



KEYNOTES



The newsletter of the Romance Writers of America New York City Chapter #6

DECEMBER 2015



ANNUAL HOLIDAY BRUNCH

Saturday, December 5

12:00 - 3:00pm

at Manhattan Proper, 6 Murray Street,
Downtown NY

Fee = \$35, includes meal, drink, tax and tip

BOOK SWAP!

*Please bring a gently used book or gift
for the Book Swap.*



Join us as we celebrate the old and welcome in the new,
including the **2016 Board of Directors:**

Kate McMurray-- President

Racheline Maltese and Mimi Pizarro-- Vice Presidents

Tamara Lynch-- Treasurer

Stacey Agdern-- Secretary

Come and learn who is **Member of the Year**

AND!

One lucky attendee will win the raffle -- a Free Membership (value \$40!)

MARK YOUR 2016 CALENDAR!



Jan 9 Feb 6 Mar 5
Apr 2 May 7 Jun 4
Jul 9 Aug 6 Sep 10
Oct 1 Nov 5 Dec 3



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2016 CHAPTER CALENDAR

Jan 9	Feb 6	Mar 5	Apr 2	May 7	Jun 4
Jul 9	Aug 6	Sep 10	Oct 1	Nov 5	Dec 3

KEYNOTES DEADLINE

Send articles to keynoteseditor@gmail.com by the 15th of the month. All articles must be typed and up to 500 words.

We welcome all subjects!

THANK YOU!
To all the
contributing writers
& proofreaders!

NEW MEMBER!

Joan Ramirez

RWA/N YC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Ursula Renée
Vice President/Events: Kate McMurray
Vice President/Contest: Vanessa Peters
Secretary: Shirley Kelly
Treasurer: Tamara Lynch
Past President: Maria Ferrer

LIAISONS & COMMITTEES

Board Liaison: Lisbeth Eng
PRO Liaisons: Maria Cox
PAN Liaison: Falguni Kothari
Blog/Social Media: Maria Ferrer
Craft Loop: Isabo Kelly
Critique Group: Mimi Logsdon
Keynotes Editor: Briana MacPerry
Publicity: Jeanine McAdam, Jean Joachim
Michael Molloy, Maria Cox
Website: Ursula Renée

ATTENTION: The Board welcomes all comments/suggestions/etc. Please send emails to info@rwanyc.com.

MEETING INFO: RWA/NYC meets the first Saturday of each month. Meetings are held at TRS, 40 Exchange Place, NYC. 12 noon. Membership is at the discretion of the Board. Annual dues are \$40. Make all checks payable to RWA/NYC. There will be a \$20 fee on returned checks.

RWA/NYC

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**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: A HOLIDAY WISH TO YOU
BY URSULA RENÉE**

As I prepare to step down as President of RWA/NYC, I would like to thank everyone for their support. Running an organization takes teamwork and time and time again, the members of the chapter stepped up to lend a hand. Though I wrote the following article last year, I want to rerun it for my wish to everyone is the same.

Harry Harrison's "May You Always" has become a holiday tradition for me. In the spirit of one of my favorite recordings, I would like to present my wish list to you.

- May you get that one hour each day you need to write your work-in-progress.
- May you sit in front of the computer and your writer's block disappear.
- May that plot twist that came to you before you went to sleep at night be with you when you wake up in the morning.
- May you find the inspiration to complete the work-in-progress you had been putting off for years.
- May you find a critique partner who offers you constructive criticism that helps strengthen your work.
- If you get a rejection, may you find someone who'll offer you a shoulder to cry on as well as give you the push you need to get back out there.
- May your dream editor love your manuscript and offer you a contract.
- May your edits go smoother than you expected.
- On that stressful day, when nothing seemed to go your way, may you get a five-star review.
- And, last but not least, may you experience good health and happiness during the holiday season and throughout the New Year.♥



Thanks to the support and encouragement of the members of RWA/NYC, Ursula's debut novel, SWEET JAZZ, was published in September 2014. Her second novel, A BOOKIES' ODDS, was released this November. As President of RWA/NYC, Ursula wants to offer the same encouragement and guidance to other RWA members. Visit her at www.ursularenee.com.

**CHAPTER MINUTES: NOVEMBER MEETING
BY SECRETARY SHIRLEY KELLY**

Board Members Present:

President Ursula Renée Shand
Vice Presidents Kate McMurray and
Vanessa Peters
Secretary Shirley Kelly
Past President Maria Ferrer

Board Member Not Present:

Treasurer Tamara Lynch

Committee Members Present:

Publicity - Jean Joachim, Michael Molloy

Members Present: 12

Agenda:

President Ursula Renée Shand greeted everyone at 12:12 p.m. Jean Joachim made a motion to accept the October General Meeting Minutes, Past President Maria Ferrer seconded the motion.

Ursula outlined the meeting: Our Author of the Month is Jean Joachim; our presentation will be “How to Research Agents and Editors” with Ursula and St. Martin’s Press Assistant Editor, Elizabeth Poteet; our workshop will be “The Power of Description” with LaQuette.

Secretary Shirley Kelly cast one vote for the Chapter in order to elect the 2016 Board, who are all running unopposed. Our 2016 Board: President Kate McMurray; Vice Presidents Racheline Maltese and Mimi Pizarro-Logsdon; Treasurer Tamara Lynch; Secretary Stacey Agdern.

Ursula asked everyone to read and vote to approve or disapprove of the new Bylaws. To approve them, we need a 2/3 majority.

Ursula invited everyone to our Holiday Brunch, which will be held on December 5th at the restaurant, Manhattan Proper. Payment can be made on the website. She asked members to bring wrapped journals or new or gently read books to give away. At the brunch, the Member of the Year will be announced; the winner of our contest will be announced; and the new Board will be introduced.

Vice President Vanessa Peters said we have approximately \$5,970 in the bank.

Shirley said we have 98 members.

Ursula said the Early Bird Renewal will be available until December 31st.

SAVE \$5.00!
EARLY BIRD SPECIAL
Renew your
Chapter Membership
by Dec 31 & save.

Kathryn Hayes “When Sparks Fly” contest: Vanessa thanked the first round judges. The final 3 entries have been sent to our final round judge, Esi Sogah. The winner will be announced at the Holiday Brunch.

Maria said there will be a November blog tour of tips for NaNoWriMo. There will be a Holiday blog tour December 20th -26th. The December Keynotes theme will be “New Beginnings”, which will include goals and plans for 2016. The deadline for articles will be November 15th.

Ursula said any messages regarding PRO and PAN will be posted on the loop.

Jean Joachim said she’d like to form a committee to search for venues in the city willing to hold readings/signings in 2016.

Ursula asked for suggestions for Chapter retreats/outings. She told members to contact her if they’d like to attend the documentary “Love Between the Covers”, which will be held on November 19th at 5 p.m. at the IFC at 323 6th Avenue. If 10 people attend, we can get a group discount. She told people to let her know if they need changes made to their links on the Chapter website.

The meeting adjourned at 12:41 p.m.♥

RWA/NYC AT THE MOVIES: LOVE BETWEEN THE COVERS



It was a dark and stormy night, but RWA/NYC members braved the cold rain to watch the NYC debut of the "Love Between the Covers" documentary of the romance industry. Afterwards, a group shot was called for. Back row: K.M. Jackson, Eloisa James, Stacey Agdern, Radcliffe, Zoraida Cepedes, President Ursula Renee, Jean Joachim (hidden), Shirley Kelly, Kate McMurray, Kate Dunn (hidden); Front row: Maria Ferrer and producer Laurie Kahn. Not pictured: Hope Tarr & Joan Ramirez.♥



EARLY BIRD SPECIAL!

**Renew your Chapter Membership
by December 31, 2015 and get \$5 off.**

Renew today at www.rwanyc.com.

Go to "Members Only" section. Password is membersonly.

There is a renewal membership form at the end of this newsletter. You can complete and bring to the Holiday Brunch for renewal.♥

INDUSTRY NEWS BY KATE MCMURRAY

Slow news month, but here are a few tidbits of information. If you hear any industry news you want to share with your chapter mates, please email kate@katemcmurray.com.

- The 2016 Authors After Dark convention in Savannah, GA, will be the last.
- Registration for the 2016 RT Booklovers Convention in Las Vegas in April is still open. There's a waitlist if you want to participate in the big signing, but author spots are still available.
- If you're planning to submit a story to an editor or agent in December, check their websites; many close to submissions for the holidays in December. ♥

PRO COMMUNITY BY MARIA COX

New to the PRO community! Please join me in welcoming the newest chapter members to join the PRO community:

Kate Dunn w/a Kate Wells

Congratulations on this big accomplishment!

About PRO: The purpose of the PRO Community of Practice is to establish within RWA a network of communication and support to effectively promote and protect the interests of romance writers in the areas between manuscript completion and PAN eligibility.

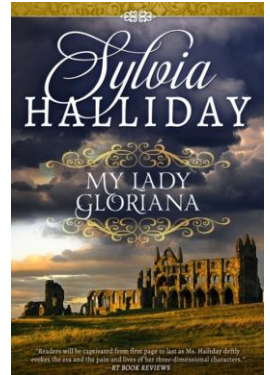
To help members reach the next level, PRO focuses on the business side of writing rather than craft. This program is available to any active General or Honorary member who: (1) is not PAN-eligible and (2) has one complete original work of romance fiction of at least 20,000 words, or multiple complete original works of romance fiction which combine for a total of at least 20,000 words.

Questions: If you're interested in becoming PRO and/or would like more information, you can e-mail me at maria@mywritingden.net.♥

MEMBER NEWS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THESE CONTEST WINNERS!

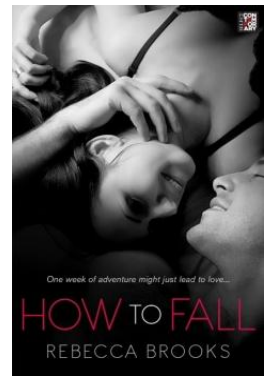
- **Jean Joachim** won first place in RWA Oklahoma contest.
- **LaQuette** won second place in the Maggie Awards, and 2nd runner up in the Best Romantic Suspense Category for the 2015 Swirl Awards.
- **Ursula Renée's SWEET JAZZ** came in 2nd runner up in the Best Historical Romance category for the 2015 Swirl Awards.



Stacey Agdern is excited about her Chanukah story included in the BURNING BRIGHT anthology released this month.

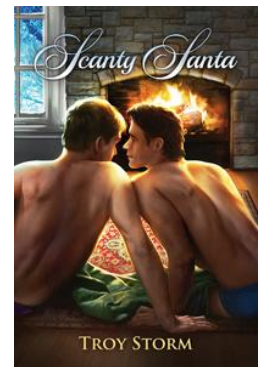
Sylvia Baumgarten, writing as Sylvia Halliday, is pleased with the response for MY LADY GLORIANA (Diversion Books). She is already writing the sequel.

Rebecca Brooks had a new release out on November 16. HOW TO FALL, published by Entangled, has been well received by readers and critics alike. She also has a story in the TASTE ME, TEMPT ME anthology.



Elizabeth Cole has several releases starting with short stories in two anthologies -- A TASTE OF SCANDAL and TASTE ME, TEMPT ME --, plus a novel release, LADY IN SAPPHIRE. All released by SkySpark Books.

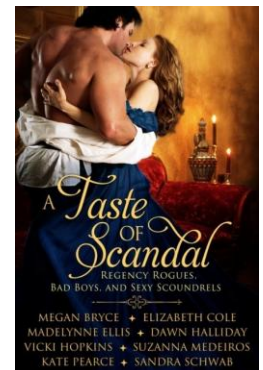
Fiona Kirk, writing as Fiona Davis, sold her new book, THE DOLLHOUSE, to Stephanie Kelly at Dutton in an exciting book auction reported Publisher's Lunch. THE DOLLHOUSE is a mystery set in the NYC Barbizon Hotel for Women. Fiona was represented by Stefanie Lieberman at Janklow & Nesbit (World).



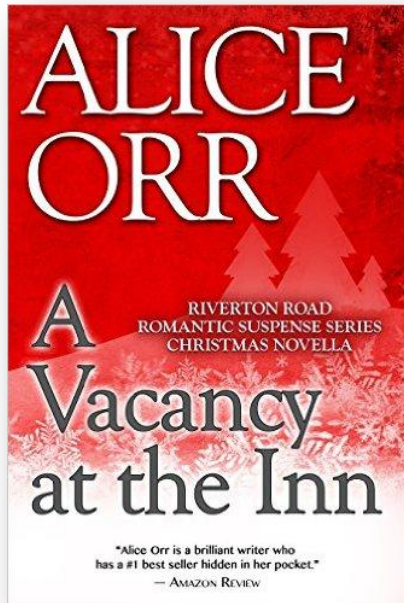
John Lovelady, writing as Troy Storm, has several release in November and December. TROY'S JOCK BOYS: ROUND ONE (Excessica Books); MERRY MANHATTAN MENAGES (Kindle Direct Publishing), and SCANTY SANTA (Dreamspinner Press).

Kate McMurray's holiday story will be released on December 23. Watch for DEVIN DECEMBER.

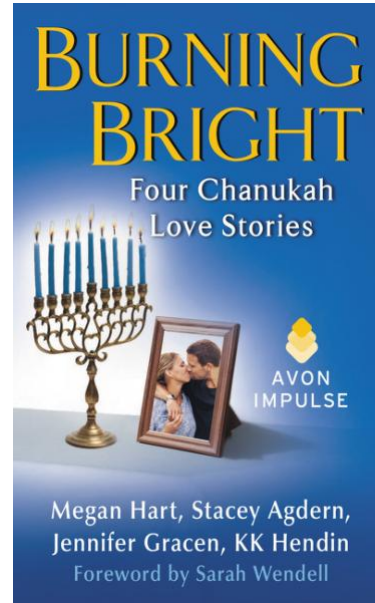
Alice Orr is happy to announce the release of her first Christmas novella, A VACANCY AT THE INN, and the third book in her Riverton Road Romantic Suspense Series.♥



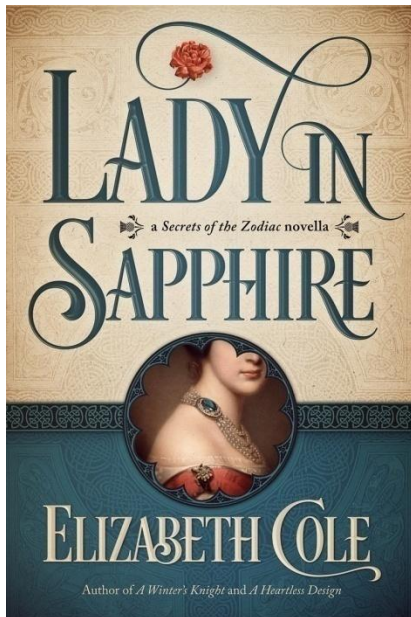
MEMBERS ON THE SHELF



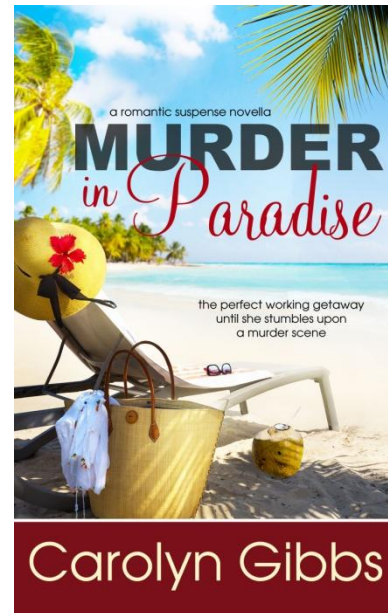
A VACANCY AT THE INN
by Alice Orr
www.aliceorrbooks.com



BURNING BRIGHT
story by Stacey Agdern
Avon Impulse

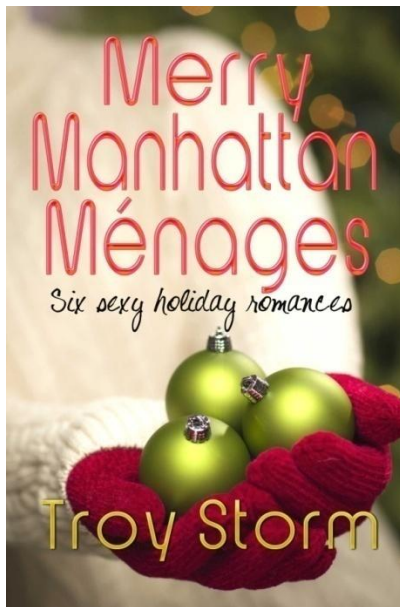


LADY IN SAPPHIRE
by Elizabeth Cole
www.elizabethcole.co

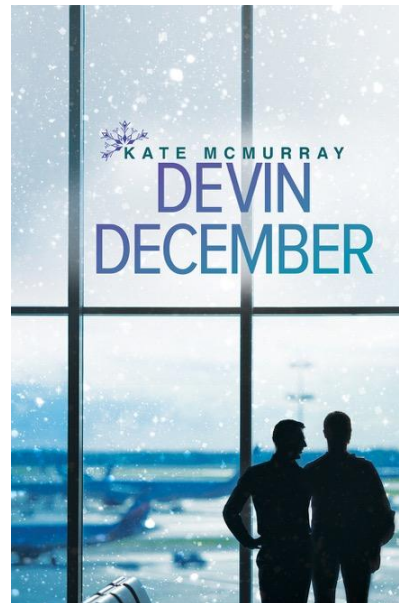


MURDER IN PARADISE
by Carolyn Gibbs
www.carolyngibbsbooks.com

MEMBERS ON THE SHELF....CONTINUED



MERRY MANHATTAN MENAGES
by Troy Storm



DEVIN DECEMBER
by Kate McMurray
www.katemcmurray.com



TASTE ME, TEMPT ME
story by Rebecca Brooks
story by Elizabeth Cole

SOCIAL NETWORKING FOR AUTHORS: YEAR-END ROUND UP!
BY MARIA FERRER

Here are my Top 7 Tips on social networking:



1. Get your name out there. Setup a website and/or a blog.
2. Join a couple of the social networks, like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram,, Trumblr, etc.
3. Be consistent in your posts and on your presence. If you say you are going to blog every Monday, then do so. Note that your posts can be a "retweet" or a response to another's post, or a comment on the latest TV episode of "Castle."
4. Friend and Follow writers, editors, agents, chapter members, celebrities, scholars, etc. Museums and associations are good too.
5. Don't just talk about your book. Talk about your pets, graffiti art, the Mets, favorite books, yummy recipes, et al. You want to be someone that readers want to engage with.
6. Manage your time wisely. Schedules and to-do lists are great.
7. Most important, remember to turn off the internet and Write!

Happy Writing! Happy Holidays! ♥

THE END

It's official now. RWA National is checking that all members are *seriously* pursuing a writing career. A couple of ways to prove that you are writing steadily is by becoming a PRO Member and by participating in National's THE END Challenge, where members pledge to write 2000 a words a month so that by the end of the year you have a chunk of a novel.

If you are participating in RWA National's THE END challenge, please let President Ursula Renée know. Email her at info@rwanyc.com.♥



NANOWRIMO: LESSONS LEARNED



Congratulations to all chapter members who participated in the NaNoWriMo Challenge of writing 50,000 words in 30 days. Every word you wrote counts, and so we celebrate your serious pursuit of a writing career. Below are some tips and comments from some of the members who participated in this year's challenge.

FROM KATE McMURRAY:

It's not possible to fail at NaNoWriMo. If you wrote anything this month, if you put any thought into your story, if you made some kind of forward progress, you're winning. And, seriously, if you all are putting time into your pursuit of a career in romance publishing, you deserve a thumbs up!

FROM ELIZABETH COLE:

Turn off the internet!!! It will be there when you're done. Trust me on this.

FROM MARISA D'VARI:

I take my laptop everywhere and if not practical my blackberry. so in cabs and waiting areas whip them out and just start a scene. I trained myself not to necessarily adhere to plot but just write scenes. I always learn more about characters.

FROM JOAN RAMIREZ:

I think the best way to build self-care into a hectic schedule is to write down a list of priorities and tackle them one by one, repeating constantly, what REALLY is the deadline priority? I also think it's a great idea to talk to yourself. While new to RWA, I'm not new to publishing. Having published three nonfiction books and many online mystery articles in tandem with working as a freelance teacher/tutor, I know the demands that life can place on us and, worse, the demands that we place on ourselves. We can either be our own best friend or our worst critic. My New Year's resolutions are to spend more time with my supportive husband and have a good first Romance manuscript to send out for review.

FROM MARIA FERRER:

NaNoWriMo is a fun and exasperating way to write. You've got 30 days to write 50,000, which is about 1666 words a day, which translates into 6-7 pages. Seems easy on November 1; seems major on November 29. The main thing is to write; to run full out for that 50k finish line. You'll never reach that goal if you don't do the work. So butt in chair; just do it; start anywhere and write, write, write.♥



BRINGING YOUR WORDS TO LIFE**BY LAQUETTE**



The cliché, “Show don’t tell,” has probably been around since the very first person put pen to paper. It’s something we’ve all heard, but what does it really mean? As authors, aren’t we in the business of telling stories? Isn’t that what fiction writing is all about? No, strangely enough, it isn’t.

Yes, as authors we are storytelling. However, in order to effectively impart our stories to our readers we have to learn to lean as much on description as we do on narration to express meaning and provide details.

According to Dictionary.com, the act of description means, “To represent or delineate by picture or figure.” In other words, use an image to illustrate the meaning of words. When we add description to our writing, it’s as if we’re giving the reader permission to fully engage with our writing. They’re not just reading they’re interacting with the text, connecting with the text. Interacting with the text keeps the reader invested. It’s a way of making them work for the story. If they want to know what’s going on they must make connections, visualize, ask questions, infer meaning, determine importance, and synthesize all of the crumbs you’ve sprinkled throughout the text to finally get to that big satisfying finish at the end. But here’s the kicker, if you simply tell them everything, they will never commit to doing that kind of work.

How do you show them your story, instead of telling them your story? You engage the senses. Yes, those very same five senses you learned about in primary school will help your readers engage, interact, and invest in your work. Use sensory words that appeal to the senses to explain things, literally write a picture or scene through sensory experience. How do you do that? Ask these questions: What does it smell, taste, feel, sound, and look like? We experience the world through our senses. This is how we as human beings process what is going on around us.

Unfortunately, many writers fall into what I call, *Lazy Writer Syndrome*. LWS occurs when a writer assumes the reader will automatically know what they mean. For example, “She was the most *beautiful* woman he’d ever seen.”

Using the word *beautiful* to describe a person’s features is meaningless. When an author writes like this, they’re assuming every person on the planet understands beautiful to mean the same exact thing. People are different. We come from different work, educational, geographical, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and cultures. Value is often informed by these things individually and collectively. This makes it impossible for any given set of people to view the same thing the same way every time.

Instead of assuming your reader knows exactly what you’re talking about; pretend your reader is from an alien planet and has no idea about any of the Earth constructs you take for granted in

your daily language. For instance, if your new alien friend asks you what an apple is, explain it as it pertains to the senses in details that will provide concrete images or experiences (It is a round fruit that grows on trees. It can range in color from a soft yellow to green, to a deep crimson red. It makes a crunching sound when you bite it. It can be sweet or sour, and juicy too).

If you want your readers to *feel* (experience) your writing, you have to make it real by using concrete constructs they can process through their senses. Otherwise, it's just words on a page.

As a takeaway, what does beautiful look like to you? Here's an example of what it looks like to me: She was five-six of deep curves that made a man's fingers itch to touch them. Her tawny brown skin glowed with just a hint of cinnamon when she stood in the sunlight. Her hair, short, in precise layers that kept the sable-colored locks closely cropped to her head in an artful design. She looked up to catch him assessing her; deep mocha eyes sparkled with intelligence and sass that said, I'm watching you watching me. Her full lips lightly covered with a deep rose gloss curved into a seductive bow as she whispered, "See something you like?"

His mouth pulled into a wide grin as his eyes finally met hers. He didn't bother apologizing for staring, he couldn't help it. Beauty like hers was made to be appreciated.♥

*2015 Georgia Romance Writers Maggie Award Finalist in Erotic Romance, 2015 Swirl Awards Finalist in Romantic Suspense, bestselling erotic romance author, **LaQuette**, is a native of Brooklyn, New York. She spends her time catering to her three distinct personalities: Wife, Mother, and Educator. Writing--her escape from everyday madness--has always been a friend and comforter. She loves writing and devouring romance novels. Although she possesses a graduate degree in English Lit, she'd forego Shakespeare any day to read something hot, lusty, and romantic. She loves hearing from readers and discussing the crazy characters that are running around in her head causing so much trouble. Contact her on Facebook, Twitter, @LaQuetteLikes, her website, www.NovelsbyLaQuette.com, Amazon, her Facebook group, LaQuette's Lounge, and via email at NovelsbyLaQuette@gmail.com.*

FREE PROMOTION!



Keynotes is a FREE Promotion Opportunity.

Have a new book out? Entered/won a contest? Interesting topic, research, tips to share? An event, book, conference you'd like to review? Send in your articles, news, book covers, reviews, etc., to keynoteseditor@gmail.com. Articles will also be published on the Chapter Blog for DOUBLE the promotion!

Deadline: the 15th of every month. Take advantage of us!♥

HELLO AND WELCOME TO MY WRITING DEN!©**BY MARIA COX**

WHY ROMANCE?

Do you ever wonder why you became a writer? I do. I've asked myself this question many times, why, and why did I choose romance of all genres?

For answers I looked to my childhood. I was just eleven years old when I read my first romance novel. I secretly borrowed my grandmother's Barbara Cartland novel collection.

My grandmother was quite the romantic. She wrote passionate love letters to my grandfather when he traveled on business. I learned of her talent for writing long after she was gone. I sometimes wish I'd had the opportunity to talk with her about her love of reading and writing romance. We might have had a lot in common.



After reading all those romance stories I fell in love with words. There was something magical about how the love stories unfolded. I was enthralled.

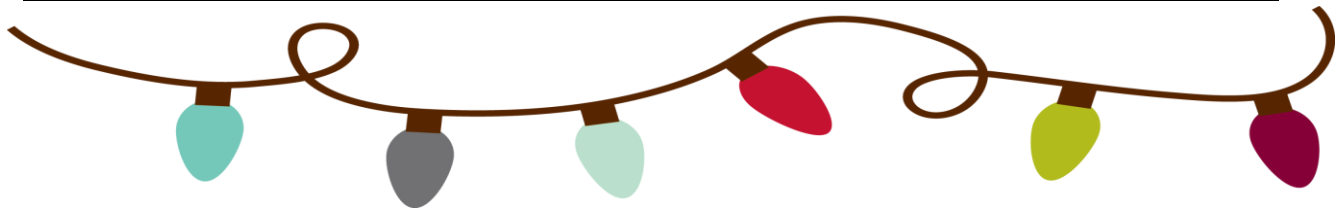
The appeal of romance is universal. Why? Fiction, romance in particular, provides readers escapism. This is much more than a diversion from the hum drum of everyday life. Romances provide a 'happily ever after' (HEA), fulfilling our need for hope. It touches the core of our being. Our world is overwhelmed with stress and despair. Bringing enjoyment, maybe a smile, to even a handful of people makes my writing efforts worthwhile.

I want to share a brief conversation I had shortly after I published my first book. A relative quietly pulled me aside and asked why I chose to write *romance*. Caught off guard, I asked, "Why not romance? It sells!" That was an overly simplistic response, of course, but her question got me thinking.

Why did I choose to write romance? I didn't. Romance chose me!♥



Maria Cox is a PRO member of Romance Writers of America, she is also the past President of the Phoenix Writers Club. Maria has been writing stories since she was a young girl. She picked up her first romance novel when she was just eleven years old and has loved the genre ever since. Maria writes sensual romance, stories that showcase strong, sassy, and sexy characters. When not writing fiction, Maria works as a technical writer. She lives in Queens, New York. Please visit her NEW site www.mariacox.net and/or follow her on Twitter.

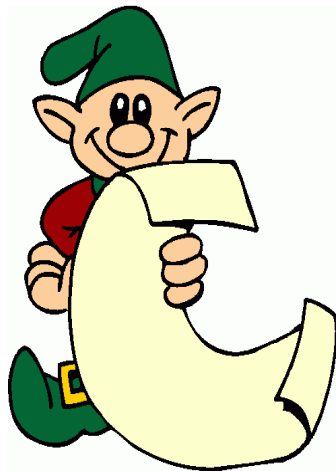


Our theme this month is

New Beginnings and Planning Ahead

Here's what our members have to say.

MAKING TO-DO LISTS THAT ACTUALLY WORK BY REBECCA BROOKS



Nothing says “planning ahead” like a to-do list. But there are ways to make lists work more effectively for you. I’ve written lists that are longer than a CVS receipt with all the coupons at the end. I’ve written lists that I stop looking at because there’s just too much on there. I’ve written lists with items that never, ever get crossed off.

The successful to-do list is a psychological weapon. It fights stress and boosts motivation. It’s your own personal juggling machine, allowing you to keep multiple projects aloft. The ideal list, to me, is focused and manageable. It shows me what I can accomplish, instead of overwhelming me with all I haven’t done.

On the days I’m feeling particularly busy or stressed (so...every day?) I get up and make a to-do list for that day. I have my deadlines on my calendar and my overarching projects in mind. But my to-do list is different. It tells me the specific action items I’m going to accomplish by the end of the day.

You can keep a daily to-do list, or weekly, or make a spreadsheet organized by urgency so you can see what needs to get done now and what will need to get done in the future. I like the daily list because more than that gets overwhelming for me, but the key is to find what works for you.

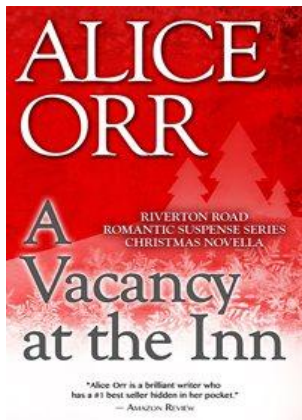
On most days my number one task is “write a book.” But I can’t put “write book” on my to-do list because it’ll take me months, if not years, to ever cross that off. Seeing the reminder that I still haven’t finished that book isn’t exactly encouraging.

The other reason “write a book” isn’t a useful way to think about what I have to accomplish is that I don’t actually have to write a book, today or any other day. I have to write 1,000 words. Or reread a scene. Or write a new character sketch for a secondary character I want to make more dynamic. Or solve one specific problem in one specific part of my WIP.

Those are the kinds of tasks I put in my to-do list. I try to think about what specific, actionable item needs to get done. This way, I break down a huge task, like writing a book, into something I can realistically accomplish day by day. Little by little, task my task, my to-do lists help me accomplish the larger goals: finishing a book, marketing a new release. Building my writing career.♥

Rebecca Brooks lives in New York City in an apartment filled with books. She received a PhD in English but decided it was more fun to write books than write about them. She has backpacked alone through India and Brazil, traveled by cargo boat down the Amazon River, climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro, explored ice caves in Peru, trekked to the source of the Ganges, and sunbathed in Burma, but she always likes coming home to a cold beer and her hot husband in the Bronx. Her books are about outdoorsy guys with both muscle and heart and independent women ready to try something new. Learn more at rebeccabrooksromance.com.

MY FIRST FICTION IN 16 YEARS BY ALICE ORR



Before my first novel in the Riverton Road Romantic Suspense Series – A WRONG WAY HOME – came out I had published eleven novels and three novellas. But that was in the past. In fact the last of those fiction books appeared sixteen years before.

That hiatus period had special significance for me. Sixteen years before that new novel my first grandchild was born. One look at her and I fell in love. So deeply in love I could no longer write fiction. For me creating stories came from that same deep place and now that place was otherwise occupied.

I'd been a publishing author and a busy literary agent for a long time by then. I'd enjoyed both of those roles immensely. But this new incarnation was a whole different level of pleasure altogether. There was only one thing I could do. I gave up my publishing world professions and became a professional grandma. I've never regretted that choice for a moment.

I spent most of those sixteen years immersed in my family. They became the thing I cared about most and knew best. Then – after that deeply immersed and wonderful time – I was ready for another new beginning. I was ready to write fiction again. It's not surprising that my new novels were all about family.

All about two families actually – the Kalli family and now the Miller family too. At the heart of everything they do – and a lot of what they're conflicted about – are their family commitments and their family relationships. It was the same with my own family.

We didn't have murders to contend with like the Kalli boys and the Miller girls do. But we did have tempestuous times. Especially between me and the love of my own life. I like to call him Sweet Jonathan – except when I might be entertaining some murderous fantasies myself.

We are very much in love all the same just like the couples I write about on Riverton Road. So you might say I didn't really leave my storytelling life behind during those sixteen years. I was doing research.

And that's my point here. We may have times when our career lives change or become distracted or even go to ground for a while. But after that – no matter how long it may be – we step back into our writing selves and make a new start. Except it's not really new after all. We've simply been collecting material for what just may be the best work we've ever done.♥

A VACANCY AT THE INN is the first Christmas Novella of Alice Orr's Riverton Road Romantic Suspense Series featuring the Kalli family – and now the Miller family too – in stories of Romance and Danger. Visit Alice at www.aliceorrbooks.com.

WHEN THE WORSE HAPPENS BY MAGEELA TROCHE



This September, my publisher Secret Cravings Publishing closed its doors. I was two weeks from my deadline for my seventh novel. Oddly enough, I did not fall apart. Stuff like this happens in life. People get fired from jobs, businesses close, authors lose contracts and so on and so on. There was one lesson I learned, though. It comes from a field that has nothing to do with publishing—finances. What is it? Just one word--Diversify!

This financial advice that we have heard countless times applies to authors. Accountants tell us to diversify if we want to have a nest egg for retirement. In publishing, diversifying is important if you want to have a career and build a strong, lifelong platform.

In this current age, authors are more than just authors. We do not sit in the serene locale writing our stories then hand it off to our editors and leave them to do all the work. We are creative entrepreneurs. Authors do it all--we create the product, develop a brand, sell the book, market and promote it. First and foremost, we must have a product and that is our novels. So how do you diversify? Nowadays there are three channels of distribution—self-publishing, indie publishing, and traditional publishing. I recommend doing all three.

But why? And how?

Let's tackle the first question—why? The first reason is for the same event that happened to me. Publishers close. If you have a product with all three channels then when something like a publisher shutting down, you have other ways of getting your product out there and making money. Traditional publishers' contracts may not be as great as some indie publishers or match what could be made by self-publishing but you get access to the business side of publishing such as editing services and public relations. I do not doubt that we all want to walk into a bookstore and see our book on the shelf and traditional publishers is the way to go. This outlet also can help with your indie and self-published books. And it doesn't put all the pressure on you as the seller

of your book. Self-publishing it hard. Sure we have all heard the stories about the author who made millions—FIFTY SHADES OF GREY, ring a bell—but there are hundreds of thousands that don't do anything. Through, self-publishing, you do have more control and indie publishing you may develop a better bond with your publisher but customers may not know about you.

I can go on with all the pros and cons of all three options but each one can help develop you as an author and a brand. The most important action you can take is to put your product out there.

In my case, luckily, I have a backlist to sell. That backlist also helps me when I am pitching to traditional publishers as well as indie publishers. It shows that I can produce work that sells and have a platform. Another reason for doing all three is because romance readers are voracious readers. When we finish a book, we can't wait for the next one. I know when I love a book, I go searching for their backlist and purchased them. Readers will do it too. For example, let's say I have historical number one of a series with a traditional publisher. Reader A purchases it and loves it. She wants the next one, but it's not out for another three months. Reader A can go onto Amazon or Barnes and Nobles or Smashwords and find my backlist and purchase those books. Now I have income for two sources and best of all, my backlist is making money for me instead of gathering dust.

So, what if you don't have a backlist or a contract with any publisher. What do you do? There is only one course of action—Write! Finish that novel. Look into self-publishing, write novellas (they sell really well) and learn the business. Also, build your platform and make connections. What if you don't have a book out? Write a novella, a short story, and invest in yourself. That means you must get it edited, polished and with a cover. You can offer it for free to build an email list, post it on Wattpad and build your platform or self-publish. It just might give you the push to finish the novel.

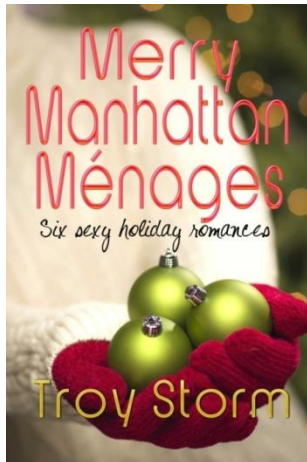
Another reason to diversify is because the three streams of revenue. Let's be honest, we want to make money writing. If we have three outlets then you have three streams of revenue and if a publisher closes or a contract is lost then you are still making money. You will also be producing work and still will feel accomplished, instead of defeated. I know some authors who only self-publish and that is your personal choice but I do not think you should limit yourself. You want your work out there where the readers are and that means giving it to them in every way you can. At RWA Nationals this year, I met many authors who are doing all three. So I plan to learn from them and do the same.

Remember this is a business and like RuPaul says, "You better work." Today's publishing world has many venues that were not available twenty years ago so take advantage of them. You could make enough money to quit your day job. ♥

Mageela Troche is the author of multiple historical novels and writes in the cramped corner of her Big Apple apartment with her black-masked lovebird Boobubla. Her website is www.MageelaTroche.com.



A NECESSARY EVIL
BY JOHN LOVELADY W/A TROY STORM



It hasn't been the easiest month of my writing life, I'll give it that. And it hasn't been all that enlightening, either. But it's been an interesting one as far as learning about some facets of the publishing world that I knew little about and cared even less to know about.

I was one of those RWA/NYC authors whose publisher went belly up a few weeks back and which publisher had just accepted a new novel that was to be part of an eight book series and a proposed holiday book of short stories.

The most immediate question was if the series was going to go forward. It was agreed we would self-publish—whatever that might mean to many of us. The author who had proposed the series and rounded up the writers took charge and a cover artist and editor was found. Worked out pretty good—it's always nice to have a guiding force—and my contribution: HEARTS OF BRADEN-Book Six-NO LOVE LOST by Troy Storm will release mid-December.

Writing a small-town series encompassing many romantic genres and coordinating with other authors on settings and characters was an experience I'm not sure I'll repeat, but it certainly brought a new set of influences into creating a story.

Then it was time to deal with my homeless books and holiday manuscript.

Excessica books, founded by Selena Kitt, which is a pretty raunchy ebook publishing co-op, accepted my proposal for the ménage short stories. On its spread-sheet of release dates, I found enough open spaces to get what became a three book erotic sports short stories M/M series out before the end of the year, assuming I could weather providing cover, editing and formatting in time. The Christmas book was forlornly abandoned like the Little Match Girl.

I could have hired editors and cover designers, but I felt it was time I learn as much about the process of self-publishing as I could. And I really like the royalty percentages when you publish your own work.

Talk about a learning curve. To make a long and painful story less so, I ended up using a website called DIYBookCovers which helped me create rudimentary, but very serviceable covers. Then I found a free book on Amazon—Building Your Book for Kindle for Mac—that was an excellent guide through the process of preparing and uploading a manuscript and cover for Kindle Direct Publishing where my CoveHaven series landed. I was up and running again.

The process of getting out the Excessica series—TROY'S BOYS-First Down, TROY'S BOYS-Second Inning and TROY'S BOYS-Third to Go—went smoothly enough to give me hopes of getting my Christmas book—MERRY MANHATTAN MÉNAGES—out in time for this holiday season. That meant publishing on Kindle which can be done almost instantly. Next would come publishing on other websites, a process that can be accomplished by using either sites such as

Smashwords or Draft2Digital which, for about 10% of your net will format and upload to most of the other ebook outlets. Draft2digital, because of its support system, seems to be preferred, though there are other choices, such as CreateSpace.

And that's pretty much it. Heartache and pain and having nothing to do with creating the path for true love, or at least hot sex, of whatever gender, to find its way—but part of the evolving self-publishing ethos if one chooses to go that way. And in this present-day world of romance writing, that likelihood appears to be a necessary evil.♥

***TROY STORM** has had over two hundred straight, bi and gay erotic short stories published under various pen names, mostly in magazines that no longer exist. His stories also appear in numerous anthologies, which do, such as, currently, Shane Allison's BRIEF ENCOUNTERS from Cleis Press.*

HANDLING THE INEVITABLE WRITING DISAPPOINTMENTS

BY MYRA JOHNSON

- Do not, under any circumstances, make any life-altering decisions (such as throwing out your computer or burning all your manuscripts) until at least two weeks have passed. If you still don't have any perspective, wait another two weeks. Or a month. Or a year.
- Stay away from sharp objects. (Ask my kids about this one if you dare!)
- Don't post a YouTube video of you dissing the editor/agent/judge/reviewer.
- Don't send a hate e-mail or text message. Even anonymously. Tech experts have ways of finding out who you are. Just watch *CSI* or *NCIS* if you don't believe me.
- If you must blog about your disappointment, thoroughly disguise the details and certainly don't name names! The Internet has a long, l-o-o-o-n-g memory. Better yet, avoid any kind of Internet-related commentary. Eat chocolate until the urge passes.
- Don't badmouth editors, agents, or fellow writers to your writers group. You will be the one who ends up looking like Miss (or Mr.) Whiny-Pants.
- Vent only to someone you are absolutely 310% positive would never, ever reveal a confidence, even if tortured with chocolate deprivation or offered a three-book contract if only she will reveal your secrets. And then think twice about it.
- Mailing anthrax will get you 20 years to life. Mailing chocolate makes friends. Unless it melts.
- Don't try to change your detractor's mind with pleading, wheedling, begging, or threats. See chocolate advice above.
 - If you run into this person at a writers conference, be polite, friendly, and professional. Your reputation is on the line at this point, not theirs. You never know who may be watching. Like maybe the agent who was seconds away from signing you.
 - Send a gracious thank-you note, no matter how badly you're hurting. As the Bible says, "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you" (Prov. 25:21-22). If not with a six-figure contract offer, at least with enough \$\$ to buy yourself a grande mocha latte.♥



6 MYTHS ABOUT GRIEF & FINDING YOUR ESSENTIAL ARTIST

BY BRIANA MACPERRY



"New Beginnings and Planning Ahead" is the theme for the December Keynotes Newsletter, for the New York Chapter of the Romance Writers of America (RWA/NYC). Being the publication's acquisitions editor, it was supposed to be my idea. But this month, I drew a blank. Maybe because when we talk about 'new beginnings' we are talking about the passing of something old, and that has the "whiff of death" doesn't it?

I am surrounded by the scent of death lately. Certainly, its out in the world, wreaking terror and havoc upon innocent people, but it's my personal relationships that have me staring at a blinking cursor on a blank screen. In the past year, I have experienced several losses.

Some of them involved corporeal death, others a death of the heart, some financial, still others, the death of simple possibility. As I look to the future, I see the potential death of yet another loved one, and I am left with a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness.

At the RWA National Conference this year, I attended a workshop in which the presenter posed the question, "Why write romance? What is it about love that we can't get enough of? It certainly isn't for the respect of the literary community."

A woman in the audience raised her hand and said, "Love heals."

Immediately, I thought, "Why isn't that a bumper sticker?" Then my thoughts circled around the experience of grief--of love lost. Of reaching out for someone you need, and finding they are no longer there. Or, of reaching out for someone you need, and finding they still aren't there, and never were. And this void is not always felt in the physical sense, sometimes it is the absence of spirit we miss most; loneliest of all when the person is a living reminder of once was.

As a society, we do not know how to talk about or handle our grief. And this affects all aspects of life, even the most trivial. But especially our "plans" for "new beginnings."

What exactly do I mean?

Let's assume, for a moment, that you had a childhood pet. A dog. And this dog went everywhere with you. Protected you from monsters under the bed. Fetched your shoes (and maybe gnawed them a little too). This dog always knew when you were upset. And at those times, he would wordlessly plop his furry warmth in your lap, giving you exactly the quiet comfort you needed. This dog was your best friend.

Then, one day, he died. Hit by a car.

You couldn't stop crying. The grief felt like a boulder in your stomach. You lost your appetite. You didn't want to leave your room. You curled up with his chew toys and would squeak them to your parent's distraction. They have been trying to "give you some space" for the past week, but

five days is plenty long enough to mourn the loss of your furry friend. Finally, your father couldn't take it anymore.

"Don't feel bad, buddy, huh? Pull yourself together. Gotta keep a stiff upper lip for your mother and your sister. It'll take time, but if you wallow in here, you'll never get over it. Go play with friends. Keep yourself busy. Hey, I tell you what. Let's go to the pet store tomorrow, and I'll buy you a new dog."

This illustrates six useless articles of what is often considered to be sage advice, when it comes to grief and loss:

1. Don't feel bad.
2. Replace the loss.
3. Grieve alone.
4. Just give it time.
5. Be strong for others.
6. Keep busy.

"What do you mean 'useless'?" You ask. "That is perfectly sound advice."

Uh huh. Okay. Fine.

So, on Saturday, your father took you to the pet shop, and you got a new dog. He was alright, you supposed. But you didn't love the new dog like you did your old one. It just wasn't the same. Your parents seemed really enthusiastic about the new dog, though. They even suggested you let the dog sleep in your bed, which they never allowed your old dog to do. You could tell they really wanted you to feel better. So, for their sake, you put on a smile, figured they must be right, and decided to "fake it 'til you made it."

Over time, the immediacy of your memories with your dead dog began to fade into the background. The pain wasn't quite so acute. You keep waiting for that "loving feeling" to take root for you new pet...but it doesn't. The new dog was cute enough, though. Everyone else seemed to love him. And it would be abnormal to cry over a dead pet longer than you already had.

A few months pass. Your feelings don't really change, just kind of...settle. You start to think this must all be a part of growing up. Maybe you only feel that intensely when you are an immature child. Kid stuff.

A year passes. You've started sleep walking into the street. Your parents find you one night, around the spot where your old dog was hit by a car. They take you to the doctor, who puts you on sleep medication and recommends therapy.

"It can't still be about the old dog," they tell the shrink, "He's been acting perfectly normal for over a year, and he loves his new pet. They even sleep together!"



Each session with the doc consists of talking about your relationship with your parents and playing checkers. But the sleepwalking seems to have stopped.

Whew. Problem solved.

If only it didn't bother you so much the way the psychiatrist stacks his books out of alphabetical order, and always had an unequal number of notepads on either side of his desk. And that stupid blue pencil. That *one* blue pencil that is *never* completely sharpened. Shouldn't an "expert" like him keep those things organized?



Time passes. You meet a girl. She makes you think about things you never thought about before. Like how big the world is. Like how small your town is. She makes you think you can do things. She makes you believe in yourself. You tell her everything. Everything you were ever ashamed of. And she kisses you and says you don't have to feel that way anymore. And the shame melts away. You stop caring so much about straightening every eschewed corner. You want to do things for her. You want to make her happy. Because when she smiles, it's a sign God exists.

Then she goes away to college. Cries over the phone that she misses you. It's so hard being so far away. Maybe she should take some time alone, to adjust. To keep busy. To find other friends to talk to. That's what her mother says.

You start to feel scared, but you know that's ridiculous! She'd never leave you... Eventually, you get the call: she's dating someone new.

You haven't felt this low since your first dog died. It's worse, in fact. More like two boulders in your gut.

"Plenty of fish in the sea." Your father says. "You're young, it was only puppy love anyway. You're better off. You'll see. When you're my age, you'll laugh about it. Now, go take a jog and shake it off. I need you to help me run the store tomorrow. Work will do you good."

And so, you do. And, eventually, you meet someone new, too. Only this time, you don't fall into her in the same way you did the last girl. It was like she took a piece of you when she went, and you're starting to feel there are only so many pieces you have left. After a while, your new girlfriend complains you're too routined and "emotionally distant."

Distant? Routined? *She's* the one who insists you see her almost every day. She sleeps in your bed, for Christ's sake. You pay attention to her; smile, like you're supposed to. Pay for meals, like you're supposed to. Hang out with her friends, even though they're caddy gossips. Hold doors. Kiss her. Hug her. Call. That's all the crap you're supposed to do, right? What more could you possibly provide? What more could she *possibly want?!*

Oh. I'm sorry. Have I made you upset? Well,

1. Don't feel bad.
2. Replace the loss.
3. Grieve alone.
4. Just give it time.
5. Be strong for others.
6. Keep busy.

Go 'head. Try it. See if it works. No? Oh, I see. Now, I have your attention.

"And what's your smart suggestion?" you ask.

Why, I can offer you six pieces of advice:

1. Feel as bad as you do.
2. Don't replace the loss.
3. Find someone who shares your pain.
4. Take all the time you need to acknowledge the loss and take stock of its meaning.
5. Let others take care of themselves and/or know your limits.
6. Don't burn out on distractions.



Grief is the normal and natural reaction to loss of any kind, though we have been socialized to believe that these feelings are unattractive and disruptive to others. More than that, to be willing to grieve properly is to be willing to feel pain. The irony is that in an avoidance of pain, we only compound it, such as in the example above.

"But why perpetuate and follow poisonous advice if it only hurts us in the long run?" you ask.

Somewhere along the line, these patterns of relating served a protective function. Through various interactions with his parents, a child learns certain thoughts and feelings are unacceptable and should be eliminated. As a little boy flies around the room in a cape and mask, buzzing through his lips, his parent must clap and take pleasure in his display. If, instead, the parent scolds the boy, insists he must keep quiet, sit still and accept his inferior status, well, the child will do just that. He may adopt an "I'm bad," attitude and struggle to meet the external world's demands of "goodness," keeping his "bad" self in check.

The same can be said for grief. If a child's lamentations are too poignant of a reminder of a parent's own unresolved grief and feelings of guilt, the parent will encourage the same kind of repression. Because these repressions are met with external approval, a child may come to view these "defense mechanisms" as his greatest strength. As he matures, however, they may prove to be his biggest crutch.

Hendrix calls this "loss of God-given wholeness" the "ultimate sacrifice to obedience," which leads to a fracturing of the unified self you were born with, into three parts:

Your "lost self"—the parts that were repressed due to the demands of culture and society

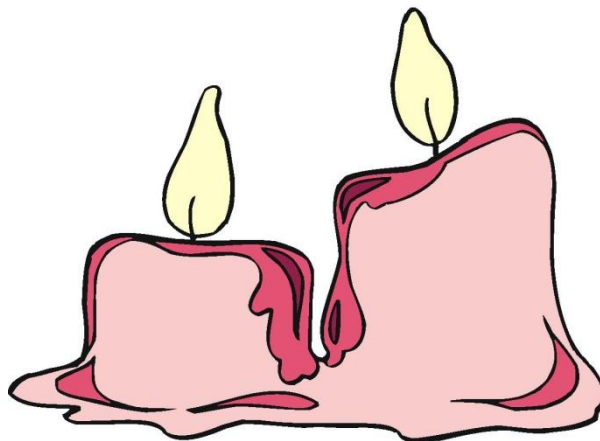
Your "false self"—the façade you create to fill the void and created by this repression and by a lack of nurturing

Your "disowned self"—the negative parts of your false self that were met with disapproval and were therefore denied

Hendrix notes when opposites attract, they are trying to "reclaim their lost selves by proxy." An individual's ideal mate is typically someone who both resembles his or her early caretakers and compensates for the individual's repressed parts. The individual's inner image of this person is his or her "imago." The imago is a composite picture of those who were most influential to this individual, at an early age. Our search for an imago match is an urgent desire to heal childhood wounds. Thus, your "true love" will inevitably reopen some very sensitive injuries, but if you are able to suffer the pain of confronting them, you might find your "true self" in the process.

I refer to the "true self" as the entirety of one's being, capable of perceiving the whole of experience; not simply the parts we *choose* to acknowledge. Creativity is essential to this. So is fantasy. And the ability to understand real events through felt experiences, as opposed to insisting on a revision of perception through a logical narrative. I like to think of one's true self as his or her *essential artist*.

In pursuit of creative efforts we are closer to our true selves because we suspend for a brief time "the brick wall of reality". In other words, the boundaries between the conscious and unconscious are blurred. This allows for greater integration of contradictory feelings—"unfinished businesses." Some say grief is the price we pay for the joy of having loved, thus, the depth of your grief would be measured by your capacity to both give and receive love. Some people might choose never to love, in order to never grieve.



Ooooh, if only life reflected the scales we like to tip and balance in our minds.

Grief can be complicated and exacerbated if we never allowed ourselves to love as we feel we could have, after the fact. If we regret. If we wasted our time erecting brick walls against the pain of loss, only to isolate ourselves from ever feeling loved. And we do this because we do not love ourselves enough to know we won't disintegrate in the face of loss. Because perhaps we were told to sit still and be quiet one too many times, and lost our connection to the essential artist that would rather have had us zipping around the room, flexing our superpowers.

Art--such as romance writing--acts as an agent of love, in this instance, because it allows us to carry the internal representation of that love object with us. It gives us the control, in a safe, emotional space, to both ask for and receive the things we needed from that person. You must reclaim the self-loving parts you sacrificed to subordination, in order to give up a learned, unhealthy pattern. Because it makes you less of a "bad" person, to let it go. And it allows you to forgive and repair the wounds you have inflicted upon yourself and others, as a result of the

wounds visited upon you. In this respect, integrative, artistic expressions of love could be considered a way to fill the holes that were left gaping. A balancing of those scales.

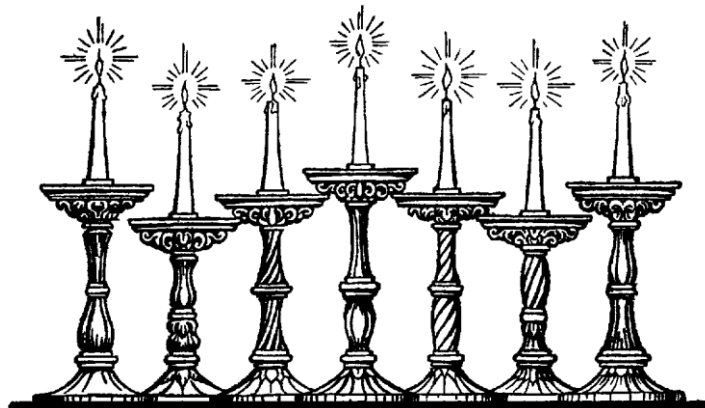
It is true; you cannot love without experiencing loss and grief. But they do not carry equal weight on the scale. Love is always the more powerful experience. I liken it to pigments, or the quality of calories. A blue pigment is weak, and a red pigment is strong. Combine equal portions of each and the red will dominate the blue. The same goes for calories. Eat a sugary donut that's 500 calories, and you'll be exhausted and starving soon after. Eat a balanced meal containing the same number of high quality calories, and you'll still be sustained hours later. Grief cannot be reduced by how little you allow yourself to love (and be loved), only by how much love you give (and embrace), while you can.

In my family, my three sisters call me the "love bomber," and recently gifted me a leotard that says, "What's bad for the heart, is good for the art." And this may be true. But what's good for the heart is good for the art also. Because love is a paradox, and art is her agent. Art allows us to recapture our missed opportunities in love. Art makes reparations possible through play and fantasy, even if our love object is no longer available in physical reality. Art also allows us to transcend and become better than what we are. To become our essential artist self again, and share our superpowers with the world, in order to better the lives of others, too.

"Why bother with relationships at all?" You might ask. "Sounds like a lot of work with little pay off. "

In her book, *THE STRUGGLE FOR INTIMACY*, Janet Geringer Woititz states, "Struggle is inevitable. Discouragement is inevitable. However, so is –sharing, loving, enhancement, joy, excitement, companionship, understanding, cooperation, trusting, growth, security, and serenity. The choice and the challenge are yours." I couldn't have said it any better myself.♥

Briana MacPerry is a creative arts therapist with ten years clinical experience working predominantly with traumatized women and children. Currently, she teaches personality development and thesis writing at Pratt Institute. When she isn't corralling her five-year old son, she's blogging, painting, drawing, or otherwise plugging away at passion's pursuit. To learn more please visit her blog at www.yellowbrickscommunity.wordpress.com, or follow her on Twitter [macperrytweets](https://twitter.com/macperrytweets).



CRAFT CORNER: LET'S BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING
BY ISABO KELLY



The opening of a book is one of the most important aspects of a story. This is what will pull readers in, what will grip them and convince them to keep reading. A lot of craft goes into the start of a novel. In this article, we're going to focus on when to start.

A brief caveat: don't worry about this too much in your first draft. You may well discover you've started in the wrong spot as you learn more about your characters and story, but none of the writing will be wasted. Everything you put on the page, even the stuff that gets cut, adds to your understanding of your story and allows you to infuse the

tale with richness and multiple dimensions.

So when do you start your novel?

Well, you start at the beginning of your story. Easier said than done, right? When is the beginning exactly? Conventional wisdom says the start is the day the protagonist's life changes, the day their normal life gets turned on its head.

But if you've developed multi-layered, complex characters, they're likely to have had several experiences that changed their lives, for better or worse--though, since this is fiction and fiction is all about conflict, usually for the worse.

Maybe your hero lost his parents in a terrible accident when he was 15. Is that the start of his story? Or does his story start when he turns 17 and discovers there's more to his parents' death than he thought? Does your story start at the end of the world? Or does it start on a "normal" post-apocalyptic day, when something else life-changing happens to your main character? Is it the day your hero and heroine meet? Or farther into their relationship when something changes in the status quo?

The type of story you're telling will play heavily into the choices you make here. A coming-of-age fantasy novel might start when the 12 year old heroine first meets the horse that changes her destiny. But if the story is a romance, you will probably start the day she meets the hero, or the day her relationship with the hero is pushed into a new realm.

Building a good, strong character means you create an interesting backstory for them. But a novel doesn't start in the backstory. It has to start at the moment things change in relation to the current plot. Are you telling a coming-of-age story, an action-adventure, a grown-up romance? Knowing this going in will help you decide the best starting point.

To complicate your decision, however, some writing instructors will say you should show your character in their normal life just before the change takes place so readers will get to know them and like them before all hell breaks loose. Others will say you should jump right into the action to hook readers and let them get to know the characters as they go.

Honestly, you can use either of these techniques and have a successful opening. But there is a trick to using each.

If you start with a normal day in the life of your character, you can't just show them taking a shower, getting dressed, going off to work as they might any old day. There's no tension in this and no real reason for readers to keep reading. On the other hand, infusing the "normal" opening with some level of tension will keep a reader's attention long enough to get to the dramatic life-changing event.

For example, as your heroine is getting ready, if she is thinking about the huge mistake she made at work the day before and contemplating the meeting she has to have with her boss as soon as she gets into the office, the "getting ready for a normal day" opening has tension. Then you can open that time rift, throw her into the past and into the arms of the Highland warrior who's going to change her life forever. Readers will be worried about your heroine getting fired long enough to get to the point where her life really changes and the story really begins.

On the other hand, you might decide it's better for your story to open in the middle of the action. This is often put forward as the best way to start a modern fiction story, though there are some who will argue the point. If this is how you feel your story will be best served, you do encounter the issue of character sympathy. Opening in the middle of the action, means readers haven't had time to get to know your heroine yet and therefore might not care enough about what happens to her to keep reading.

To make this opening successful, you have to build in ways to reveal your main character as sympathetic from the very start. You have to give readers a snapshot of their character and why they should be worried about the outcome of your opening action.

A random man running away from gun-toting thugs could be anyone. Maybe he's just as rotten as the guys chasing him. Why do we care if he survives the chase? If you introduce an aspect of his character--through the action--to make him sympathetic, you give readers that reason to care.

Perhaps your running man sees a family with kids coming into view and knows if the thugs see them, they'll kill the family. So your hero leads the thugs in a different direction, even though it's more dangerous for him, in order to keep the family safe. This reveals a lot about your hero and gives readers the sympathy for him they need to keep reading and to care if the thugs catch him or not.

The way a book starts is always going to be a very personal choice, depending entirely on the genre and the type of story being told. Just keep in mind three points. First, the opening needs to start when this story starts--not in the backstory. Second, if you jump into action from the first sentence, you need to show your character's personality fast. And finally, if you start by showing a "normal" day, you need to fill it with tension, then introduce the life-changing moment quickly.



Making sure the opening of the book is both tense and character revealing will ensure readers stick with you past the first few pages. Then give them a truly plot-worthy upheaval in your main character's life and they will read to the very end. ♥

Isabo Kelly is the award-winning author of numerous fantasy, science fiction, and paranormal romances. The third book in her Fire and Tears fantasy romance series, WARRIOR'S DAWN, is now out in paperback. She's also in the process of re-releasing some of her out-of-print stories. For more on Isabo and her books, visit her at www.isabokelly.com, follow her on Twitter @IsaboKelly, or friend her on Facebook www.facebook.com/IsaboKelly.

THE GIDDY GRAMMARIAN: A CASE FOR A CASE BY LISBETH ENG



The English language is challenging enough, I admit, but try studying a foreign language if you really want to exercise your gray matter. In German, for instance, there are six different ways to say the word “the.” First, one has to consider the noun’s gender (masculine, feminine or neuter). Then, one must determine case, and we have *four* possibilities there: nominative, accusative, dative and genitive. Don’t worry – you don’t have to memorize these!

“But surely there is no such thing as ‘case’ in the English language,” I hear you say. Don’t feel bad. I didn’t know there was such a thing as case in English either, until I began to study German a few years ago. Well, I didn’t know what it was called, but it was always there, nonetheless.

Case refers the function a noun or pronoun takes in a sentence. These are the cases in the English language:

*Nominative: the subject of a sentence, the person or thing that is performing the action of the verb. The nominative pronouns are I, you, he, she, it, we, they.

*Accusative: the direct object, that which receives the action. Pronouns are me, you, him, her, it, us, them.

*Dative: the indirect object, that which is indirectly affected by the action of the verb. A preposition must be included or implied. Examples include to him, with her, for them, etc.

*Genitive: This is the possessive case, exemplified by the pronouns my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, etc.

Okay, I know you're stuck on that "implied preposition" thing in the dative case. I'll explain in the following example:

I gave John the book. Clearly, "I" is the subject (nominative), the one performing the action. But what is the direct object and what is the indirect object? The book is the direct object (accusative) because the book is the thing that is being given. John cannot be the direct object because he is not the thing being given. But if John is the indirect object (dative) where's the preposition? The *implied* preposition is "to" because what you are really saying is, "I gave the book *to* John." Aha, indirect object!

But the real question you should be asking is, *Why should I care about any of this?* I'll give you a practical example.

Consider the following: "A few members of my critique group sat down with Janice, an agent with Beastly Books, to discuss our manuscripts. The only writers Janice invited to submit were Gertrude and I." This is incorrect. It should be, "Gertrude and me." But wait – isn't "I" the subject because I am one of those submitting – I am performing the action of the verb "submit"? Therefore "Gertrude and I" take the nominative case, right?

Read the sentence again. Janice is the subject because she is performing the action of the main verb in the sentence: "invited." If you simplify the sentence it will become clear. "Janice invited us to submit." You wouldn't say, "Janice invited we to submit."

In complex sentences, with multiple clauses and parenthetical elements, it is sometimes difficult to identify the role each word takes. The more words that come between the subject and object – in this case "Janice" the subject and "Gertrude and me" the object – the more mindful we must be. Knowing the names of the cases (nominative, accusative, etc.) is not important.

Understanding the principles behind them is. From a practical standpoint, for example, you wouldn't want your query letters to be filled with errors. Proper grammar is essential if we are to be taken seriously as writers. ♥

Lisbeth Eng works as a Compliance Officer in the financial industry by day and writes historical romance by night. She holds a bachelor's degree in English, and speaks a smattering of German, Italian and French. Please visit her at www.lisbetheng.com.



MARKETING AND DISCOVERABILITY: HOW DO YOU DISCOVER BOOKS?
BY CAROLINA MONTAGUE



In the online world of books, discoverability is a key marketing concept now, even though what it means is simply how readers will discover your books. In the past hundred years, this mostly meant through brick-and-mortar book stores, and many authors say they will stay with their traditional publisher because these publishing houses have a clock on book distribution (Rusch 2014, Penn 2014, Whistler 2015).

However, this is changing. Now the landscape of distribution includes paper and electronic means of delivering your books to readers, and authors have many more ways to find their audiences. Even traditionally published authors are finding what midlist and small press authors have known for a long time—unless an author is famous or has been a

bestseller for a long time, the onus of marketing is on the author.

I am at an early stage of my career, where I fit the criteria of “wouldn’t I be better off writing” (Rusch 2014), than trying to market the few books of mine that are available. But I took a break recently to look at how readers who might like the books I write could find my books.

Since my nose is pretty much down to the writing grindstone right now, I discarded the idea of a poll. That would take way too much time. How to proceed? I figured that people who might like the books I write would probably be something like me, so I started with that. I idly flipped through my Kindle and was shocked to see that in the past two years, I had bought 319 books. This was not counting the hundred or so I’d bought in paper. Well, I am an avid reader—most writers are—but in doing this exercise, I got really curious.

I made a spreadsheet. Yes, I know—time suck! But it was just for the past two years and actually took less time than I thought it would. Each book in the sheet had the title and how I found it. Then I sorted on how I discovered the books—and was in for a surprise.

A third of the books I bought came from advertising, mostly ads on my basic Kindle device (not a Kindle Fire—I have the one that has Kindle advertisements show up as a screen saver). That floored me. Almost a third of the books I’d bought came from clicking “Buy” on that link! I thought I’d bought more from the really cool covers on Goodreads, but I only bought one that way. It was the paranormal *Out of Breath* by Blair Richmond (www.goodreads.com/book/show/13088808-out-of-breath).

The cover of Blair’s book just got to me, so I wanted it, and loved the book. I also bought *The Quaker Cafe* by Brenda Remmes from a Kindle screen-saver ad because it had an appealing cover (www.brendaremmes.com). It was not really the type of book I would read, but the cover spoke to me. So covers matter, but not as much as I’d thought.

However, buying a direct ad from Amazon might not be a bad idea. I thought I was relatively immune to ads, but the numbers showed me I was not. And if I’m not, chances are my readers would be susceptible as well.



A quarter of the books I bought came from recommendations from a trusted source. These are more than word-of-mouth, and can include known experts in many fields (Das 2015). For fiction, the “known experts” can be book lists in blogs of your favorite authors.

The recommendations that influenced me the most included SFA-RWA authors, close friends, and a book that is called *Vampires Are Us: Understanding Our Love Affair with the Immortal Dark Side* by Margot Adler (www.goodreads.com/book/show/18654415-vampires-are-us). Margot’s book traces her fascination with books on vampires in several genres, and includes her recommendations. Several of the books I bought are from her lists, including Faith Hunter’s Jane Yellowrock series (www.faithhunter.netwp/books/jane-yellowrock-series) and Nora Robert’s Circle vampire trilogy (www.goodreads.com/series/44593-circle-trilogy). I got the digital box set for Nora’s and I now pre-order all of the new books in the Jane Yellowrock series.

I’d have to agree with Das on the power of trusted sources in book marketing. I had never pre-ordered a book before!

Ten percent of the books I bought came from my prior experience with an author. I bought a number of books for my Kindle to complete series by authors when I had the first books of the series in paper. I got the entire *In Death* series by J.D. Robb (www.jdrobb.com) and Robyn Carr’s *Virgin River* and *Thunder Point* series (www.robyncarr.com).

I also found books came from online searches for research books that I needed for my own books. I bought resource books on the areas where my characters travel and history books covering the background of my hero.

The final way I found books was from authors interviewed by Terry Gross on *Fresh Air* (www.npr.org/programs/fresh-air/), by Justine Willis Thoms on *New Dimensions* (www.newdimensions.org), and from a podcast from Simon Whistler (www.rockingselfpublishing.com).

When I looked closer into the media sources, I found that, indirectly, I bought more books from the podcast by Simon Whistler than from both of Terri’s and Justine’s shows, because Simon introduced me to a subgenre that I’d never read before: *Zombie Apocalypse* books. In his podcast, Simon interviewed Shawn Chesser, an author who had self-published his books after he’d written his first zombie novel using Notepad on his iPhone (www.shawnchesser.com). His first book was only ninety-nine cents, so I bought it to see what this genre was all about. I got hooked, and whenever I saw another author in the same genre from Kindle’s “recommended for you” algorithm, and liked the cover, I bought them too.

I’d included only the eight books in Shawn’s zombie series as being from “podcasts,” but had put the rest of the many zombie series I’d bought in “advertising,” because I was looking for broad categories. However, these really could fit under several categories—trusted sources, media, and advertising, because some of them came from direct ads, others from lists, and Simon’s podcast.

To all these potential sources, I could add another category: articles in newsletters! I've included websites for the books I've named, so you can take a look.

I can see that a finer-grained analysis could lead me into methods of marketing that I might want to experiment with, once I have more books released. As Kristine Kathryn Rusch, in her 2014 book *Discoverability*, says, "None of the hype, none of the career stuff, none of the marketing works on just one book. Nor does it work well on only a few." She recommends that authors prioritize writing, first, last, and always. Happy writing!♥



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