover or reviews yet! Still, by laying the groundwork, I designated places for that content as it arrived and it did, faster and thicker than I could have imagined. The structure helped me sort through everything.

To create a powerful OPK, all you need to do is centralize, strategize, synergize. Your press kit will never be finished, but it needs to start now.

CENTRALIZE:

This is the easiest step and will take the least amount of time. Simply gather all of the marketing components folks request regularly, include anything that you've had to send to more than 3 entities that promote your work or love your books. Again: the OPK exists to cut down on repetition and clutter, so think it through...

What are the things you constantly distribute for publicity?: bios, banners, cover art, headshots, social media links, avatars, interview clips and links, videos, purchase & publisher links, event listings, maybe memberships and associations, possible blog topics and areas of expertise. In half an hour, you can assemble 90% of this stuff, because as a working writer, you already HAVE it somewhere.

Do the work for them.

OPTIONS: As you compile your material, provide versions that meet different needs. You cannot predict every eventuality, but I guarantee you can think of some regular (and irregular) requests that could be addressed before they come. So give your OPK browsers plenty of options and you'll save yourself time down the road. Consider offering:

- At least three lengths of bio: 50-75 words, 100-120 words, and 200-225 words seem a comfortable range.
- 3-5 sizes on each of your images (cover art, headshots, banners, avatars); a well-spaced range from 75pixels wide to 300 pixels wide will satisfy most folks. Don't make them resize if they don't have to.
- Both hi-res and lo-res compression levels on A/V content (book videos/podcasts etc); Video & audio content are less common for niche publishing so if you have `em, flaunt `em (and host `em)!

Resolution: For images, video, and audio, graininess looks hideous and unprofessional. Format the eye candy at as high a resolution as possible without getting nutty. Additionally, for video & audio, several free players exist for hosting content to which another site can link easily. On that tip: host that

content. Include easy-to-snap HTML tags for all the images/video/audio right there so folks can just link to your site.

PLACEHOLDERS: Missing stuff? "Nothing" is a perfect beginning! Make note of the absent elements and gaps that can be filled later. Consider material you might want to add as the need arises and your career develops. Possibilities include: sample interview questions, an event calendar, free fiction, relevant licensed artwork to accompany articles or blogs, character interviews etc. Use your imagination.

Keep loading the whole mess into a single, massive document until you think you've found everything. List the things you still need to create or acquire.

Once you have your pieces in a pile, it's time to put the puzzle together.

STRATEGIZE:

Our goal in this phase is organizing for ease of access and brand coherence. First, arrange your press kit by demand, putting the most requested sections at the top. For some reason, I get a lot of e-mails asking for bios and links, whereas avatars and areas of expertise seem more of a specialty request from people with whom I already have a relationship. Here's a possible structure:

- Author Bios
- Contact Links
- Book Covers & Banners
- Author Banners
- Recognition: Quotes/Awards/Endorsements
- A/V material
- Avatars / Artwork
- Headshots
- Topics for Interviews & Articles

Brand matters. Every author and every book is different. Your OPK should be distinctive to your work and your goals. If you're making a big push for YouTube interviews, then A/V might come earlier, if you want to promote a series of educational articles, interview topics might lead the list. In essence, your goal should be to frontload the popular info, yet include things visitors might not even have thought to request.

Once you have a rough shape, think about how you can streamline it and solve problems in advance. Ultimately when anyone searches for your name on the Web, your OPK should appear as close to the top of the list as possible and visitors should be able to locate what they need swiftly and intuitively. Folks only have to ask if you don't make things easy to find.

Communicate clearly.

NAVIGATION: Divide the OPK into discrete, easy-to-navigate sections with LOTS of crosslinking so people don't have to scroll all the hell over.

Remember: this webpage should help folks who will be in a hurry to get what they need. Make sure to include many handy "Back to Top" links that will whisk them back to the Table of Contents.

ACCESS: Make the OPK easy to find or they won't find it. Include a link to your online press kit on EVERY page of your website. Include a way to contact you if they need something you've forgotten, and then the moment you've rustled it up, add it to the press kit for the next visitor. Again: transparency is the goal. Professionalism counts and marketing matters. Every millimeter of the OPK should sell you and your books in a logical structure. People want to help you. Ensure that their attention accomplishes what you want.

SYNERGIZE:

So now that you assembled all your pieces in a useful shape, you need to polish that page like there's no mañana! In essence, this final phase never ends, evolving throughout your career so your OPK continues to keep your "brand" in the fire, so to speak.

Help your components produce an effect greater than the sum of their parts. Fill the gaps as you can and constantly improve on what's already in place. This press kit needs to pitch you and your writing to the entire Web as firmly and positively as possible. Brand yourself, and then help that brand evolve over time so you can stand out in a crowded field. Keep your content fresh and current. The more you give visitors what they need, in a way that supports your own marketing message, the more their coverage will resonate with your branding.

Build a better publicist.

Who couldn't use a clever, devoted press secretary who works 24/7 for no pay? Like a devoted employee, your OPK becomes your first line of defense against distractions and simply answered requests. You'll waste less time on those essential, redundant PR chores. Remember: by doing light steady maintenance, it will stay strong and topical. Investing a half hour a week in OPK grooming will save days of wasted time when you should be writing something new.

I tend to think of my online press kit (and by extension my entire website) as a fussy Persian cat that needs grooming and pampering to keep purring. Run a brush over the tangles a couple times a week. Feed it treats and fresh tidbits. Don't abandon it for long stretches. Every time a new review comes in, pull the hot phrases and add it to the mix. Every time you get new cover art, render it in several resolutions/dimensions. Revisit and revamp regularly as you find better verbiage, sexier quotes, or cooler images to keep it current and to inspire promotional opportunities.

Accentuate the positive and keep all your materials consonant with your brand.

Clarify the kinds of books you write: If you write in a specific subgenre, weave its timbre through all of your materials. If your stories are funny then make sure your OPK and all the materials included anchor the sense of humor in your brand from font choices to layout. If you specialize in provocative erotica, make sure your bio anecdotes, your banner artwork, and even the logline language all strike the appropriate tone. Consider colors, shapes, word choices with the ruthless precision of an ad exec angling for a promotion. Your work deserves that kind of passion and mindfulness.

Clarify who you are: Your bio must support your brand as an author. If your books are funny, be funny, if they're gritty, stay gritty. Emphasize any element of your skillset or personality that tends to attract readers. If you are particularly good on camera or audio, include clips of yourself to draw people in. If your expertise, your fetishes, or even your dimples will interest your readers, make sure they get play in the OPK. Help people tell the world about you.

THE HANDY DANDY SWISS-ARMY PRESS KIT:

Only YOU can make your press kit all it can be. No one knows your work better than you, so no one can or will sell it with your care and enthusiasm. What about you and your work will get the right kind of attention? What are the elements which provide the simplest, strongest entry point for someone unfamiliar with your backlist? Make your content singular and memorable. Building a robust OPK will help you identify your brand, refine it, and push it further.

Stay vigilant about finding new hooks, angles, and "sizzle" for lack of a better word. What will they want to know? Where have you been and where are you headed? What should fans anticipate from you? Why do new readers need to take a closer look? How will your brand and your books evolve and how can your online content reflect and support that future?

Spin is critical and sizzle sells... especially as niche markets push the boundaries of mainstream appetites. The publishing landscape changes daily, and LGBT fiction along with it. For M/M romance in particular, what started as an outgrowth of fan fiction has evolved into a lucrative global industry that gains traction by staying competitive.

A centralized, strategized, synergized online press kit works for you, feeding the marketing mob so you can spend your time writing the next book as you ought. Remember: the next book does more to sell your work and build your brand than anything else.

At the end of the day, the sizzle only matters if there's steak on the plate.

Damon Suede grew up out-n-proud deep in the anus of right-wing America, and escaped as soon as it was legal. Though new to M/M, Damon has been writing for print, stage, and screen for two decades. He's won some awards, but counts his blessings more often: his amazing friends, his demented family, his beautiful husband, his loyal fans, and his silly, stern, seductive Muse who keeps whispering in his ear, year after year. You can get in touch with him at DamonSuede.com.



Is Burnout Inevitable?

By DeAnn Sicard

The following was first used in the Mid-October issue of MRW Interpretations (Midwest Romance Authors.)

I read an article recently that got me to thinking. How likely is it that I'll experience burnout? Or better yet, how likely is it that I'll experience it again and again and again?

So for, I've personally dealt with burnout in almost every area of my life, mostly small, minor forms, but burnout none-the-less. With my fulltime day job, 30 years worth of stress, trials and tribulations, I've hit the proverbial brick wall on more than one occasion. In my part-time job, I've dealt with it on a smaller basis, this one can be attributed to working two jobs and having little-to-no down time..

In my dream career, writing, I've hit so many highs and lows that I've stop writing for weeks, months even for a few years. If I'd only known then what I know now, I wouldn't have lost so much writing time.

Burnout is an accumulation of many factors; exhaustion, lack of variety, trying to sustain a long-term project without a break, lack of joy in what you once found exhilarating, fun, important or rewarding, excessive and prolonged stress, little recognition, frustration, so on and so on.

A few signs of burnout

- a.. Unhappiness
- b.. Depression
- c.. Not caring whether you finish what you start
- d.. Lack of motivation
- e.. Feeling of resentment
- f.. Feeling overloaded
- g.. Etc.

How to Combat Burnout

- a.. Take time for yourself
- b.. Step away from the project for a day or so
- c.. Set up a stress management system
- d.. Find friends and others who share your love, develop a social network to help when the stress starts to build
- e.. And like all health related issues (burnout does affect your health) in your life, consider exercise and relaxation methods as well as watching your diet.
- f.. Use your gift of writing to work your way through burnout. Write about something totally different than your WIP. Journal about how you feel. Write letters to friends and family. Better yet, write letters to your favorite author (past or present). You don't have to mail any of the letters, just write what you feel. Knowing that burnout is a possibility gives you an edge over others. You can set up a plan of action.

Take time to sleep and exercise--these are important for your well being. Learn coping techniques, slow down, reflect on your needs and relax your need to control the situation. Set boundaries--don't forget to say no on occasion. Reconnect with friends, and let them support you through this time. Most importantly, take time to create new and brighter dreams.

Feeling of burnout may be inevitable, but by following the steps and suggestions above you can alleviate the all-encompassing meltdowns that usually strike when burnouts hit.

DeAnn Sicard has been nominated for the prestigious Golden Heart award and continues to write romance novels while adding short stories, confessions, and nonfiction to her repertoire. -- submitted by Sunny Cole, editor for MRW Interpretations editor



Young at Heart

By Linda Kage

The following article was first printed in the Sept 2011 issue of MRW Interpretations (Midwest Romance Authors.)

Here are links to some big YA blogs.

The Story Siren

(if an author's first book is a YA, I strongly recommend donating a copy of your book and monthly goodies to the Story Siren's yearly Debut Author Challenge. Great way to get your name out there). <http://www.thestorysiren.com/>

The Story Siren lady has also compiled a blog that lists YA Book Blogs. A person can go through to each link and check out their review policy or see if they give author interviews or allow guest posts. Great promo opportunities. <http://yabookblogdirectory.blogspot.com/p/ya-book-blogger-list.html>

Around the World ARC Book Blog Tours

An author may donate a copy of their ARC to this tour, which is hosted by The Princess Book Blogger. It's another way to get your book out there in the lime light. I think it's only for YA books. Not sure. <http://princessbookiearctours.blogspot.com/>

Teens Read Too

I'm not sure how helpful these people are. I signed up for an interview on their blog, and got a couple comments. The lady who won the ebook copy of my book I gave away posted a good rating on GoodReads, so it wasn't bad publicity. <http://teensreadtoo.com/>

Until next time, keep reading, keep writing, and stay young at heart.

*Linda <http://lindakage.com/> Linda Kage has had 14 sales within the past 12 months. She writes young adult romance under one name and erotic romance under another. A review of Linda Kage's YA *The Stillburrow Crush* can be found here: <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/7268423-the-stillburrow-crush>*



Writing a Villain Readers Will Care About

By Kim Gabauer

The following article was first printed in the Oct 2011 issue of MRW Interpretations (Midwest Romance Authors.)

Just wrapping up a class with CJ Lyons called; "Thrillers with Heart", and "Villains, and Those Who Pursue Them" with Dr. Cynthia Clark, and I learned so much from them. One of the best things I learned was you MUST have a villain readers will care about.

My WIP is about a sociopathic female serial killer. Being in the Mental Health field I know in order for my character to be a true sociopath she would have traits like: glibness, self-centeredness, and she would mimic emotions because sociopaths feel nothing for anyone else but themselves. Most are narcissistic and very BORING!

So, as a writer you must dig deeper into their character and find something redeemable in them. Dr. Clark used the example "Dexter," the killer character, written by: Jeff Lindsay, who inspired the hit Showtime series with the same name. In one episode, he acknowledges if he could feel anything towards anyone, it would be for his sister.

Then in a later show, Dexter's sister moves in with him and leaves the OJ on the table without putting it away. Dexter, who's a clean freak, says to himself, "I must not kill my sister." It was not only funny, but something all of us had felt, one time or another, and it was a connection to the audience. Something we all have in common.

Another lesson: the villain and the hero share outer/inner goals. An outer goal would be: Villain-Not to get caught by hero. Hero-To catch the Villain. Inner goals are something both need, and are unaware that they need it until they end. They often mimic each other as well. Dexter is a serial killer who kills other serial killers, who went to court and was acquitted.

He hands down justice by exposing the serial killers with pictures of their victims before he kills and dismembers them. Ironic yes, both share the need for power and control.

And lastly, any good villain will be smarter than the hero for 90% of the book. But in the end the hero always wins!

Happy Writing!

Kim Gabauer w/a Diane Kratz Kim Gabauer, who writes as Diane Kratz, is the co-author of a horror short story and the sole writer behind a series of action thrillers and horrific romances awaiting either completion or submission. --



Editor's Message

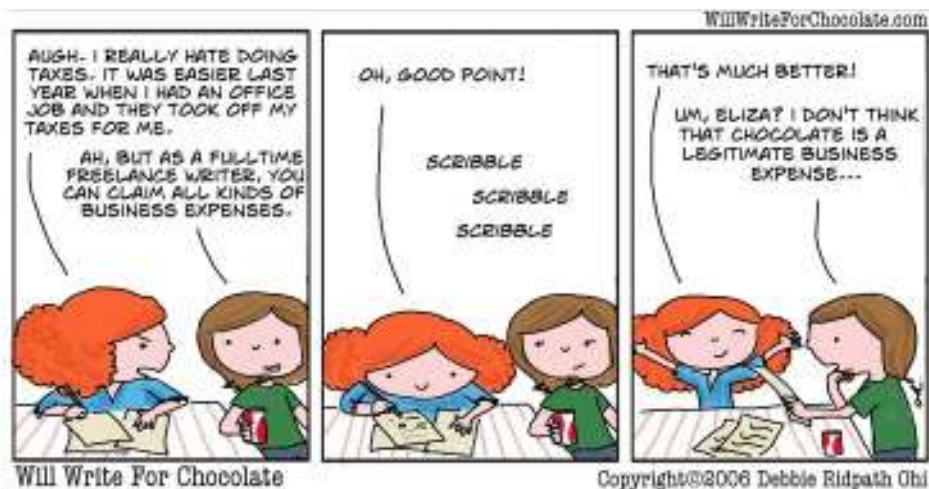
Write a Love Knot Article

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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