

The Love Knot

Newsletter of the Ottawa Romance Writers' Association



JANUARY 2012

In this month's issue:

- ♥ President's Message
- ♥ Current Releases
- ♥ Upcoming Workshops
- ♥ Articles
 - How to Squeeze More Writing Into Your Day
 - Extinguishing External Plot Devices
 - You're Going to Write HOW Many Books in the Series?
 - Stay in The Game
 - Interview with Brenda Novak
 - How to Turn Your Writing Resolutions Into a Realistic Plan
 - Resolutions for Writers
- ♥ Editor's Message

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE ADDICTION

*There was a young man of distinction
Who suffered a dangerous affliction
It was something he knew
He would have to eschew
Before it became an addiction.*

I hope everyone had a very happy Christmas and that Santa was good to you. I am writing this on New Year's Day with, as usual, a motley collection of resolutions I plan to keep (well try, anyway!). One resolution is to get more exercise. I find sitting at my computer for hours is not conducive to inspiration as my backside competes with my brain for numbness. January's workshop "The Care and Feeding of the Romance Writer" will, I'm sure, offer solutions to keep my body healthier and my brain more productive. I'm also sure that Tammy Plunkett, our January workshop speaker, will have lots of other ideas we can draw from to make us mean, lean writing machines.

Most of my messages last year started with a "Quote of the Month", but this month I'm having a bit of fun and starting with the first verse of a limerick with a romance theme. I am hoping this will also help to inspire you all to compose your own limerick that we can read and have a good laugh over at the Valentine Brunch in February. You will find more information about the Brunch, and the remaining verses of the limerick at the end of this message.

REPORT ON OUR DECEMBER MEETING

I am very pleased to report that the draft budget presented to members at the December meeting was discussed and adopted. A copy of the budget is available in the files section of the chat loop.

A reminder that as of January 1, 2012, members can renew their ORWA membership on-line using PayPal by visiting our web site at www.ottawaromancewriters.com. For those of you who prefer to renew by cash or cheque you can renew at the January meeting in person, or by cheque to my address at 14 Sandwell Crescent, Kanata ON K2K 1V3.

I am also happy to report that Maureen Fisher has agreed to become our Registrar once again, allowing Rizzo to focus on her role as Treasurer. Thank you Maureen. I would also like to announce that Teresa Wilde has agreed to be ORWA's official spokeswoman. Teresa's knowledge of the industry, her confident manner and the clarity with which she informs on our industry, make her the obvious choice to represent us. If any member is contacted by anyone from the media or other literary organization, please let Teresa and me know so that we can exploit the opportunity to the maximum. Thank you Teresa. I know you will do a great job. Teresa has also kindly offered to arrange for all the ORWA awards that will be presented at the Valentine Brunch. Teresa will be posting a message on the loop with a list of the awards and requirements to qualify.

Our Valentine Brunch will be held at the Loch March Golf Course on Sunday, February 5, 2012. The cost is \$30.00. You can sign up and pay at the January meeting or you can send me a cheque at my address: 14 Sandwell Crescent, Kanata ON K2K 1V3. Deadline to register is January 30, 2012. I will be posting a more detailed message about the Brunch on the loop.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

I would like our focus in 2012 to be on encouraging new members. We have a terrific workshop schedule in the making, we have an abundance of published authors to be proud of, and we can offer the full spectrum of education, support and social interaction. Any ideas you can come up with to help us increase our membership will be most welcome.

Malena Abel, President

Well here it is! The rest of the limerick.

**In horror he suddenly thought
What would happen should he be caught?
Indulging his passion
In so unmanly a fashion
Before finding the cure that he sought.**

**Too late, our young man was discovered
His dreadful addiction uncovered
It took only one look,
In his hand was a book
To this day he has never recovered.**

**But what, may you ask, was so painful?
What book was so horribly shameful?
Was he reading perchance
A torrid romance?
And if so, should the world be disdainful?**

**Some men have this puzzling notion,
That to read about love and devotion
Is unmanly and wrong
For they have to be strong
And deny they are touched by emotion.**

ANON.

Current Releases

AMBER CAREW
I DREAM OF GENIE
 November 2011



AMBER CAREW
CHRISTMAS ANGEL
 November 2011

LINDA POITEVIN
SINS OF THE ANGELS
 Ace Books
 September 2011



OPAL 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



Upcoming Releases

OPAL CAREW

PASSION PLAY

Samhain Publishing
December 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

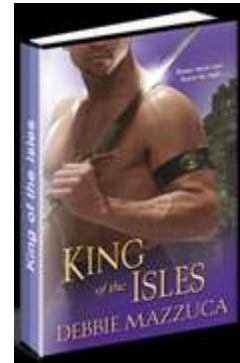
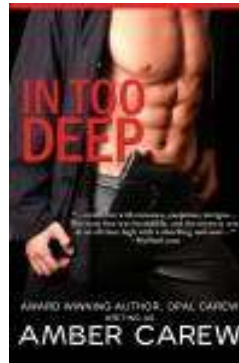
INSATIABLE

St. Martin's Press
February 2012

OPAL CAREW

ILLICIT

St. Martin's Press
July 2012



Upcoming Workshops

January 8th, 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Care and Feeding of the Romance Writer with Tammy Plunkett

Romance writers spend a great deal of time sitting in front of a computer. This has huge implications for our body, mind and spirit. We are hunched over a keyboard, often brushing crumbs off our chest, and we push through an action scene that has our adrenaline pumping as if the gunman were chasing us, or we weep through an emotional scene right along with our characters. But alas, our backside is firmly planted in its seat. What does this do to your arteries, your adrenal glands and your waistline? What exercises can be done to prevent Carpal Tunnel Syndrome? Which foods will increase productivity and creativity? **Tammy Plunkett** started her professional life as a registered nurse in the cardiac and intensive care units. After twelve years of nursing she switched gears and stayed home to raise four children leading to an in-depth study and practice of both homeopathy and yoga. Tammy's greatest joy is sharing her special view from both sides of the healing fence. She strives to combine evidence-based studies with alternative and complimentary practices to offer the general public the best of both worlds. After several successful workshops and speaking engagements, Tammy has decided to write a book in order to reach a larger audience.

February 5th Valentine's Brunch

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Place: Loch March Golf & Country Club

1755 Old Carp Road Kanata, Ontario K2K 1X7

Ticket Price: \$30.00 (includes tax and gratuity)

Cash Bar

Members can purchase tickets for the Brunch at the January, 2012 meeting or by mailing their payment to Malena.

The cut-off date for signing up for the Brunch is January 30, 2012.

Articles

How to Squeeze More Writing Into Your Day: A Method for Both Plotters and Pantsers

By Lynn Johnston

The following article first appeared in the October - December 2011 issue of Out of This World, the newsletter of the Fantasy, Futuristic, and Paranormal Chapter.

You've probably heard other writers talk about how they eked out writing time when they were first starting out: the new mom who wrote during her baby's fifteen minute naps, the engineer who skipped coffee and cigarette breaks for the sake of getting a few more paragraphs written, the nurse who wrote an entire novel while waiting for the bus. Jane Austen is said to have written a sentence or two at a time as she paused between carrying out her other responsibilities.

It sounds like such a great idea, doesn't it? Find all those little dead spaces in your schedule and use them to get more writing done.

That's exactly what I thought the first time I heard one of those stories. I immediately booted up my computer, set the microwave timer to fifteen minutes, and...nothing.

I sat there for the entire fifteen minutes without adding a single word to my novel.

It wasn't that I got distracted and started surfing the web or had a sudden, urgent need to reorganize my desk. Even though I had a plot outline, I simply didn't know what to write next.

'Maybe I'm the kind of writer that needs big blocks of time to write,' I concluded. 'Maybe I need more warm-up time than other writers.'

But in spite of that first failure, I still loved the idea of being able to turn all that wasted time into writing time. Again and again I attempted the fifteen minute writing exercise, and each time failed miserably.

Until a clever friend made a suggestion. "You're a plotter," she pointed out. "Maybe you need more structure to write in short bursts."

Eureka! I discovered that I could start writing immediately if I gave myself very specific parameters. I decided I would spend ten minutes writing the part of the scene where the bus explodes.

During the next ten minute session, I wrote my protagonist's reaction to the bus explosion.

In the next one, I wrote the part where the dazed bus driver tries to stop my protagonist from fleeing before the police arrived.

In other words, I broke the scene into beats (meaningful units of action) and focused on writing one beat at a time.

Writing like this in bursts throughout the day not only gave me an opportunity to make a bit of progress during my otherwise less-than-exciting workday, it also kept me in touch with my character's world during the day.

In the evenings, when I did have a big block of time to write, I was eager to write more because I'd been thinking about my characters all day, and I didn't need a half hour to get back into my heroine's point of view. Once I trained myself to focus on a single beat of action rather than the whole scene, I find I could start writing within a couple minutes of opening my draft.

Another advantage of writing like this is that I no longer waste as much time getting stuck in the middle of a scene. I might not know everything that has to happen in a scene, but I can figure out the key events that have to happen at this point of the story, and I can write those in short bursts. Then later, I can go back and stitch those key events together by adding transitions and filling in the holes.

You don't need a plot outline to do this, either. (Remember, my plot outline didn't help me at all when it came to writing a few minutes at a time.) As long as you can figure out what the next beat in the story should be, you can set a timer and just write that beat of action.

I'm not suggesting that you stop setting aside big blocks of time to write. There's nothing like the high that comes from having written an entire chapter and knowing that you've gotten significantly closer to finishing the story. Short bursts of timed writing are a way to boost your productivity outside of your regularly scheduled writing sessions.

Sometimes I use the timer technique even when I do have a big block of time, because it helps me build momentum. I make a list of all the beats in a scene, and then I go down the list, setting a timer for each one. As my momentum builds, the scene will take shape in my mind, and eventually I'll realize that the timer went off forty minutes ago and I was so engrossed in writing that I didn't notice. Focusing on one beat at a time can help you get more done during longer writing sessions as well.

Don't write in beats? Do you think better in layers? No problem. Set your timer for fifteen minutes and write just the dialogue for a scene. Next time you have a fifteen minute block, add in all the physical action. Third fifteen minute block, add interior monologue. Fourth block, add setting descriptions. Fifth block, add body language. Keep layering scene elements in until the scene is fully fleshed out.

Again, take a moment before each writing session to identify specific parameters. Before you write the dialogue layer, ask yourself: "What is the main topic the characters will discuss?" Before writing the physical action layer, ask yourself: "What will the characters be doing while they have this conversation?" Before writing the setting layer, ask yourself, "Where are the characters and what objects will they interact with?"

Writing like this probably won't feel natural to you immediately. It took me about three weeks of training myself to write by focusing on single beats of action, and for most of those three weeks I wondered if I was wasting my time. Like any new writing method, this takes practice to master.

Set aside a fifteen minute block every day, separate from your usual writing time, and if it helps take the pressure off, work on something other than your work-in-progress. Remind yourself that this is merely a new technique that you're learning. Don't expect your first attempt to yield 500 words of pure

gold—look at this as a training exercise that will increase your productivity over the next few months.

But I don't want to write in short bursts, you say. I'll just be getting warmed up when the timer goes off, and when I hear that beep, I'll feel frustrated.

That will happen. Let me suggest that it isn't a bad thing.

What's being frustrated here? Your desire to write. When you feel that little surge of frustration because you want to write more, recognize that what you're feeling is your creative drive.

Embrace that drive! It's the source of motivation. You know, that thing that keeps you from procrastinating? A couple of ten minute writing sessions during the day can keep your motivation stoked, so that by the time you're finished with dinner, you're chomping at the bit to write the scene that you started on your lunch break.

When you feel that eagerness to keep writing, promise yourself that you're going to sit down and write more that evening (or whenever your next writing session falls), and keep that promise, even if all you can manage is another fifteen minutes before bed.

The more you practice, the easier it gets to write in short bursts. You'll train your brain to enter the flow state more quickly and easily—so you waste less time getting into the story even when you've got a large block of time to write. Even better, you'll start looking forward to those fifteen-minute breaks in your day because the next two or three paragraphs are practically boiling over in your brain and you can't wait to get them down. --

Lynn Johnston blogs about how to take control of your life 10 minutes at a time using the kaizen approach: <http://www.smallstepstobigchange.com>

*Each week, readers of her blog receive a small, simple step they can use to improve some area of their lives. She's also the author of several books on the kaizen approach, including *The Kaizen Plan for Organized Authors: Take Control of Your Writing Career 10 Minutes at a Time* (Open Clearing Press, October 2011).*



Extinguishing External Plot Devices

By Wendy S. Marcus

The following article was printed in the Hudson Valley RWA chapter newsletter.

How many times have you read a romance book where the hero and heroine have a fight? The hero storms out. The heroine packs her things and moves out. This is it. The breakup to end all breakups. Then the heroine gets the call: "There's been an accident!" She rushes to the hospital. Her vision clouded by tears, she maneuvers around the crowded Emergency Room in a desperate search to find someone who can help her, someone who can tell her if the hero is alive, or heaven forbid, (dramatic sob)..dead. And at the thought of losing him she is suddenly slapped by the realization she loves him, would be lost without him, and has no desire to go on living if she can't do it with him by her side.

As a reader I think: WHAT? Three pages earlier she'd thrown a cleaver at his head, told him he was scum and she could never forgive him for cheating on her with those slutty triplets he'd met at the bar. Sure, he'd apologized profusely. But she'd been adamant. She could not get past-and would never, ever forget-the images from the videoed play-by-play that'd gone viral on the Internet. He was depraved. She was humiliated. They were done.

But then, with the possibility of him being dead or gravely injured comes her declaration of unconditional love? I'm not buyin' it! Because if it were me, I'd be thinking: 'Take that you lying, cheating, scumbag. You got what you deserved.' But then readers wouldn't have the expected happily ever after ending, would they?

External plot twists are things we authors throw at our characters to create conflict or make them do something so the story moves along the way we want it to. In the first draft of WHEN ONE NIGHT ISN'T ENOUGH I had a secret baby, a threatened miscarriage, a car accident, and the hero's estranged wife, who he'd never bothered to divorce, showing up in the E.R. on the day the

heroine had decided to tell the hero about her pregnancy. Oh, did I mention the estranged wife was also pregnant?

Oh the drama!

Upon reading my complete manuscript (after signing me based on my first three chapters (thank goodness)) my agent said, "Wow. You've got a lot of external plot devices here. I seriously suggest you get rid of some.

Newbie that I was, I thought: External what? And did a Google search.

Then my brand new editor who'd agreed to take me on (because she'd loved my voice (again, thank goodness) in an attempt to see if I could revise my manuscript into a saleable novel said, "The hero and heroine cannot get together simply because she's pregnant. And while the pregnant estranged wife showing up is dramatic, I don't think you need it." Then she went on to talk about internal motivation, character driven plot, and character growth.

Okay. Back to the storyboard.

What I learned from revising my manuscript (actually rewriting it - twice) is that by eliminating external plot devices that moved my story along I really had to dig deep into my characters' heads to determine who they were, what they wanted, and how they planned to get it. I let them determine their own fates based upon their decisions and actions. By removing the threatened miscarriage as a means of getting the hero close to the heroine, I was forced to show the progression of their relationship. How he grew to care for her before finding out she was carrying his child. And by changing the car accident scene, which originally served to prompt the heroine's disclosure of her pregnancy to the E.R. doctor treating her - yes, the hero, I was forced to show her thought processes and anxieties leading up to the big reveal. And by deleting the estranged wife showing up at the hospital I kept the focus on the hero and heroine.

All in all I think the changes made for a much more satisfying read. I hope you'll agree. Please check out my debut Harlequin Medical Romance, WHEN ONE NIGHT ISN'T ENOUGH. <<http://wendysmarcus.com/>>



You're Going to Write HOW Many Books in the Series???

by Terry Spear

The following article first appeared in the October - December 2011 issue of Out of This World, the newsletter of the Fantasy, Futuristic, and Paranormal Chapter.

I started with one book. Heart of the Wolf. It came in 3rd place in a contest years ago where there were 7 winners. And the NY editor said it was a nice unique twist on a horror story. I don't think the world was ready for werewolf romance back then. While I had a lot of rejections, I had just as many full requests. Still, I wasn't selling and yet I couldn't give up the werewolf world I had created. So I began another story, Don't Cry Wolf. It was a different wolf pack because I wanted to ensure that if one didn't sell, the other might and I wanted a stand-alone title.

Heart of the Wolf sold! To Sourcebooks. It made PW's Best Books of the Year! What else did I have to offer?

Don't Cry Wolf, but it wasn't done. I'd worked on some other stories, as I usually do as I get stuck and don't know if a book will sell so just keep writing until something does. Hopefully.

My editor wanted to see Don't Cry Wolf. So I concentrated on that one, and it was different enough from Heart of the Wolf that my editor held onto it forever. I figured it was a no go. And I worked on other stories. I sent her some of my vampire romances. Too many vampire stories out there. So I came up with a couple of more werewolf ideas, To Tempt the Wolf and Legend of the White Wolf, and began working on book three, To Tempt the Wolf, new wolf pack in case Don't Cry Wolf didn't sell.

See a pattern?

Don't Cry Wolf sold and became my biggest seller, Destiny of the Wolf, the Silver Town wolf pack in Colorado.

To Tempt the Wolf was about a SEAL wolf, and I just blazed right through it. I love when that happens. I turned it in and my editor said, Sold! Before she'd read even half of the book, and Sold! To Legend of the White Wolf based on a blurb.

And that was the beginning of selling on a proposal.

But how do you write so many books in a series? Dreaming of the Wolf is the 8th book in the series and just released. It's Jake's story from the Silver Town wolf pack, affectionately known by some fans as the Silver brothers. That makes 3 stories for this wolf pack that started out with Destiny of the Wolf. Wolf Fever is book 6, about Carol, a human in the town, and I'm currently working on the other brother's story, Tom's.

I finished the sequel to To Tempt the Wolf, A SEAL in Wolf's Clothing, and I've got to say the covers are just getting better and better. But you see, the stories are now coming from fan requests. Hunter's sister, Meara, in To Tempt the Wolf has to have her mate. And Finn Emerson is so not the SEAL for her. And he's not about to settle down. But the situation is just too volatile not to consider...well, that's coming in March 2012.

So what I found was that after writing the first 4 books that were about unrelated wolf packs, readers kept asking me for more about the secondary characters. And of course, I had to oblige.

But each story must be unique. The pack dynamics, the characterizations, the location might stay the same to a degree, but the plot, the romance, the interactions between a new hero and heroine must be different.

After book 4, Legend of the White Wolf, I met my editor at the Shreveport Conference where I taught Happy Hookers, and suggested I think of writing something else. But I knew I had a following and it would only grow if I continued to write a related series. So I suggested a Highland wolf pack because of my Irish, Scottish and Welsh roots. I'd always wanted to write a Highland wolf story, and she was delighted and Heart of the Highland Wolf was born. And now besides Ian's story, I've written the sequel, not sure of title,

Duncan's story in the Grand Cayman Islands, and am working on the 3rd story, A Highland Wolf Wedding, Cearnach's story.

But after the 13th wolf book was contracted (3 still to be written), my editor wanted me to offer a new series. The first jaguar shifter story is coming out in the fall of 2012. Savage Hunger, I think. :) And I'm writing about the hero's sister in the next installment. Three are contracted.

You have to build your worlds, stick to them, but make each story unique enough that your readers will read them and know they have a brand new story to enjoy. Not the same old plot with new character names or a new location, or whatever. They have to be fresh and new, and yet have some familiarity to them, the same sense of intrigue, or sexiness, or humor—our voice.

So how many wolf books will I write? My fans are worried that I'm going to quit. But I'm not. I love the world of wolves, the way they interact with one another in the wild, the way they raise the alpha pair's litter as their own, the way they mate for life. I love using their world to create my werewolves so every time I get this question, I smile and say, "As long as readers want them, I'm writing them."

Half of writing for the world is writing for ourselves. We have to love our world enough to want to write more of it and more and more, but we also have to ensure every store is just as new as the last. --

Terry Spear is an award-winning author of urban fantasy and medieval historical romantic suspense, Heart of the Wolf named in Publishers Weekly's BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR, NOR Reader Choice for BEST PARANORMAL ROMANCE.

"Giving new meaning to the term alpha male where fantasy IS reality."



Stay in the Game

By Natascha Jaffa

The following article first appeared in the January/February 2012 issue of Sandscripts, the Las Vegas Romance Writers Chapter newsletter.

The publishing industry is constantly evolving and we as writers are expected to do our research to stay in the game. That research includes the publishing routes writers take upon themselves. Self-publishing is a very personal choice. No one has the right to tell you how to publish your book, but do you know what you're getting into by leaving a traditional publisher on the sidelines?

If you're considering self-publishing, you have to research and you have to be meticulous. Otherwise, without the tools a traditional publisher or an agent offers (editing, copyediting, marketing, legal guidance, etc.), you may look like a fool. Your dedication to succeed is the deciding factor. Self-publishing is a great resource for new or advanced writers to get their work into the world. Without the stress and disappointment of finding an agent or waiting years for your book to hit shelves, you can take your career into your own hands. But there are a few things to consider before you take that final step.

Interviews from four authors will give you insight into the following questions when comparing a traditional publisher to self-publishing:

- * How long does it take for my book to become available to readers?
- * What are my royalty rates?
- * What level of self-promotion is involved to sell my book?
- * What level of editing is required to self-publish my book?
- * How does self-publishing help already-published authors?

Sherri A. Dub, self-published author of her paranormal romance, Goddess Cottage, chose to take her career into her own hands because the slushpile was taking too long. She states, "I knew my book was ready, as it was requested, in full, by a major publishing house, but they chose to praise it and pass" (Dub Interview). This led Dub to utilize BookBaby.com and pay \$219.00 for an ISBN number, a cover and to format her novel. Dub's novel was made available on iBooks, Sony, Nook & Kindle on April 21, 2011, at \$1.99 with a second novel, The Witch Ball, and a third novel, following suit later in the year. However, there are no royalty figures available as of yet for Dub as it can take

between 60-70 days in order to receive payment from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Apple and Sony. The writer spends a good chunk of free time, when she isn't writing, promoting her first novel. "I do daily promotional work on Twitter, Goodreads.com and Facebook" (Dub interview), she states and lists Twitter as her greatest resource, reporting over one thousand followers. Dub feels she is doing well with over one hundred downloads of her novel and advises, "If you have a large writing group of peers who are encouraging you to do this and you have honed your craft, then I say go for it" (Dub interview). Even with this amount of success, Dub is still on the hunt for an agent and looks forward to pitching herself at future writing conferences. Sherri A. Dub can be reached through her website: www.sheropatra.com

Romance writer Sherri Smith, writing as R.M. Sotera, has numerous novellas traditionally published electronically. Her decision to self-publish came after she realized she had to evolve as the industry evolved. "In all honesty, it appears that building a name for oneself through E-Publishing and Self-Publishing is a good step in securing the ultimate goal of traditional publishing—if this is an author's goal" (Smith interview). Smith continues to query agents in the hope that one of her manuscripts will catch an agent's eye, but is currently succeeding electronically through eXtasy Books and Evernight Publishing. Smith reveals that even though she has gone through a traditional publisher for her work, the release date for her novellas, after the contract is signed, is only two to three months. According to Smith, e-published authors can be paid monthly, quarterly and semi-annually, depending on the publisher, but Smith reports that \$55.00 is the most she's made in one month through this route. The writer attributes the amount of money she personally makes to promotion. "I'm sure I could do better if I had the time needed for promotion, but with my full-time job and allotting writing time in my schedule, online promotion is a big problem for me" (Smith interview). Smith is one of the authors who have considered self-publishing, eager to get her name out there as any author is, but she goes on to state, "At this time it isn't feasible because I don't feel that I have the time to put the amount of leg-work needed into self promotion" (Smith interview). She can be contacted through her website: www.rmsotera.com

Self-published author and self-publishing guru Kris Tualla is another one of those authors who tried the traditional publishing route, but found that her books were not what the publishing houses were looking for. The main reason: her Norwegian heroes weren't Scottish. Thousands of writers are praised for their writing capability, but hit the "your book isn't sellable" wall. Tualla's answer: self-publishing. Spending over ten hours a day promoting her books while writing three to six hours on her next manuscripts, this writer has published her books both in print and electronically. Tualla pulls in about \$75.00 a month with her books, spending between \$4.88-\$5.00 on the print-on-demand and absolutely nothing for her e-books. How'd she do it?

CreateSpace from Amazon. With offers like free membership, flexible royalty models, free CreateSpace ISBN, and a print-on-demand option, CreateSpace is the "juggernaut" of self-publishing (Tualla interview) and perfect fit for Tualla. With an art degree in her background, Tualla created her brilliant cover designs herself. By studying traditional covers for those key elements, this writer took every aspect of her career into her own hands, but warned writers that, "No writer can edit themselves" (Tualla interview). Because of this, Tualla uses four separate readers for plot consistency, characterization, GMC and setting while using a completely different set of readers for copyediting. Before even considering releasing her manuscripts to the masses, the writer buys her own book for one last edit, folding down the corners of every page that has a missed mistake. Her first rule before self-publishing: create a well-written product (Tualla interview). Currently in the works with a traditional publisher for her sixth, seventh and eighth novels (a trilogy), Tualla offers a 5-day self-publishing intensive for members of www.savvyauthors.com who want to learn the ins and outs of self-publishing. She can be reached through her website: www.kristualla.com.

And lastly, our very own multi-published crime author Robert S. Levinson has nine novels published to date. Taking six months to find an agent and a year to land a publisher, Levinson takes the brunt of his promotion upon himself, even with publishers Forge and Star/Gale at his back. This author reports that it generally takes between twelve and sixteen months for his novels to become

available to the public and receives industry standard royalties of the cover price.

But how can self-publishing help already-published authors? Even though Levinson still writes and submits to his publishers, he has taken his backlist (those books no longer available) and self-published them electronically on Amazon's Kindle and other e-book outlets along with authors such as Carolyn Jewel, Kevin J. Anderson and L.L. Bartlett. Websites such as Smashwords and CreateSpace are helping traditionally published authors keep their titles available after the publisher has given back the rights to them. Once the author has those rights, it's fair game.

If you're still not sure self-publishing is right for you, consider one last route before uploading that file. Jessica Faust of BookEnds Literary Agency is just one of the thousands of literary agents who have opened their own e-publishing house. Beyond the Page Publishing is out to help both agented and unagented authors to publish electronically. They offer expert editing services, cover design, distribution through major e-book sellers, copyright application, pricing consultations, and marketing guidance. What the agent gets in return: 15% commission from your sales. All you have to do is submit your query to info@.... Beyond the Page is a traditional publisher. However, they are strictly electronic. Other companies such as Carina Press and Sapphire Blue Publishing follow the same line and since they are strictly electronic, the guidelines are a little more relaxed and you'll see sales a lot sooner than with a traditional publisher.

Whether you're a new author or a veteran, writers all over the world are working to stay in the game by self-publishing. Either you can take your career into your own hands or wait another year to see your book on the shelf. The choice is up to you.

Natascha is an active PRO member of Romance Writers of America in the Las Vegas Romance Writers chapter and the Kiss Of Death Mystery/Suspense chapter and a member of Mystery Writers of America. She can be contacted through her website www.thelasvegaswriter.blogspot.com.



Interview with Brenda Novak

By Juli Alexander

The following article appeared in the December 2011 edition of SMOKE SIGNALS, the monthly newsletter for the RWA Chapter, Smoky Mountain Romance Writers.

I was lucky enough to get the rights back and wanted to do something to utilize them. I was hearing great things about the indie path and decided to give it a shot. It did really well when it was released, but that was over a decade ago. And since I was orphaned at HarperCollins before it was even released, it didn't get much support. I really wanted more people to be able to read it.

Your latest release, **The Bastard**, has been getting great reviews. Tell us about the book.

Born a bastard to a wayward marquise, Lieutenant Crawford Treynor was given to a poor farmer to raise and was maltreated until he ran away to join the Royal Navy. Treynor is determined to prove he's as good as any other man and rise to captain his own frigate. But once he finds a runaway French beauty aboard **The Tempest** he must decide whether to return her to the man he knows would abuse her—or risk everything, even his life, to keep her safe.

I really enjoyed writing this book. I love a man in uniform, and the British navy provided such an interesting backdrop. Life in those times was so challenging.

Were there aspects of indie pubbing **Of Noble Birth** that surprised you?

Yes, in a positive way. I found it really fun to choose the cover and figure out various places online where I could get advertising. But it was even more fun to self-publish THE BASTARD, because it wasn't in finished form. OF NOBLE BIRTH had already come out (November 1999), so I had the back cover copy written, a beautiful cover to use as an example, the editing had been done, etc. It wasn't that hard to convert the file (once it was scanned) to e-format and put it up on Amazon.com. THE BASTARD required a great deal more work.

What did preparing *The Bastard* entail?

The manuscript for THE BASTARD was finished, but I hadn't read it in a number of years. I had to polish it up. Then I had to hire a content editor, a copy editor, a cover artist and proofreaders--on top of the people I hired to convert the file. I was on deadline for another one of my suspense novels, so I was juggling a lot at the time, but I was determined to get it out before Christmas. I would write suspense all day, then edit my historical into the night.

My cover artist's first attempt didn't resonate with me, but I LOVE what she came up with next (which is the cover I have now). In addition to doing all the things my publisher normally does for me, I had to think of ways to promote the book, and I had to come up with some good cover quotes. Fortunately, three bestselling, generous authors came to my aid--Madeline Hunter, Elizabeth Boyle and Anna Campbell. These women are fabulous writers. Definitely try their books if you haven't already. Anyway, they read the manuscript and even helped me fix a few historical inaccuracies, which was so gracious (and I was very grateful, given this isn't my typical genre).

Are you planning print editions of these or future releases?

I'm currently trying to get the print-on-demand up for THE BASTARD. Since OF NOBLE BIRTH was previously published in print, there are copies available on Amazon.com (and were already). I think I'm about a week away from the POD for BASTARD. I'm also hoping to get my third historical finished and listed by the end of March. It's called THROUGH THE SMOKE and has a slightly gothic feel to it.

Did you have trouble finding the resources you needed? Advice, cover artist, formatter, or editor?

I was very fortunate. I had no trouble at all finding these resources, partly because of my annual online auction for diabetes research, which has put me in touch with so many members of the writing community, and partly because I joined an online group who was amazingly generous with their help, suggestions and support. I definitely could not have accomplished publishing

THE BASTARD myself, not in such a short period of time, without these wonderful people. I laugh when I remember how clueless I was, but my writing associates were so kind and helpful. They held my hand and led me through it.

[Do you plan to release other books from your backlist?](#)

I probably won't be able to get any more of the rights back. All the rest of my books were written for Harlequin, which has a more stringent policy.

[Do you plan to Indie pub other "new" work?](#)

Yes, I definitely want to do more. I have my sights set on another historical (actually, I have two more historicals for which I've written about 100 pages). I just need more time in the day! LOL

[What are the three biggest lessons you have learned with *Of Noble Birth*and *The Bastard*?](#)

The first is the importance of a good cover. The next would be to protect your brand by making sure that the work is top quality. And the last is that it's still important to get the word out. It's a very crowded market and difficult to stand out whether you're talking print books or e-books.

[Do you have advice for new writers about how to stay on track and meet deadlines?](#)

I think it's important to set priorities for each day--and to do the most important thing first. For me, that is turning out pages. Keeping your life in balance, so that you feel as if you can write, is also important. Sometimes I'm trying to wring more pages out of my muse when I should be giving myself a break. LOL So my two best pieces of advice--schedule time to get up and move around and balance that out by putting the most important things first (best way to beat a tendency to procrastinate!).

[What's next for Brenda Novak?](#)

I have a new small town contemporary series starting in September--WHEN LIGHTNING STRIKES, WHEN SNOW FALLS, WHEN WINTER COMES--which will be published by Mira Books (Harlequin). I've had a blast writing these stories because the town (a fictional town called Whiskey Creek, CA in the heart of

Gold Country) has been so enjoyable to create and so have the group of friends on which these novels are founded. I'm also writing a suspense novel titled HELL BENT. I haven't had time to finish it or shop it, but I hope it finds a great home because I really like the idea behind it.

In January, I will also start gearing up for my annual online auction for diabetes research. For those who don't know, my son has this disease. Every year I offer over 2000 items, many of which can't be found anywhere else, and all the money goes to the Diabetes Research Institute. So far, we've raised \$1.3 million. We hope to add a great deal to that total when the auction opens in May. Definitely sign up (via my web site) so that you get the notices. Together we can make a difference!

[What is this FAN event I keep hearing about?](#)

The FAN (Feehan And Novak) event I do with #1 New York Times Bestselling Author Christine Feehan. This is the last weekend of February. It's a reader appreciation weekend on board a 1920's riverboat in Old Sacramento. This year, there will be a Venetian Ball, a murder mystery dinner, a couple of buffets (during one we play a fun bingo-type game), etc. It's a great time for all. This will be our third year. More information can be found at [*www.fanconvention.net*](http://www.fanconvention.net).



Resolutions for Writers

By Charlotte Carter

The following article was first printed in the January 2011 Orange Blossom, newsletter for Orange County Romance Writers.

Here we are looking 2012 right smack in the face. If you're like millions of other people, you're making resolutions about losing weight and exercising more. Chances are good that 90% of those resolutions will be broken or forgotten by the end of January.

If you are a writer, published or unpublished, you're hoping this New Year will bring Fame and Fortune. Or more realistically, you're hoping for a contract that will help to build your career.

I have some suggestions for your New Year's Resolutions:

- 1. Make writing a priority.** It's way too easy to get off track if you don't stick to your guns. Family and friends make demands on you. A good movie opens at the local theater, you promise yourself that you'll get back to your writing schedule tomorrow. Don't count on it!
- 2. Spend time with other writers.** No one understands a writer's fears, failures and successes like another writer. Not even your mother.
- 3. Don't let the business get you down.** Nora Roberts says, and I believe her, that it was hard to get published when she started writing. Getting published in the traditional way is still hard. Get used to it.
- 4. Develop a presence on the Internet.** Editors do check authors' blogs and websites. But remember Resolution #1 - don't spend all of your writing time fussing with your Internet exposure and forget about your goal of being published.
- 5. Improve your craft.** Attend workshops and conferences, take classes online, find a critique group that will encourage you and help you to grow. This is part of making your writing a priority.

6. **Keep yourself mentally and physically healthy.** Yep, you do have to exercise, spend time with friends and family, and find ways to fill your creative well.

7. **Read. A lot.** Both in and out of the genre you're writing. I guarantee that won't be a burden.

So happy writing in 2012. Here's to making all your dreams come true.

Charlotte Carter is a multi-published author of more than fifty romance, cozy mystery and inspirational titles. Her most recent release, Montana Family will be followed by Montana Love Letter, an October 2012 release, both from Love Inspired.



How to Turn Your Writing Resolutions Into a Realistic Plan

By Daphne Gray-Grant

The following article first appeared in Power Writing #306, January 3, 2012. Reprinted with permission.

Do you make new year's resolutions? The [13 most popular resolutions in the U.S.](#) don't mention writing but my bet is you've probably included writing on your list.

Good idea. But turn it into an ebulliently effective plan by asking yourself these five questions first:

Is my resolution measurable? Sure, it's easy to say things like "I want to become a better writer." But how vague is that? Instead, give yourself a goal that is concrete. Resolve to write 250 words a day. Or, promise to spend at least 15 minutes at your computer producing words and sentences. Or, better yet, vow to stop editing WHILE you write. When it comes to editing you can also give yourself some measurable goals that will add a fine patina to your work. For example, resolve to stop using all forms of the verb "to be." (This is a lot harder than it sounds.) Or promise to eschew words ending in -ize (e.g.: "monetize). Resolutions that are concrete and therefore measurable are much harder to blow off and far more likely to give you satisfying, even jaw-dropping results.

Am I starting small enough? A popular expression says "Go big or go home." I say you may as well head for home right now if you're stuck on starting big. Instead of setting yourself up for failure, plan for success. If you've been procrastinating for years don't resolve to spend an hour a day writing. That would be agony! Instead, begin with three minutes. Yes, three! Pick a goal so small that you can't do anything but succeed. And build from there. To learn more about this technique, read [my review of the book One Small Step Can Change Your Life: The Kaizen Way.](#)

How am I going to hold myself accountable? Have you ever noticed how many successful exercisers have running buddies or gym partners? Athletes understand that their motivation will vary from day to day so they create a system to protect themselves from the natural dips to which every human body is prey. Writers are no different. Find yourself a writing chum to whom you can report. Make sure he or she is tough enough to give you a hard time if you fail. If you can't find anyone then at least promise yourself to do something you dislike if you fail to achieve your goal. (I like the idea of making a \$100 donation to a political cause you abhor. That's truly motivating.)

Can I get someone else to make my resolution for me? Here's an idea I discovered in a story in my morning newspaper. Don't make your own resolutions -- ask someone who knows you well to do it for you. Ideally, that person would also be a writer. But, failing that, try your spouse, a sibling or a parent -- just make sure they're someone you get along with and who knows you well.

Do I need any extra training? If you're new to writing or if you've struggled with it for years without making any progress you may find it helps to take a course or read a book on writing. Check out your local night school courses or your favourite library or bookstore. If you're interested in my support, I have a great book [8½ Steps to Writing Faster, Better](#) (best of all, shipping is currently free everywhere in the world) and a popular email-based course [Extreme Writing Makeover](#). If you found value in this newsletter, please forward it to colleagues and friends who might be interested. They'll thank you and so will I! (You can use the handy blue "forward email" link near the end of this email.)

Don't let your resolutions amble aimlessly into the new year only to be hopelessly lost by mid-January. Instead, set them up and make 2012 the year of the writer.

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](#).

Editor's Message

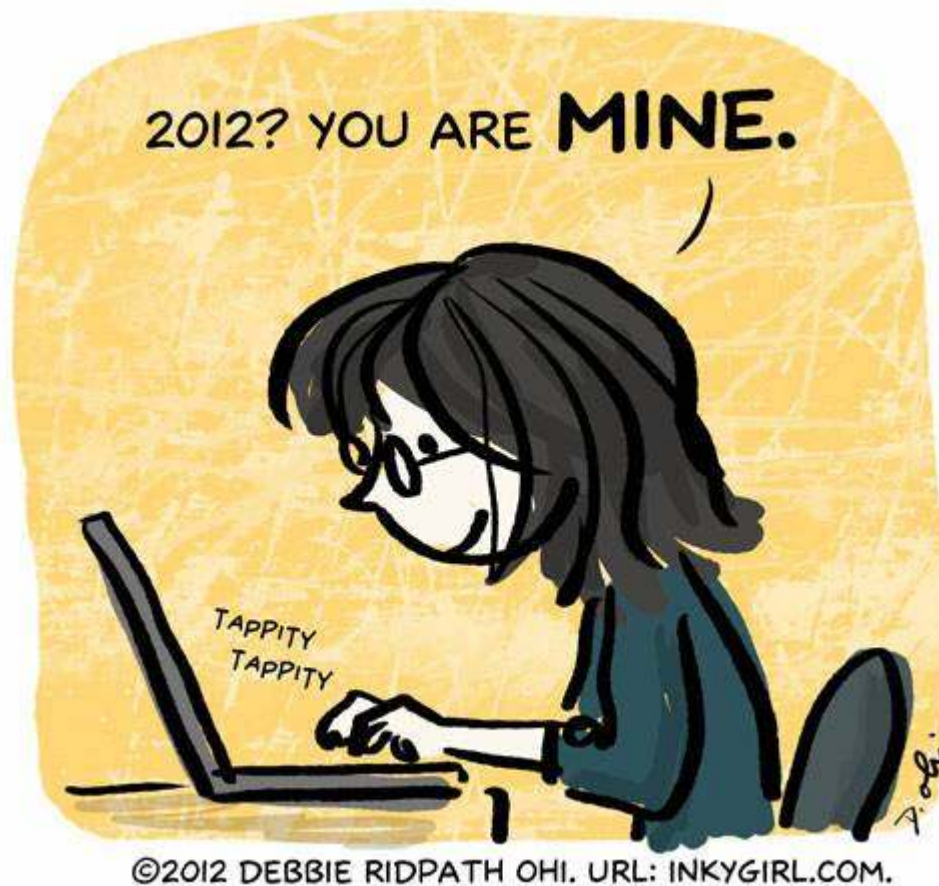
Write a Love Knot Article

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



Used with permission from Debbie Ridpath Ohi at Inkygirl.com.