

THE LOVE KNOT

Newsletter of the Ottawa Romance Writers' Association

September 2009

In this month's issue

- ♥ President's Message
- ♥ Current Releases
- ♥ ORWA's Upcoming Workshops
- ♥ Articles
- ♥ First Meet contest info
- ♥ Editor's Message



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

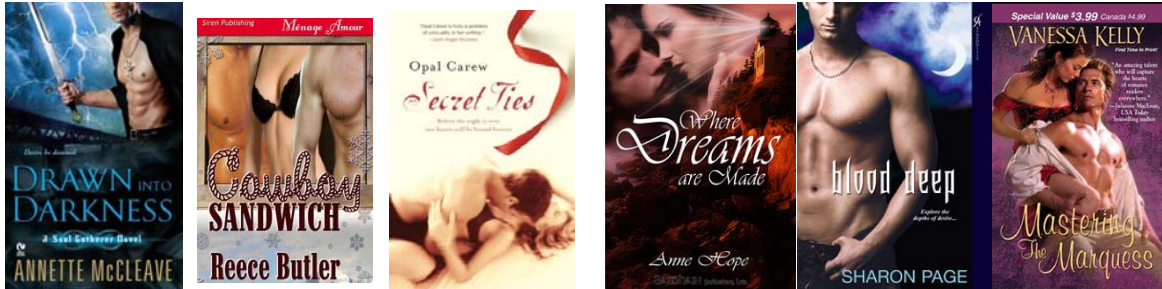
No matter what age we are, September always brings to mind thoughts of back to school. As children, we look forward to the start of school again with a mixture of anticipation and dread. We long to see our friends again, but mourn the end of summer holidays. Even as adults, we are still somewhat mentally programmed to see the beginning of September as the time for "getting serious" about things. Were you serious about your writing over the summer? If so, give yourself a pat on the back. Being consistent is the secret to success. If you weren't, what were the obstacles that stood in your way? What can you do to change things and recommit to your writing career? Remember, it's the passion that brought you to writing in the first place, but it's the patience and persistence that will help you succeed and reach your goals.

For ORWA, September is a chance to catch up with our fellow writers following the summer holidays. We have an excellent workshop planned with Eve Silver. September also marks the new timeline for the First Meet Contest. Entries are now being accepted electronically, up until midnight on the date of our September meeting. The First Meet Contest is an invaluable opportunity for unpublished authors to seek feedback on their work. The contest judges work very hard and provide helpful

feedback. If you're thinking about entering, take the chance, it's an excellent opportunity to bring your writing to the next level. Wishing you all a productive "back to school". Happy writing.

Cynthia Boyko
President

CURRENT RELEASES



REECE BUTLER, COWBOY SANDWICH will be released summer 2009 by Siren-Bookstrand

OPAL CAREW, SECRET TIES was released in June 2009 by St-Martin's Press. Also available from SMP are SIX, BLUSH, SWING and TWIN FANTASIES.

ANN HOPE, WHERE DREAMS ARE MADE, was released in print in July 2009 it is also available in digital format from Samhain Publishing.

MAGGIE JAGGER, JASPER'S ANGEL, is due out November 2009 from New Concepts Publishing. PERFECT OBEDIENCE and EVERY MIDNIGHT are also available now.

VANESSA KELLY, MASTERING THE MARQUESS is available now from Kensington Zebra.

ANNETTE MCCLEAVE, DRAWN INTO DARKNESS will be released September 1st 2009 by NAL/Signet Eclipse

SHARON PAGE, BLOOD DEEP, was released May 26 from Kensington Books. Also available from Kensington are SIN, BLOOD ROSE, BLACK SILK, HOT SILK, BLOOD RED, and WILD NIGHTS. Also available is the *USA Today* bestseller THE CLUB released in February 2009 from Dell Publishing.

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

Sunday, September 13, 2009, 2 p.m.

A Perfect Marriage: Plot & Pace by Eve Silver

Too fast? Too slow? Too cliché? Whether you're a plotter or a pantsers, the end goal is the same: create a plot with depth and drama that flows at a perfect pace. In this interactive workshop, we'll explore techniques for both plotters and pantsers, key points of plotting, methods for adding layers and depth, and cures for an ineffective pace. This workshop will include lecture, discussion, practical exercises, and handouts.



*Bestselling, award-winning author Eve Silver writes dark contemporary paranormals and historical suspense. As Eve Kenin she writes speculative romance. Her work has garnered starred reviews from Publishers Weekly and Library Journal, won Romantic Times Reviewers Choice Awards, was listed on Barnes and Noble Booksellers Mass Market Paperback and Nielsen BookScan's Bestsellers lists, and was chosen by Library Journal among its Best Books 2007. Eve's latest release, **Seduced by a Stranger**, is a dark, seductive historical suspense. Contact Eve through her website at www.evesilver.net*

ARTICLES

The Father of Motivation on Why You Should Go to Conferences: Not really, just my spin on it.

by Tammy Plunkett

I recently flipped through the guide on my television and stumbled upon a PBS special called “Excuses Be Gone” by Dr. Wayne W. Dyer. Now, I don’t know about the rest of you, but there are many situations in my writing life for which I can muster up legions of avoidance excuses: submissions, revisions, and most of all sex scenes. So on the heels of that inspiring television show let’s get the excuses for not attending a conference such as Nationals out of the way up front: it is expensive, it is too far, and I’d have to take vacation time from work and/or actually go on vacation without the family. I know



these all too well as I wallowed in them for years. But for some reason this year was different. This year I knew the benefit would outweigh the cost not only financially but also of having my husband take a week off work and leaving him, my four children and puppy behind.

And what were those benefits you ask?

Motivation:

If you are teetering on the fine line between a writing hobby and a writing career I am here to tell you about the one step that will have you tumbling over that line like Alice down the rabbit hole. Becoming a published author will suddenly go from a “nice idea” to a “must attain goal”. There is nothing like being surrounded by two thousand like minded people for three or five days to make you want to shout from the rooftops: “I am a romance writer, hear me roar!”

Networking:

Where else to you get to ask Susan Elizabeth Phillips how she likes writing sex scenes, and in the same day have Anne Stuart comment on your dress color? You get to speak to agents and editors, not only during pitches but also during spotlights and in the lounge. You get a real feel for who they are and what your working relationship could be like. You also have a great chance to meet some new people who write in your genre. For instance, ORWA may not include a plethora of inspirational romance writers at the moment but you can find some to befriend at a conference.

Workshops:

Honestly, ORWA has had some kick-ass workshops over the last three years, and the rise in published and almost-published authors can attest to that. But there is something to be said about the inundation of information from several days full of workshops. The tips that really resonate with you seem to be repeated over and over until they become your mantras at the keyboard. The sheer variety of possible topics can fluster, but instinct allows the right workshop to stand out on the list of choices and its contents guide your writing to a better place.

Free Books:

Outliers author Malcolm Gladwell’s 10,000 Hour Rule says it all. If you are going to spend ten thousand hours reading romance novels in order to be an outstanding romance writer you sure as heck will want some for free. The line-ups for the free book signings at RWA Nationals can be a little crazy, but very worth it. I was able to cart home eighty romance novels from every possible genre of romance, from every publisher and from novice debut novels to the queen herself, Nora Roberts. These books

will allow me to decide where my writing fits and more importantly which editor's time I should not waste by querying them.

Camaraderie:

Writing is a solitary endeavor, which is why ORWA has been such an important place for an extrovert like me over the years. Well, socializing at ORWA is nothing like the fun that can be had at conferences. Think about it, we all have to eat at some point. Getting together groups of hilarious and intelligent romance writers is bound to be a bunch of fun. You also get to play tourist and see setting that might make it into a future book. But we also make long lasting friendships with the people that seem to be at all the same workshops. Packing on the last night feels much like the last day at camp, melancholic for having to see it all end so fast. But seriously, for a stay-at-home mom like me, getting away *alone* for a week with people I love and doing what I love was pure bliss. It should be mandatory every year. I should have had it written into the wedding vows.

Have I busted those excuses yet? Do these invaluable benefits outweigh saying goodbye to a little bit of cash? If not, go pick up Dr. Dyer's book and he'll give you much better advice. I do advise that if you get that total sense of delight when you are in the flow of writing and you know you want to do this as a career then you absolutely owe it to yourself to attend a large conference. I'll be speaking at the New Jersey conference in October. I hope to see many of you there.



BOOTCAMP FOR WRITERS: Getting (Your Manuscript) Into Shape by Jenna Kernan

From: A Word About Romance, Newsletter of the Hudson Valley Romance Writers of America #80

Welcome to boot camp, soldier. As your drill Sergeant, it's my job to give you new recruits essential survival information so that your manuscript doesn't come back at you like a bad MRE. There's lots to learn before your deployment so let's get started.

Soldiers need the right weapon and the correct ammo. You'll learn how to use your weapon later. For now, we'll stick to the basics, so try not to shoot a hole in your shoe. Manuscript Basics include: Formatting, Spelling, Grammar and Word Count.

If you're formatting is wacky you'll stand out like a crossing guard during

camouflage training. Exact formatting varies from house to house. Print publishers want you to start chapters one third of the way down the page, while many e-publishers do not. So begin at the publisher's website to find out what you can. That may be little or nothing. So, standard format includes an easy to read font like Courier New or Times New Roman. The manuscript should be double spaced with a one inch margin all round. The header on page one should be single spaced and include your real name, address, phone, email on the right and on the left, the type of story you are submitting (for example: Regency, Contemporary, Paranormal) and the word count. Then move down the page about two inches and type the title again in the center of the page. Below that, also centered it should say Chapter One. Beneath that, justified to the left, an author might place a date or place, especially in a historical. The second page should have your name, the page number and the title. I like to put this all together on the right, so as not to interfere with the eye as it reads from left to right after turning the page. I also use a different font for the same reason. It looks like this: Kernan/SIERRA BRIDE/2. Assuming you get to the final page, authors generally hit the enter key about four times and then type THE END in capital letters. Feel free to open your favourite beverage after this to celebrate, unless you are just adding the correct formatting on an already completed manuscript. In that case, let me remind you, no drinking on duty, soldier.

Now about spelling. Just like when soldiers are practicing on the firing range, creativity is not appreciated in the arena of spelling. Read your work out loud. Have a friend or bunk mate read it as well. I've just started using TEXTALOUD, a software program that reads your text back to you. I bought Crystal and Mike (the voices) and they are not exactly human, but they do allow me to hear mistakes that I don't always see. Now, grammar is a different thing. It should be correct, to a point. In dialogue it is common to see fragments and grammar that is not Standard English, depending on how your character speaks. Also it is okay to use some fragments in the exposition. Read other authors to see when and why they do this.

Finally, a word about word-count. Some publishers want you to use the computer word count at the bottom left of most word programs. Others want you to calculate the count, to allow for white space in dialogue, etc. Figuring a one inch margin throughout and 25 lines per page, the method is to multiply 250 words per page times the number of pages. Let's say you use this equation and get 92,000. Your computer says you have 84,453. Don't write either of these numbers in the query or on the first page of the manuscript. One method is to round off numbers to the 83,453 becomes 84,000. Fine, great, but listen to your sergeant now, because this is life and death. Know the word count of the line you are targeting. Let's say it's 82,000 and you are over by either 2,000 words or

10,000 words, depending on which count you use. Here is not a place for honesty. Name rank and serial number only. Or in this case, your story is exactly 82,000 words. If a publisher asks to see it you can do some editing. The point is, don't get an automatic rejection because your story is 20,000 words too long. Stay alive, soldier by giving the publisher what they asked for.

Okay, enough about weapons and ammo. Time to pack that footlocker with all the things you'll need when deployed. Outfit your story with these standard supplies: Hooks, Characters that are emphatic, but flawed and who grow and change over the course of the story. If you pack all that (with neatly folded corners and sharp creases) then you'll have much of what you'll need on manoeuvres. Set them out on your bunk so we can take a look at those four items one by one.

Privates who don't want to stay privates forever would be wise not to begin their stories with their heroine sitting and thinking (this includes driving to the location where the story begins) or with a big block of backstory (or any backstory). Instead try something that works. The most common opening in novel and film is beginning in the heroine's ordinary world, but with an interesting problem or dilemma. Ordinary does NOT mean boring. She should have a problem right off the bat. This makes for an interesting opening and allows the reader to meet your protagonist and see what her ordinary life is like. An example: *The Devil Wears Prada* opens with Andrea transitioning from home to work for a job interview. By the time she walks into the dragon's den, we are rooting for her. Another common opening is to begin at the moment of change, with the encounter or problem that launches the protagonist in a new direction and out of their ordinary world. The up side of this is that you have a bang up opening. The movie *Jaws* does this by beginning with a shark attack. The bad news about this type of gripping opening is that the reader doesn't know the protagonist at all when you begin, which is why in *Jaws*, the next scene after the attack is the protagonist (Brody) in his ordinary world. Either way, open with conflict and action and open with the protagonist in trouble with some significant problem.

It is a great idea to open with this type of hook, but don't stop there. End paragraphs with hooks. End scenes with hooks and definitely end chapters with hooks. Hooks can be the introduction of an interesting problem, putting the protagonist in jeopardy (physical or emotional), introducing a looming deadline, foreshadowing an upcoming conflict that someone is dreading so the reader can anticipate it, introducing a question or secret that intrigues the reader enough that they read on to get the answer. Make sure you give it to them, but before you do, act like a veteran and introduce two more questions.

This all makes a good start but you're not ready to be dismissed just yet. You still need admirable characters who have the readers' empathy and who have flaws and who are willing to grow and change in the course of the story. And, no, you can't go to the supply sergeant and get a character like that requisitioned. You have to build one and if it's not moving when you are done, then you have to paint it. Here's Michael Hague's list of five characteristics of an empathetic character: She is the victim of undeserved misfortune (think Cinderella), She is in danger (think Snow White), she is likable, funny and/or loving. She is powerful (any wicked queen). She is funny. Now not every hero or heroine will be all of these characteristics, but it's important for a soldier to have a target to shoot for.

Remember that most common opening that I mentioned, the one that begins with a problem in the heroine's ordinary world? One reason it is so common and so popular is that this opening gives the author time to build empathy, using one or several of the characteristics from the list of five above. It also gives the opportunity to show a flaw or two. These flaws are what's keeping the protagonist from being a complete and happy individual ready to seize her happily-ever-after. By the story's end, these flaws have been eliminated because the protagonist has grown and changed by the events she has encountered during the story. This has made her become a better person, ready to be promoted.

Now before you line up for inspection and submit that manuscript to an editor, maybe you'd like to hear some of their complaints making these mistakes will likely lead to a form letter fired in your direction. Don't tease the editor with a cliff hanger that includes the words "if you want to find out how this ends you'll have to request the complete manuscript." Oh no they don't – and won't. Commanding officers do not take orders from privates. And another thing, get the format right, begin with action and make sure your writing evokes the five senses so that it is experienced by the reader. For a partial request sent the first three chapters in order and end with a hook. It is hard to believe but editors tell me some authors send chapters that are non-sequential.

All right, private, you're ready for deployment. So mail that manuscript and start another. Editors want writers to can continue to produce manuscripts in a timely fashion.

What do you mean you only have three chapters? You better drop and give me twenty---pages that is.

Here's hoping you earn your stripes in no time and get yourself assigned to a publisher. Just don't forget your old sergeant back at basic training.

Your C.O. has no military experience, which is probably evident from the article.

Jenna Kernan writes fast-paced romantic adventures that will capture your heart. Her next release, *SIERRA BRIDE*, arrives in August 2009. Her first paranormal, *DREAM STALKER*, arrives in December 2009 with *Silhouette Nocturne*. Jenna has twice been nominated for the Rita® and is a popular speaker. She keeps her website current with excerpts and monthly contests. Please visit her anytime at www.jennakernan.com.



Are We There Yet? Wait...where are we going?

**My small trials and tribulations as a romance author
by Suzanne Forrest**

This article first appeared in the June edition of the *Writer's Saddle*, the newsletter of the Calgary Chapter (CaRWA). Permission to forward granted with proper credit please.

I never aspired to become an author; writing came to me purely by happenstance and (very) late in life. I did, however, have a bohemian palm reader tell me eons before that I would write a book one day...well, when you're nineteen and having the time of your 'college' life, who are you going to call? Ghost Busters? Oops! Did I just give away my age? To get back to the palm reader, I paid the exorbitant fee, smiled politely, and as I left the building to head to the nearest nightclub with my friends, I also left behind his all seeing, all knowing insight about my future career.

I finished university, went on to marry and have children, and you know the rest of that story, so I shan't bore you with all the details in between. Suffice to say, life happened...and then I was a writer. Huh? How the heck did that happen?

My exact sentiments, and if I viewed the glass as half-full, and not empty, I'd be humming the reggae tune "Don't Worry, Be Happy." Okay, let's be realistic-we all know what happened to the guy who wrote that, but there are times I feel as if I am on the slow boat to nowhere. And let's face it; writing is hard work...unless you're the next Ernest Hemmingway.

Looking back, I would have to say arrogance played a big-huge actually-role in how I fell into doing something which has now become my passion. So a word of advice or caution here, don't read a book and then say to yourself after you've finished, "I can write just as well." Not going to happen unless you are Ernest Hemmingway reincarnated. To

paraphrase Jo Beverley, "writing is like learning to ride a bike. You start with a baby tricycle, progress to training wheels then a two-wheeler." One day, though, I'll be riding that unicycle all the way to the top of the New York Times Best Selling List. Hey, I can dream and be a realist at the same time, can't I?

So, did my newfound passion equate to being a good writer? How would I know? As I said earlier, I wrote when life wasn't throwing curve balls at me, which I had to duck or run to outfield to catch, sometimes not returning to home plate (the keyboard) for months on end. Then one thing after another prevented me from pursuing the business end of writing. That is, actually sending out one of my finished pieces to a publishing house.

And then my mother happened. Growing up I heard, "Self praise is no recommendation," so many times well, the old adage stuck to me like Crazy Glue. Don't get me wrong, I love her to pieces; she's a great-OT for a moment-she and my Dad are going to celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary June 7th, so I salute their journey with a round of applause. My Mum wasn't trying to be malicious; she was just a product of her generation and just trying to raise me to be a modest, humble person. But to this day-you know when you're in a group setting and you have to say something positive about yourself-I stutter and sputter when it comes to uttering aloud one of my redeeming qualities. I am not saying this aloud, I am writing it, and so I can say without sounding vain, I have many. Writing wasn't one of them, or so I thought, even though I loved creating my many romantic heroes and feisty heroines. So, if I didn't think I was any good, nor would an editor. And why waste a tree printing off a manuscript that no one is going to want to read anyway, right? So, once again, I shelved my aspirations as self-doubt continued to wreak havoc on my mind.

Then, just this past October, I took the plunge; I leapt out of the aeroplane without a parachute. Well, perhaps nothing as drastic as that, but my heart was racing to beat the band as if I had. I drove the three hours from Edmonton to Calgary to pitch my story to an editor, who wasn't even acquiring my genre, with my loving husband's parting words, "Now, this is a practice run. You're not expecting anything, so don't get your hopes up," ringing in my ears the entire 383km drive. Talk about settling my fears. My stomach was in my throat for the next twenty-four hours! But, with the help and encouragement of some really great ladies, who have ridden the same emotional rollercoaster as I, they gently took me in hand and calmed my upset nerves.

Months later, I am able to say ALOUD and with confidence, I am good at writing. I have it from the horse's mouth, or at least one horse, that I do

have talent. Did I make a perfect pitch that fateful day? Well, no not exactly. I stuttered 'till I finally shoved my piece of paper at the editor, and said something like I was probably going to vomit if I had to keep talking. Did the publishing house ask for my book? No. But surprise, surprise, Forest Gump recently visited, reminding me that life is a box of chocolates; you just never know what you're going to get. My writing has taken a different route from the one I envisioned. The destination, however, is still the same. I AM writing and one step closer to achieving my dream, to be published.

In hindsight, fear, pure and simple, stopped me in my tracks from sending out my manuscript in the past. I made excuses. If I really wanted to, I could have jumped hoops to get my work in front of an editor. I jumped for others, even asking how high, for years.

I can't really blame my mother or others, though, for MY fear...MY fear that I suck at writing...MY fear of rejection. Let's face it-we all come with baggage to some degree or another and we all have obligations that sometimes cannot be ignored.

So, keep in mind ladies and gents, it ain't over 'till the fat lady sings. But ask yourself before you step away from the microphone and give up on your dream-whatever that may be-who is truly silencing you?



GRAMMAR ME: SEMICOLONS by Nancy Purdy



A writer in our group thought it odd to find a semicolon in dialog. The semicolon, that comma with a period on top, sometimes acts like a period, sometimes like a comma; it can show up anywhere it normally would, even in dialog.

So where does it normally show up? Usually between different elements in a sentence:

--To join two closely related independent clauses instead of using a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet – I bought a book by my favorite author; I couldn't wait to read it.

--To set off two independent clauses joined by a conjunction if either clause contains commas – After I wrote the chapter, I set it aside; but when I read it later, I found several grammatical errors.

--To separate items in a series if any of the items contains commas – The writers met at the convention; set up their tables, book displays, and handouts; and waited for their fans to arrive. Or, groups containing commas: We could recycle aluminum cans; cardboard, newspapers, and

other paper products; glass bottles, jars, and other glass items.

--To join two independent clauses connected by a conjunctive adverb (however, also, therefore, thus, finally, etc.) or parenthetical expression (after all, for example, etc.) – Writer's block can be a stumbling block for many authors; in fact, it is a common complaint.

As a reminder, an independent clause is basically a sentence. It has a subject and a verb and is a complete thought. We join two related sentences with conjunctions to create a compound sentence. Or, we can use semicolons for emphasis and clarity, as in the examples above.

When in doubt, simply omit the semicolon by writing two or more less complicated sentences. Or, email your writer friends, and say, "Please grammar me."

About the author: Nancy Purdy teaches vocational education to high school students in special education. A former English/language arts teacher, she has worked as a newspaper reporter and corporate publications editor. Her writing interest is Elizabethan Ireland.

Deadline Hell by Cindy Holby

The following article ran in the September 2009 issue of The Final Draft, the newsletter of Carolina Romance Writers in Charlotte, NC. Permission granted to sister chapters to forward or reprint with proper credit.



I was trying to explain to a friend the other day about deadline hell. What happens to writers when we have to slide into that dreaded place that consumes every bit of our time, imagination and energy. I realized that until you really live it, that most people do not really understand what it is. So hopefully this will explain it a bit and give you some hints on what you can do to help your favorite writer get through it.

Deadline hell is what occurs when you don't hit your carefully planned out page count for each day that you have until your book is due. Best laid plans and all that, but quite frankly, life happens and it does get in our way. For me lately it's been my dad's cancer, which is now in remission, thank you. So said

book that was due March 1 is now due June 1 and has to be turned in or else it will not make it to production on time for its February release. This also means that since I missed the first deadline I will only have one release this year and I SUCK AS A WRITER AND MY CAREER IS OVER.

Since I now have two extra months to write I can do it. Woohoo! WRONG. During April Dad is in hospital twice with complications, I am preparing for RT, I go to RT for eight days and it takes me a week to recover, and catch up from RT. Two of those days were spent sleeping as I got no sleep at RT. So now its May 1, book is due June 1 and I'm about 4,000 words away from halfway. Which means I have to write around 250 pages in a month. Which is around ten pages a day, if I write everyday which I won't be able to do because life gets in the way. Can I do it? I better, because if I don't I SUCK AS A WRITER AND MY CAREER IS OVER.

So what happens then? I sit in front of my computer. I tell myself I will not play Freecell, or (insert favorite online game here) ever again for as long as I live. I play Freecell. I look at manuscript. I decide entire book is the great dedication to sucktitude. I put on writing inspired songs to get into the story. Since I am writing an angsty story I get depressed. I listen to them over and over again. I get all weepy. My bwff (best writing friend forever) tells me to quit listening to angsty songs and I reply with giant wail, "But I caaaaannnn't. It's the soundtrack to Atonement and I Lurve James MacAvoy and he diieeesss." Btw dialog like this goes back and forth all day with my bwff posse. (If you want to know who they are check out the dedications in my books. Finally I decide I am in right frame of mind to write.)

But first I check my email, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter. Why? Because writers are isolated. The internet is our connection to our friends. What are our friends doing? Are they in writing hell too? Oh, here's a link to something. Maybe I should check that out. Finally I realize that I've wasted half a day on internet. Turn off internet and write. Go back to manuscript. Maybe it doesn't suck. Hmm, writing historical and I need to know what certain building on certain street looked like in eighteenth century. Sign back onto internet. Get distracted again by email, IM or something Brittany/Paris/TomKat, Jon and Kate plus eight has done. Oh, another email. Someone I know has hit list/won award/got new multi comma contract and while I am happy for them it didn't happen to me because I SUCK AS A WRITER AND MY CAREER IS OVER.

Why do writers obsess over things like that? Because we write in a vapor. Some writers have critique partners. I don't. If the story takes a direction I'm not sure of, I'll send it out to a few of my friends for some feedback, but for the most part it's just us and the story.

So now its time to really get serious. What happens next in the story? Write write write. Hmm, write some more. Shove kitten off desk. Try to ignore sad doggy eyes. Grab apple, yogurt, banana, hand full of chips for lunch. Grab some caffeine. Grab some more. Stay up late writing. Eyes cross, wrists aches, back and shoulders ache, butt hurts because this continues day after day after day. Husband pokes head in and asks about dinner. You look at him like he's an idiot and wave him off. Husband carries in dinner, does laundry, vacuums, rubs back and tries to stay out of your way. (I am fortunate that my kids are grown and pretty much self sufficient and I also have an awesome husband) Week goes by, then another, then another and you realize story has come together and perhaps you aren't the giant burrito of sucktitude (bwff term) that you once thought you were. But you are also very lonely, and you kind of look like crap since you have basically lived in front of your computer for a month. Since I am now working on my fourteenth book I've kind of been through this before so I know what to expect. You think that one day I would figure it out and stay out of deadline hell, but I don't because I SUCK AS A WRITER AND MY CAREER IS OVER.

So what can you, as a fan/friend of a deadline crazed writer do? I have my own little support group. I just got a text hug from one. Another is giving me rah rahs every night and I have realized how much I really appreciate it. I look forward to it. It keeps me inspired because I know these people believe in me and maybe I don't SUCK AS A WRITER. So if you have a writer friend who is in deadline hell then drop them an email (believe me they will be checking) or a comment on their MySpace, Facebook, Twitter page and say "Yay, we believe in you and can't wait for the next book." They will appreciate it more than you know. And it's also great to know that you don't really suck and that you are just doing the best that you can.

Oh yeah, we procrastinate too. Why else would I be spending my time writing this instead of working on my story?

Cindy Holby is a multi-published author writing in several genres, including paranormals as Colby Hodge and YAs as Kassy Tayler, for Dorchester. If you would like to know more about Cindy check out her website or blog.



BEGINNER'S BLUES by **Rebecca Wright**

The following article was originally printed in the October/November/December 2008 issue of Romancing the Prairie, newsletter of Prairie Hearts RWA #43. Permission to reprint with credit to author

and newsletter.

So, you have decided you want to try your hand at writing romances. You have read them for years and think you have a good idea for writing a novel of your own. Great. You sit down at the computer or if you are old fashioned like me, with a blank sheet of paper and a good pen. Then...nothing. You stare at the blank page and your good ideas run from you like a herd of cats. What started out as a passionate concept is now heading in all different directions, none of them in anything that resembles a real storyline. What do you do now? Give up and say you were never meant to write anyway? Or do you start searching for ways to corral those ideas into something you can work with? Well you joined RWA so you must really want to write. Plunking down \$75 for something and then just walking away at the first sign of trouble is not something you want to do. So where do you start on your quest to really begin writing?

The first place to go is the RWA's website. In the members section there are a selection of articles available from previous issues of Romance Writers Report and eNotes. Both publications list online classes offered by professionals from the writing world. There are lists of online groups and forums on subjects ranging from the craft of writing, the writers life and on the publishing industry itself. It is never too early to find out what the industry will want from you as a writer.

The second place for help is the myriad books on writing. There have been some really excellent books published on writing romance novels. Below are several that I find especially helpful and what each book can offer the new writer.

- *How to Write Romances (Genre Writing Series)* by Phyllis Taylor Pianka - this book is unfortunately out of print but getting it used or from a library should be pretty easy. The one thing this book has that I have not seen in other books is great exercises. It gives clear writing examples and then offers exercises at the end of the chapter so that you can put the ideas you learned to work. The exercises get you writing romance stories right off the bat. If you are like me, just reading about a concept doesn't help unless you can actually do it yourself.
- *On Writing Romance: How to Craft a Novel that Sells* by Leigh Michaels - a newer book, this was published in 2007. It explains the types of romance novels that are selling today. Chapters include sections on story structure and building great characters. There is even a section on how to submit your novel once you have it written. This is particularly good because it addresses the genre of romance specifically and how to handle

getting your work into the proper hands and increase the likelihood that you will get published.

- **Passionate Ink: A guide to Writing Erotic Romance** by Angela Knight - Ok, so maybe you don't want to write erotic stories but all romance novels have some degree of the erotic in them. As a beginner, one of the most worrisome parts is the idea of writing a love scene. This book breaks it down into understandable parts. Even if you want to write mild love scenes, this book gives you the tools to do so successfully and with very little embarrassment. If you are one of the writers who doesn't shy away from love scenes this is the book to help you really get the passion across in a way readers will love.

If these books don't give you enough information to get you started, there are some really great general writing books that can help the novice writer. The following books are ones that approach specific writing issues and help beginners figure out plot and character.

- **Plot and Structure: Techniques and Exercises for Crafting a Plot That Grips Readers From Start to Finish** by James Scott Bell - this is a great book that explains writing concepts and then has exercises to get you writing. It explains the three-act story structure and how to use it to create your own exciting plot. You will learn to recognize what makes a story connect to readers and keep them turning the pages.

- **Dynamic Characters: How to Create Personalities That Keep Readers Captivated** by Nancy Kress - this book is exactly what it says it is. Creating characters that will move the plot along and keep your readers interested. It gives clear examples of what to do as well as what does not work and why.

All the books listed above are written by full-time genre authors. As a newbie, I find this helpful because I can not only see how someone else does it but also get encouragement to try it myself.

Ok, so you joined RWA, you checked out some books, and did some writing. Are you still feeling overwhelmed? Relax, if you have access to a local RWA chapter you can find real life writers that have gone through the same rough patches. Sometimes just knowing that you have others around that can offer a helping hand (or just a sympathetic ear) goes a long way. Reach out to your local RWA chapter or check out some of the wonderful online chapters. The best resources available to a new writer are other writers. RWA has some of the most giving and understanding writers out there, offering online classes and articles on the craft of writing. The resources are endless.

About the author: Books have always been a big part of Rebecca Wright's life, fiction in particular. Her job as a library specialist keeps her surrounded by the works of some of the best authors in the world. Her passion is writing historical and paranormal fiction with a romantic twist.

Is It Show? How Can You Tell? by Kirt Hickman

The following article appeared in the August issue of The Jasmine, the newsletter for the Lowcountry Romance Writers in South Carolina. Permission granted to reprint or forward to sister RWA chapters with proper credit to author and chapter.



You've heard it before: Never tell something that you can show. This is a difficult concept for many new writers, but it's crucial. It lurks beneath a multitude of self-editing sins: problems from passive voice, to information dumps and narrative summary, to absence of tension and others. Telling the story, rather than showing it, gives it the detached feel of a news article. It keeps the reader from experiencing it as though she is the viewpoint character. It leeches the importance--the very life--out of the events.

What is Tell? How do you know if you're showing or telling? My rule of thumb is simple.

You may state facts: "Gerri threw the contract onto the floor, snatched up her coat and stormed from the room." (1) Don't draw conclusions for your reader: "Gerri was angry." In the first sentence, you see Gerri's actions and are allowed to draw your own conclusion that she's angry. This is show. In the second, I've drawn the conclusion for you. This is tell. Decide for yourself which is more compelling to read.

Consider these examples from a critique submission.(2) The scene is written from the viewpoint of a teenage boy named Ian.

Tell: "There was someone breaking into the house."

Show: "The trapdoor burst down and Ian jumped backwards. Dust showered the cardboard boxes that cluttered the closet floor. As soon as the ladder thunked down, a black boot stepped onto the top rung, followed by another."

This example is from the next sentence of the same critique submission. Tell: "[Ian's] first thought was that he should probably get help, but he

was much too distracted.”

Show: “Before [Ian] could run for help, the shapely legs of the woman in the boots arrested him. Ian fails to move because of the intruder's shapely legs.” This shows that he's distracted without saying, “He was distracted.” The phrase “before he could run for help” shows Ian's thoughts without saying, “He thought he should get help”.

Here's an example in which the same author did a delightful job of showing: “[Rhiannon] leaned forward, her eyes fixed on the artery that had begun to pulse faster as she leaned close to it.” This is a great line. It shows the emotions of both characters. Rhiannon, whom you've already surmised is a vampire, leans forward with her eyes fixed on Ian's pulsing artery. It's absolutely clear what she wants, and the author never said, “Rhiannon was hungry for blood.” Ian's artery pulsing faster shows his fear or excitement without saying, “He was afraid,” or “He was excited.” Context will establish which emotion he's actually feeling.

How to Show

Rewrite any sections in which you've told something. To find a way to show it, ask yourself this question: What can the viewpoint character see, hear, feel, smell, taste, or recall, that allows him to draw the conclusions that you've told instead of shown? In other words: How does he know this? If you've drawn a conclusion for the reader, the viewpoint character must also have drawn this conclusion. On what is his conclusion based?

If the viewpoint character has nothing upon which to base the conclusion, no way to know the thing you've told, then the section of tell constitutes a viewpoint violation. Delete it and find some other place in your manuscript to reveal the information. Keep in mind, though, that if you move it, it's still tell. You must still convert it to show.

Be particularly attentive to dialog tags that tell emotion, as in this example:

“Herrera was on board.”

“On the Phoenix?” Chase said, surprised. “What was he doing there?”

You may have shown the emotion well enough through the actions, thoughts, and dialog of the character. If you have, that's good. If not, find a way to do so. Either way, delete the part of the tag that tells emotion.

Below, I offer three ways to correct the passage above. I show Chase's surprise through his actions, thoughts, and dialog, respectively.

“On the Phoenix?” Chase glanced at the central hologram, as if it could somehow confirm the news. “What was he doing there?”

“On the Phoenix?” He couldn't be. “What was he doing there?”

“On the Phoenix?” Chase said. “What the hell was he doing there?”

If you're having difficulty determining whether you've told or shown an

emotion, find a way to portray it without using the name of the emotion or a synonym. You can't tell an emotion without using its name or a synonym.

1. Noah Lukeman. *The First Five Pages*. Simon & Schuster. 2000.
2. Excerpts from critique submissions are reprinted with the permission of the original author.

Kirt Hickman Master degree in Electrical Engineering from UNM. He has worked with high-energy laser optics, microelectronics, and other technologies relevant to science fiction, and leverages his knowledge and experience to enrich his stories. *Worlds Asunder* is his first novel. His first non-fiction book, *Revising Fiction: Making Sense of the Madness*, will be released in June, 2009.

FIRST MEET CONTEST

THE ORWA FIRST MEET WRITING CONTEST RULES

1. The contest is open to all paid-up members of ORWA, as of the contest closing date, who are not published in book-length romantic fiction. It is considered appropriate for members at all levels of experience to enter. Only one entry per member is allowed. For submission by two writing partners, one must be a member of ORWA. Neither can be published in book-length romantic fiction.
2. One (1) copy of the contest entry is e-mailed to the coordinator.
3. The contest entry must be a scene from a romance novel in progress and will consist of up to ten manuscript pages (to a maximum of 2,500 words) and a brief synopsis, not to exceed five pages (to a maximum of 1,250 words) of the entire novel. This may be category romance, suspense, historical, fantasy or any other kind of fiction as long as the love story is the major story line.
4. The scene should contain the first meaningful meet of the hero and heroine. If the first meet scene is shorter than ten pages in length, an entrant may at her discretion include a portion of the scene immediately prior to the first meet scene, a portion of the scene immediately following the first meet scene, or portions of both. The entire entry—the first meet scene plus any additional scene portions—must be a maximum of ten pages in total. Since you must stay within the maximum word count no marks will be lost for an incomplete scene. (By first meaningful meet, it is intended that the writer feel free to pass over a brief encounter, such as a passing word in the hotel lobby, or a phone call to set up a meeting. The judges retain the right to question and possibly disqualify an entry in which significant encounters have clearly been passed over).

5. If the contest entry does not comprise the actual beginning of the novel, then a brief introduction should be provided, no longer than one page (250 words).
6. The contest entry must be submitted as follows:
 - a. In Courier New font, size 12, Double-spaced, and using standard 1 inch margins. Computer word count will vary depending on the amount of white space produced through dialogue vs. description. Please be advised that only 10 pages will be read, regardless of word count. If the entry is not submitted following these guidelines the coordinator will convert the file as such and cut off the entry at page 10.
 - b. The title must appear on the upper left corner and page number on the upper right corner of each page. **Your name should not appear in the header.**
 - c. The category must also appear in the header under the title. The category may be historical, single title or mainstream contemporary, category, single title or mainstream romantic suspense, paranormal, futuristic, regency, fantasy, short contemporary, long contemporary. For short and long contemporaries, please list the appropriate line(s) such as Silhouette Romance, Harlequin Presents, Super Romance, Harlequin Blaze, etc.
 - d. The entry should be numbered from the beginning of the novel (e.g., it could start on page 23). This will enable the judges to see how far into the book the scene occurs.
 - e. Include one cover sheet that contains the title, author's name, address, e-mail, telephone number, word count, category and/or the line. **Author identification MUST NOT appear on any other part of the entry.**
 - f. Include a cheque for \$15 (Canadian dollars), payable to: ORWA.
7. The closing date for entries is midnight of the September meeting and entries are to be e-mailed to the person designated to receive them. The entry receiver will ensure, as far as possible, that contest rules have been followed and will pass the entries to the judges without identification. The Contest coordinator will copy and paste the entries into new documents to send to the judges so that the electronic copy's properties do not show the entrants identification.
8. The Contest Coordinator may not enter the contest or be a judge.

9. There will be a minimum of three judges, preferably four. The judges are selected by the committee of published authors who have previously judged the contest.

10. Even though there will be no identification on the manuscripts, some judges may recognize some work. This is accepted, and we trust the integrity of our judges.

11. Entries will be rated using a standard score sheet, and these sheets will be returned to the entrants. If you wish to have a copy of this sheet, please ask the Contest Coordinator.

12. The results will be announced, and the trophy awarded, at the November meeting.

13. In addition to the trophy, the winning manuscript will be sent for critique and consideration to an appropriate editor or agent. The second and third place manuscripts will be sent to a published romance writer for a critique. (All contestants must be prepared to produce three chapters no later than the September meeting. This should present little problem as the contest is intended for members' work in progress, not material created specifically for the contest). Failure to present a manuscript in a timely manner as determined by the discretion of the judges may result in the forfeiture of the critique for the 1st place finalist or the substitution of a \$25 CDN award in lieu of the critique for the 2nd and 3rd place finalists.

14. The decision of the judges is final.

ORWA Writing Contest Evaluation Sheet

The Characters

1. The Heroine: (based on the scene only)
Does the heroine come alive? Is she strong, admirable, sympathetic and believable; potentially or actually caring and tender?
2. The Hero: (based on the scene only)
Does the hero come alive? Is he strong, admirable, sympathetic and believable; potentially or actually tender and sensitive?
3. Characters in general: (based on the scene & synopsis)
Are the characters believable, non-cliché, intriguing? Are their motivations clear and plausible?

The Story

4. Plot/Synopsis: (based on the scene & synopsis)
Is the plot interesting, complete and logically developed? Does the synopsis clearly explain the story?
5. Attraction/Sexual Tension: (based on the scene & synopsis)
Is attraction and/or sexual tension present in the scene and likely to develop through the story?
6. Conflict: (based on the scene & synopsis)
In the scene and the synopsis, is there evidence of sufficiently deep and complex problems within and between the characters to carry the book?
7. Setting: (based on the scene only)
Is there a sense of time and place? Can the reader feel the period and the locale: do they set the mood?

The Writing

8. General: (based on the scene & synopsis)
Is the writing fresh, coherent and free of clichés? Is it well-paced? Is the point of view handled well? Is the writing free of errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling?
9. Dialogue: (based on the scene only)
Is the dialogue lively, interesting and convincing?
10. Presentation: (based on the scene & synopsis)
Are manuscript and synopsis presented in a professional manner?

Editor's Message

Please send any upcoming releases, news, and articles to tammyplunkett@sympatico.ca all summer long and by the 20th of September.

Have a great month full of learning and writing.
-Tammy