



# KEYNOTES

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

JANUARY 2016

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## NEXT CHAPTER MEETING: JANUARY 9

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TRS, 40 Exchange Place, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 12 noon

## PRESENTATION: A CHAT WITH HEROES & HEARTBREAKERS' JENN & HEATHER



Get your new year started on the right foot! Join us for a chat with Jennifer Proffitt and Heather Waters from the Golden Apple winning Heroes and Heartbreakers blog. We'll discuss upcoming books they're excited about, trends they're seeing for 2016, blogs, self-promotion, and open it up for questions.



### **Heather Waters: Site Manager, HeroesandHeartbreakers.com**

Heather Waters, 24/7 fangirl, joined HeroesandHeartbreakers.com mere days before its launch in 2011. Now the site manager and editor, she has seen the site grow into one of the romance genre's top online communities. She previously worked as an assistant editor at Pineapple Press in Sarasota, Florida.

### **Jennifer Proffitt: Associate Community Manager, HeroesandHeartbreakers.com**

Jennifer Proffitt, a Midwest transplant to New York City, is the community manager of HeroesandHeartbreakers.com, a dream job for someone who spends most of her time reading and writing about romance.♥






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## 2016 CHAPTER CALENDAR

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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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## KEYNOTES DEADLINE

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Send articles to [keynoteseditor@gmail.com](mailto: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!

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## RWA/N YC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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President: Kate McMurray  
Vice President/Events: Mimi Pizarro-Logsdon  
Vice President/Contest: Racheline Maltese  
Secretary: Stacey Agdern  
Treasurer: Tamara Lynch  
Past President: Ursula Renée

## 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](mailto: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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New York, NY 10163  
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[info@rwanyc.com](mailto:info@rwanyc.com)  
[rwanycblogginginthebigapple.blogspot.com](http://rwanycblogginginthebigapple.blogspot.com)



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**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: NEW YEAR, BIG PLANS**  
**BY PRESIDENT KATE MCMURRAY**

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Welcome to 2016! I'm thrilled to be ushering in the New Year as president of the chapter with a (mostly) new board. I've got a lot of plans for the year, with the goal of engaging members more and helping them with everything we can to further careers in romance publishing. The membership of this chapter is full of some of the smartest, savviest, and most talented people I've ever met, and whether you're still finishing your first novel or have published ten, it's a great pool to draw support from.



I think I'm the rare person who, when I make New Year's resolutions, I usually follow through with them. I'm not silly enough to resolve something like going to the gym more often; I know myself well enough to know that would last, like, a month, tops. I usually resolve to do career-related things.

For example, my first published novel was essentially the result of a New Year's resolution. I started 2009 resolved that it would be the year I finally got serious and I promised myself I'd send out a manuscript to an editor or agent by the end of the year. I sent that manuscript out in August, and it was accepted for publication a couple of months later.

So here's my challenge to you all: forget about what has come before for a moment. Forget about rejections, failure, the manuscript languishing on your hard drive or in a drawer. Resolve to do something this year to take your writing career to the next level. It can be something simple, like writing a set number of words per month, or finally finishing that unfinished manuscript. It can be something bigger like showing your work to a colleague for the first time, or finally sending that manuscript out to editors and agents. If you're further along in your career, maybe 2016 is the year you try writing in a new genre or finally write that crazy idea you've been kicking around for a while, even if it's not "commercial." Maybe this is the year you try self-publishing or create a new marketing plan to help you get on a bestseller list.

Whatever it is, think big. Where do you want your writing career to be in a year's time? In five? In ten? Think about that and plan accordingly.

I have faith you can do it. One of the reasons I even considered running for president of the chapter is because I've met so many great people through it.



I also wanted to let you all know you can contact me at any time with ideas for what programs you'd like to see or projects you'd like the chapter to take on. This year will feature some of our favorite chapter traditions and hopefully some new ones as well.

I'll raise a toast to a fantastic 2016! Remember to think big and reach for the stars!♥

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**WELCOME TO OUR NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**PRESIDENT – KATE MCMURRAY**

**Kate McMurray** is an award-winning author of gay romance and an unabashed romance fan. When she's not writing, she works as a nonfiction editor, dabbles in various crafts, and is maybe a tiny bit obsessed with baseball. She has served as President of Rainbow Romance Writers, the LGBT romance chapter of Romance Writers of America; and as Vice President of RWA/NYC. She lives in Brooklyn, NY. Visit her at [www.katemcmurray.com](http://www.katemcmurray.com).

**VICE PRESIDENT/CONTEST – RACHELINE MALTESE**

**Racheline Maltese** is one of the co-authors of the LGBTQ romance series *Love in Los Angeles*, set in the film and television industry, from Torquere Press and the *Love's Labours* series, about a summerstock Shakespeare company, from Dreamspinner Press. She and partner Erin McRae have also had work published with Cleis Press and *Supposed Crimes*. Racheline's training includes a journalism degree from The George Washington University, as well as acting and directing coursework at the Atlantic Theater Company Acting School (New York City) and the National Institute of Dramatic Art (Sydney, Australia). Her fiction, non-fiction and poetry has appeared in numerous outlets, and she is a regular speaker on pop-culture topics at fan and academic

conferences. Visit her at [www.avian30.com](http://www.avian30.com); Twitter: @racheline\_m; Facebook: Erin.and.Racheline; Instagram: rachelinem.

**VICE PRESIDENT/EVENTS – MIMI PIZARRO-LOGSDON**

**Mimi Pizarro-Logsdon** has been writing romance stories since her teens, and loves the Sci-Fi, Fantasy and Paranormal genres. She has worked in the media industry for over 25 years, and currently works at HBO, Inc. She lives in New York with her husband and pets. One of them, an eccentric cat named George she features in her current romance series, "Immortals In New York." Follow her on Twitter: @mimilogsdon; Facebook: mimipizarro.



### TREASURER – TAMARA LYNCH

**Tamara Lynch** is a writer and long-time fashion executive whose lifestyle, relationship, race, and culture pieces have appeared on several webzines including Salon.com, The Huffington Post, TheFrisky.com and CNN.com. She has also contributed to the Madonna Anthology Madonna and Me published by Soft Skull Press. Writing as Chloe Blaque, she has published two erotic romances with Loose-id. Visit Tamara / Chloe at [www.chloeblaque.com](http://www.chloeblaque.com).



### SECRETARY – STACEY AGDERN

Stacey Agdern is an award winning former bookseller who has reviewed romance novels in multiple formats and given talks about various aspects of the romance genre. She is also a romance writer. She's a proud member of both LIRW and RWA/NYC. She lives in New York, not far from her favorite hockey team's practice facility. Friend and follow her on Twitter: @nystacey; Facebook: [staceyagdern](https://www.facebook.com/staceyagdern).♥




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## MEMBER NEWS

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**Sylvia Baumgarten** will be reading at Lady Jane's Salon on January 4. All are welcome at 7pm at Madame X on Houston.

**Anna DePalo** is happy to say that the first book in her Serengetti family series from Harlequin Desire now has a title and release month! **SECOND CHANCE WITH THE CEO** will be out in September 2016.

### REMINDER!

*Pick up your  
2016 Calendar at  
the January Meeting.*



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**EDITOR'S LETTER**  
**BRIANA MACPERRY**

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Hello, 2016! As the acquisitions editor for Keynotes, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the Keynotes readership. I would also like to recognize and thank the other diligent members of the publication team, including Maria Ferrer, who brings it all together and makes it look pretty, and Kate McMurray, who offers a keen eye and makes it readable! I also want to thank our committed columnists, and give you a snapshot of what you can expect in the New Year.

**The Craft Corner:** Still going strong! Make sure to read Isabo Kelly's monthly column for tips and tidbits to hone your craft. Isabo also happens to be our craft loop coordinator, so feel free to hop online and tell her how much you love her column!

**The Giddy Grammarian:** Lisbeth Eng reminds us to cross our t's and dot our i's with her easy-to-read column geared towards proper grammar

and other technical challenges.

**About Indie Publishing:** A column dedicated to Independent Publishing authored by various writers, throughout the year.

**Ask Alice:** Based on years of experience, Alice Orr offers expert advice in response to burning questions.

**Industry News:** Kate McMurray provides up-to-date news and insights into an every changing industry.

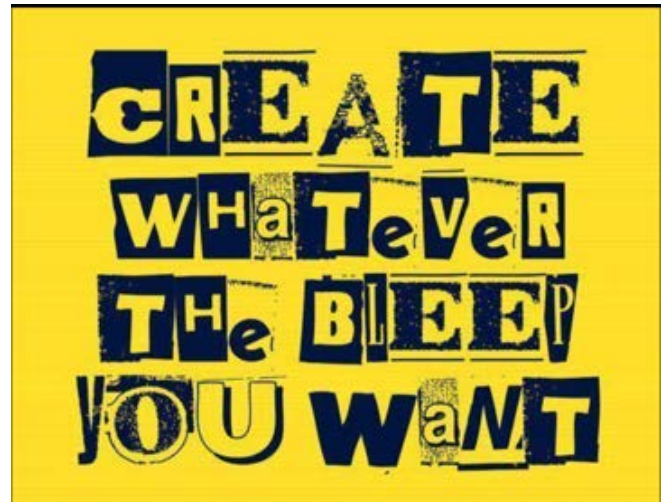
**Welcome to My Writing Den:** Maria Cox shares her personal process and inspirations. Maria is also our PRO coordinator, so be sure to ask about PRO status at the next meeting!

**Embracing My Crazy:** LaQuette shares her "particular brand of crazy," and the occasional op-ed article.

Keynotes also puts out a call for submissions based on a monthly theme, but we accept articles on other topics as well.

**Submissions are due by the 15<sup>th</sup> of every month.**

The final newsletter is published and posted to the "members only" section on the chapter website, typically before the monthly meeting (the first Saturday of the month). I hope you enjoy this year's lineup and will contribute to our themed articles in 2016!♥



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**HOLIDAY BRUNCH PHOTO ALBUM**

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Chapter Members gathered on December 5 to celebrate the Holidays and to be presented to the new Board of Directors and the Member of the Year. A good time was had by all!♥



President Ursula Renée, Tanya Goodwin, Teresa Miñambres, Michael Molloy & Alice Orr.



Jenn Welsh & Alexis Daria



LaQuette, Maria Ferrer, Tamara Lynch & Vanessa Peters

**MEMBER OF THE YEAR**

Michael Molloy



Kate McMurray, Shirley Kelly & Barbara Bent



Lis Eng & Racheline Maltese

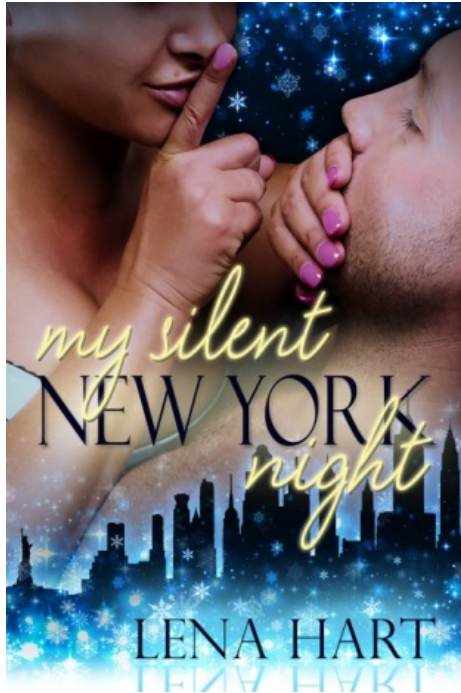


John Lovelady, Elizabeth Mahon, Isabo Kelly & Stacey Agdern



**MEMBERS ON THE SHELF**

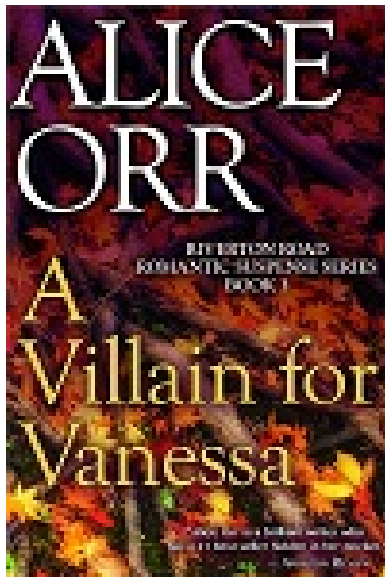
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**MY SILENT NEW YORK NIGHT**  
By Lena Hart



**NO LOVE LOST**  
Hearts of Braden Book Six  
By Troy Storm



**A VILLAIN FOR VANESSA**  
By Alice Orr

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**FREE PROMOTION!**

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**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](mailto:keynoteseditor@gmail.com). Articles will also be published on the Chapter Blog for **DOUBLE** the promotion!

**Deadline: the 15<sup>th</sup> of every month.**  
Take advantage of us!♥

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**GOING THE INDIE ROUTE—AND MANAGING EXPECTATIONS ALONG THE WAY  
BY SHARA MOON W/A LENA HART**


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*We want to thank Alice Orr for the idea for this column, and all the members who jumped on the bandwagon and volunteered to write an article for it. Hence, every month we'll bring you a different view "About Indie Publishing." Many thanks to Shara Moon for going first.*

Today, going indie has never been easier. That doesn't mean, however, that becoming an independent or hybrid (traditionally published and self-published) author gets any easier. It only means that there are tons of resources (e.g. Author EMS), support groups (e.g. Indie Romance Ink), and publishing platforms (e.g. Draft2Digital) available that makes the journey a lot more seamless to publish a book.

But in my two years as an indie author, I've learned that there's nothing easy about going indie. Nothing. On the other hand, indie publishing isn't for the elite—it's not for those who have been published before or who have tons of money to invest in it. Why do I say this? Because I've experienced it.

**Full disclosure:** I started my publishing career with a small e-press then went indie when I realized how much I valued the freedom and control that indie publishing allowed. Just recently, I became a full-on indie author with all the rights of my earlier books back. The money I made from the books published with that small press was what I used to self-publish my next series. Like many new first time indie authors, I had some growing pains along the way. But for me, personally, I learned more about myself as an author, about publishing, and about the industry as an indie author than I did with a publisher. Though not all publishers are created equal, and not all experiences are the same, I don't believe that being previously published is a huge factor into whether you become a successful indie author or not.

But I can only speak for myself and share what I've learned during my two years as an indie author. So before you hit "Publish" on your finished manuscript, you may want to ask yourself what you're looking to gain by going indie. If your responses remotely resemble the top five reasons listed below then you may want to consider some of these harsh realities...

***1. I want to make a lot of money.***

**Reality check:** The days of making hundreds, thousands, or even hundreds of thousands on your first self-published book are over. Sure, the billionaire/secret baby/step-brother books are selling like crazy right now, but each trend eventually reaches its pinnacle and writing a book only because it's selling doesn't bode well for a lasting career in publishing. And the harsh reality is that once a trope or trend becomes flooded with books by those who want to make a quick buck, readers will lose interest and move on to the next new hot thing.

**Bottom-line: Manage your money.** Don't expect to make much money on your first indie book, or even your second or third. And more often than not, if you are making money, that income will be put



back into promotion, marketing, or preparing for your next self-publish book. You may even start off operating in the red for some time, but if you're in this career for the long haul, then you'll be making money with your books in no time. But it *will* take time.

**2. *I want the freedom/control of publishing my work how I want, when I want.***

**Reality check:** Being your own boss is not easy. Believe me, I know. So when you're responsible for writing the book of your

heart and publishing it on the date that you set, you want to be sure you keep yourself to a schedule. Speaking from experience, I can't tell you the amount of time, I've given myself a deadline and missed it. I think knowing that I have the flexibility to change my due dates (unless I've set up pre-orders) prevents me from taking my deadlines as seriously as I should, leading to over-promises and under-delivery to my readers. Not a good look.

**Bottom-line: Manage your projects and writing time.** Evaluate your production and publishing schedule and set your deadlines accordingly. But if you're like me and have a hard time keeping yourself accountable, find someone else to do it for you. Whether it's your critique group, your editor, or beta readers, set up milestones to have your manuscripts to them and let the fact that you owe someone besides yourself a finished draft be the thing that keeps you on task.

**3. *I want to write my stories my way.***

**Reality check:** It's true, indie publishing does come with some nice perks—and one of them is being able to write whatever we want. But in all things, there are rules and restrictions. For example, many of the retailers have harsh adult content filters—some harsher than others—so if you don't want your erotic romance or erotica novel to be buried in Kindle or iBooks' book dungeon, be sure your content remains sexy but always tasteful and professional. And then there are issues with the taboo topics (i.e. incest) or taboo story devices (i.e. cliffhangers). I've seen it numerous times where an author wants to break from convention and write something fresh and different, only to have it back fire horribly on them.

**Bottom-line: Manage your readers' expectations.** Determine what genre you're writing in, who your audience is, and what they like and don't like. You want your book to be bought and read from start to finish—not slammed with a bunch of 1 star reviews because you broke a “cardinal rule.” If you're feeling a little risqué with your writing, then just add a disclaimer so your devoted readers know what you're introducing is different than what you typically write. But if you're still uncertain of what you have will trigger a negative response, find a critique group or some beta readers to help you decide if you're working with gold or garbage.

**4. *I want to get more book(s) published quickly so I can make more money/not wait months to hear back from a publisher.***

**Reality check:** There are many prolific writers out there who can churn out 6-10 books a year, and then there are others who are quite content with publishing just 3-5 books a year. Whatever your publishing schedule, don't fall into the hype that the more books you publish, the more money/readers you gain. Sadly, the word around the indie world is that: more books = more money/readers. Yet, I've witness indie authors fall into this trap and put out tons of half-baked stories and still not make any more money (or gain any more readers) than they had before.

**Bottom-line: Manage the quality of your finished product.**

Naturally, as you gain experience in your craft, your writing and publishing will gain momentum and you too can go from publishing 3 books a year to 6, if that's what you want. And if the stories are good, the readers will come. But as with most things, that too will take time, so exercise patience and continue to build on your craft. Don't fall into the rat-race of indie publishing and choose quantity over quality.

**5. I want to get a book published so I can start building my author brand/platform.**

**Reality check:** Some indie authors hit the ball out of the park with their first book, while others take years to build their fanbase. But this part of the journey is not as hard as it seems. Readers are smart and eager and they want to interact with the author—but some are also lazy. Make yourself available to your readers and allow them to be able to find you with little effort. Love it or hate it, you should have an account on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest—you pick your poison), you should have a mailing list, and at the very least, you should have a functioning website.

**Bottom-line: Manage your author brand and platform.** You don't want to burn yourself out or be everywhere at once, but to build your fanbase/readership, you need to make it easy for readers to find you. Once you have these in place, you want to make sure it's everywhere your readers can see/find it, i.e. your email signature, in the front/back matter of your e-book, on your website, etc. Just make sure it's visible. Trust me... "If you build it, they will come."

All in all, the ultimate reality is that in indie publishing you are constantly wearing multiple hats—as author, editor, publisher, marketer, copywriter, publicist, designer, sometimes formatter—because many of these things (that a traditional publisher would have handled) become your responsibility. Anyone can self-publish a book—but only few do it well. And those that do, prepare themselves for the arduous journey. To separate yourself from the bad to the best in indie publishing, you want to ensure you are aware of what you're getting yourself into so you can then manage your time, resources, *and* outlooks accordingly.♥

*Shara Moon is the owner of Maroon Ash Publishing, a boutique services company helping authors navigate through the intricate world of independent publishing. You can find her blogging about her experiences or hot topics in the indie-publishing world at [www.MaroonAshPublishing.com/Blog](http://www.MaroonAshPublishing.com/Blog). Her alter ego, Lena Hart, is a multi-published indie author who writes sensual to steamy romances with smart heroines and the strong, alpha men who love them. You can find out more about her and her books at [www.LenaHartSite.com](http://www.LenaHartSite.com).*



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**EMBRACING MY PARTICULAR BRAND OF CRAZY  
BY LAQUETTE**

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Embracing my crazy...one character at a time.

Hello everyone!

Welcome to my new column, *Embracing My Crazy*. This column will essentially address some of the things I've experienced or find interesting with respect to writing and the process of writing.

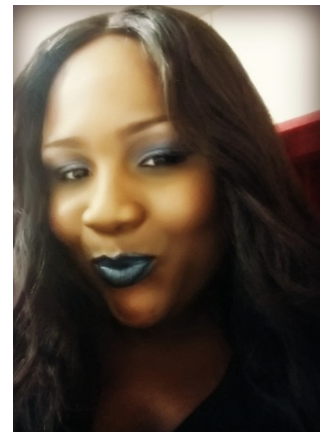
My tagline, "Embracing my crazy...one character at a time," essentially sums up how I approach writing and the process of writing. I know there are plenty of manuals on writing and writing style that provide you with hard, fast, and plentiful rules about what you can never do as a writer, about what elements have to be present in your writing in order for it to fit into a genre or subgenre. Honestly, there are even rules and guides about what a hero/heroine must/mustn't do in order for your story to be a "real romance."

In my opinion—since this is my column I feel it's okay for me to share it—that's the largest load of garbage that's ever been spoon-fed to authors. Yes, there are some things that should remain consistent in writing. Formatting, grammar, etc. are elements that are definitely needed to help make sense of the words we string together. However, even those truths which we hold steadfast can sometimes be bent in order to further our creativity. This is exactly where embracing your crazy comes in. Doing what feels intuitive versus doing what is considered to be the correct method of doing something can ultimately set your muse free and yield you a new and refreshing piece of writing.

For instance, there is this unspoken rule that heroines need to be rescued. After all, the entire purpose of a romance is to create a fictional situation where the heroine is incomplete until her hero comes on the scene to point out her flaws and fix them for her (just in case you didn't know, that was sarcasm). As silly as that notion sounds many romance novels do depict that exact theme. Some people may like that kind of thing. As for me, I'm a chick from Brooklyn who was raised to save her own day, so I write women that reflect a more modernized ideal of femininity. My heroines are smart, able, and powerful. Oftentimes they're just as flawed and surly as my heroes are, and they always give as much hell as they get from their male counterparts. My heroines make things happen and most importantly, they offer partnership to their heroes. They fight and love equally in the boardroom and the bedroom.

That's just one of the ways I've found to bend if not break the rules. Come back next month to see what other antics I go through just to embrace my particular brand of crazy.♥

*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. LaQuette 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.*





*Our theme this month is*

## SECOND CHANCE ROMANCE

Here's what our members have to say.

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### SECOND CHANCE ROMANCE: MOST ALL ROMANCE IS BY TROY STORM

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In my novel, *NO LOVE LOST*, Book Six in the *Hearts of Braden* series, the four main characters are all second chancers, or more. Holly, the one who sets in motion most of the action that brings the three protagonists together, is a three-time abusive relationship loser. She is the classic optimist always believing this time her prince charming will turn out to be just that, and, having her hopes once again shattered, finally sets out to get her due (read revenge...and cash).

Josey is an illegal immigrant of mixed black and Spanish heritage—tough enough to begin with—from hardscrabble South American beginnings—even tougher—but finding himself in conservative middle America, discovers how to use his attractiveness and innate charm to build a new and protected life, until he finds there's probably no such thing as truly starting over.

Ches is a typical hunky good ole boy mid-westerer, buffed and polished for erotic romance consumption, but more realistically shaken to his small-town core by two horrendous deployments in the mid-east.

And Maddie is the unwitting catalyst resigned to a life of quiet desperation who charges into the middle of a situation that she feels she can instinctively and professionally set right this time, yet finds herself baffled at all turns by the startling revelations with which she is forced to deal.

They all have to deal with the smashing of second round hopes of finding the elusive true love we are all led to believe is out there waiting to be discovered. And since I write romantic erotica, their sexual journeys are the main paths by which they find their ways to the required happy for now, and maybe ever after.

To be quite honest, by the time we're teenagers, most of us are already second chancers, and it's that universal experience of having "loved" not wisely and way too enthusiastically that draws romance writers and readers to believe there's a better road ahead.

It's been a long time since Dame Barbara Cartland's virgins were the norm. The trend now is to present lives more realistically led—exception, or taking into account, many of the current crop of “realists” are zombie-plagued, time-travelers or paranormals. “Normals” being the operative concept.

Modern readers appear to respond to characters who resemble lives they recognize and can relate to. Even our billionaires astonished to have produced surprise babies are endowed with traits with which the less well-off can empathize.

Romance has often been tossed into the escapism category. I find the category more compelling and meaningful than a great deal of modern popular fiction that strives to create worlds that strain my belief system, no matter how good Tom Cruise or Daniel Craig may look enacting the filmic incarnations. A good romance looks at lives that I recognize, endures problems that are somewhat and more often painfully familiar, and hopefully, concludes with both the protagonists and the antagonist having learned a little something. And finding great romance, of course. In bed, of course.

I have hopes for Holly, even after creating havoc among some decent lives. I have even greater hopes for Ches and Josey and Maddy. ‘They’re good decent, flawed folk who deserve a second chance. And I, as their creator, can see they get it. And my readers can join them in their journey and cheer them in their coming out for the better at the proverbial happy ending.♥

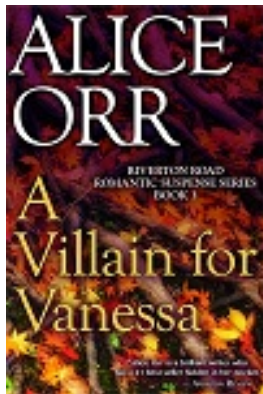
*John Lovelady writes erotic romance as Troy Storm. He's been giving second chancers a shot at finding true happiness—at least for now—for several decades. His CoveHaven erotic ménages and Hearts of Braden contribution are now self-published. Other second chancers are published by Dreamspinner and Excessica Press.*

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## SECOND CHANCE FOR LOVE – BIG CHANCE FOR STORYTELLING

### BY ALICE ORR

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I do love Second Chance stories. Two of the three books in my Riverton Road Romantic Suspense Series so far are Second Chance stories.

I love second chance relationship situations because they're good for the storytelling. They allow me to jump straight into the heart of the story without a lot of meet-cute at the beginning where I'm supposed to be hooking the reader and grabbing her attention.

I'm not a big fan of the meet-cute. Two attractive people meet in a cute and usually at least somewhat contrived situation and are attracted to each other. Sparks fly and clever banter abounds. But where is the real story?

What plummets the heroine and her readers into a dilemma that is intense and dramatic and powerful? A dilemma she will have to scramble and struggle to escape. How is the reader hooked? Why is her attention grabbed?

I write romantic suspense so my lovers-to-be can meet over a dead body which diminishes the cuteness considerably. Still on first encounter they might tend to circle one another bantering cleverly all the way. Come to think of it none of my Riverton Road stories follows that scenario.

In *A WRONG WAY HOME* and *A VACANCY AT THE INN* my heroine and hero were lovers in the past though only briefly. That's not the case in *A YEAR OF SUMMER SHADOWS* but they've been eyeballing each other for quite some time. The murder situation causes them to leap into love instead of just gazing and fantasizing.

Each of these story lines saves me a lot of work as a storyteller. The preliminaries are out of the way before page one. The "I'm so-and-so. Who are you?" part is past.

More important I now have some backstory to work with and develop. Backstory that's rife with conflict. Backstory that gives my current front story lots of potential for intensity and drama and power.

In other words I've given myself a strong story advantage even before my story begins. I'm definitely in favor of advantages. The challenges of storytelling are enormous. I'll take any help I can get. Second chance stories are a great source of such help.

Interestingly – at least to me – my next Riverton Road book isn't a second chance romance. But the lovers-to-be Bobby and Vanessa share a powerful connection that reaches deep into each of their past histories.

In *A VILLAIN FOR VANESSA* the second chance involves a third character Bobby already loves and Vanessa needs to love. So I guess this one is a second chance situation too. We'll have to see how it turns out – especially since I'm still writing it.

Meanwhile maybe I love second chance stories because I believe life is all about them. Second or third or fourth or as many chances as we need to succeed. All we have to do is pick ourselves up and dust ourselves off and try all over again.♥

*Alice Orr's A VILLAIN FOR VANESSA will be the third novel of her Riverton Road Romantic Suspense Series featuring the Kalli family in stories of Romance and Danger. To learn more about Alice and her series visit [www.aliceorrbooks.com](http://www.aliceorrbooks.com).*

*Riverton Road*



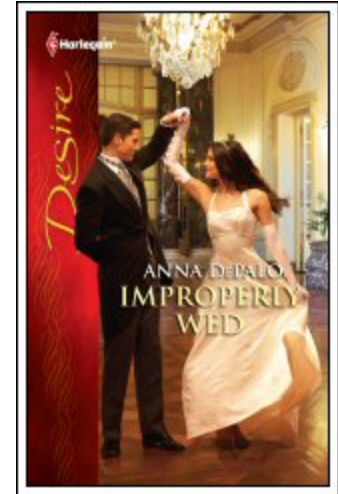


## ONE MORE TIME...WITH FEELINGS

BY ANNA DEPALO

Second chance or reunion stories are a popular trope in romance. From the writer's perspective, the great thing is that you can jump right into the story. There's no "hello, how are you?" The opening scene is easily powerful if the two main characters parted on bad terms, with angst, or otherwise had unsatisfied love or lust. There's conflict from the get-go, you don't have to build up to it. Betrayal! Tragedy! Revenge! These two have checked into Heartbreak Hotel—maybe more than once.

Readers love reunion stories, I think, because we all have regrets. Some of us even have "the one that got away." In second chance romances, we can revisit those feelings—and fix them. Yes, it's fantasy, but therapeutic, too. Also, readers sometimes want a different ending (fan fiction, anyone?). In a reunion romance, we're saying, hey, we're going to let you scratch that itch and satisfy it. We're going to kick it up a notch: this is going to be good...even better than before. This time around, HEA!



The pitfall, of course, is that...(wait for it) these two *have a past*. The writer must avoid an information dump or tons of backstory at the beginning, no matter how tempting. So how do you do this? Interspersing dialogue, for one thing, but avoid stating the obvious. The trick is to drop clues about what initially broke these two apart without revealing too much at the beginning of the story. For example, here's a passage from chapter 1 of my upcoming 2016 title, *SECOND CHANCE WITH THE CEO*:

*"You need something from me."*

*She nodded, her throat dry.*

*"Too bad I don't forgive or forget a betrayal easily. Consider it a character flaw."*

*She flushed. She'd always wondered whether he'd known for certain that she was the one who'd ratted out his prank to the school administration, earning him a suspension and likely costing Pershing School the hockey championship that year. Now it seemed he hadn't been proceeding just on rumor.*

*She'd had her reasons for doing what she'd done, but she doubted they'd have satisfied him—then or now.*

Okay, see what I mean? What were her reasons? They remain to be seen...including whether they'll satisfy him. ☺ But we already have an idea of what drove a wedge between these two as teenagers. She'd been his femme fatale...leading his eighteen-year-old self to destruction. At the same time, chapter 1 advances the story from the past: she's just gotten confirmation that he *knew* all along she'd been his Mata Hari. Ah, love! By the way, Mata Hari died by firing squad. Let's just say, my heroine doesn't. See my point again? It's a rewritten, more satisfying ending in a second chance romance.♥

*Anna DePalo is the USA Today best-selling author of a dozen romance novels. Her next book, SECOND CHANCE WITH THE CEO, the first in the Serengetti family series, will be released in September 2016 by Harlequin. You can find Anna online at [www.annadepalo.com](http://www.annadepalo.com), [www.facebook.com/anna.depaloauthor](http://www.facebook.com/anna.depaloauthor), [www.facebook.com/AnnaDePaloBooks](http://www.facebook.com/AnnaDePaloBooks) and [twitter.com/Anna\\_DePalo](http://twitter.com/Anna_DePalo)*



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**SECOND CHANCE ROMANCE**  
**BY MARIA FERRER**

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Second chances are the very heart of romance novels.

Let's face it, in every romance the boy "loses" the girl, and the whole story revolves around getting a second chance to make things right so they could live happily ever after. –Sigh–

The first "second chance" romance I remember reading was *SWEET SAVAGE LOVE* by Rosemary Rogers. In fact, there were five books of second chances for Steve and Ginny. They were ill matched from the start – he a rugged, worldly rake; she a shy, curious debutante – but the passion between them burned fast and furious; Hence, the five books.

Another favorite is *CAPTIVE BRIDE* by Johanna Lindsey. Philip sees Cristina at a ball in London and knows he wants only her. When she says no, he kidnaps her. When he gives her her freedom, she thinks he is dumping her for another so runs home secretly pregnant. Of course, he follows as soon as he learns of the baby only to find her accepting another man's proposal. Talk about second chances!

And of course, another Lindsey favorite was *LOVE ONLY ONCE*, one of the first books in the Mallory Family series. Regina and Nicholas fall in lust at first sight. Being very well connected Regina gets her heart's desire and Nicholas is forced to marry her. However, that doesn't stop him from abandoning her, and when her uncles bring him back, neither one wants to say I'm sorry first. Second chances are also big in Telenovelas – aka Spanish Soap Operas. The young couple are super in love then his family or hers, his ex or hers, his friends or hers, break them up and then the next 250 episodes are all about how they are growing further and further apart until he or she come to their senses and they give themselves a second chance. (Note: 250 episodes may seem like a lot, but, luckily, Telenovelas last about two to three years tops. American Soap Operas run into decades. For example, *General Hospital* just celebrated its 52<sup>nd</sup> birthday.)

All this reading about second chances and watching second chances have awakened in me the need to write my own Second Chance Romances. I'm working on two at the moment. The first is the story of childhood sweethearts who suffer a great trauma and separate. They are reunited five years later, but reconciliation seems impossible. Old hurts have festered and taken root. Can the stubborn lovers get past the hurt and find the love they lost? (Gotta use that line in the back cover blurb!)

The second story is about the guy who did not get the girl in a previous story. He wasn't a villain; he just wasn't the hero. I like him so much that I have to give him his own second chance romance. I don't know if I want to get him together with an ex, despite the adorable twins he just learned he fathered. But do I really want to kill off the mom? I don't know; maybe not.

What I do know is that second chances make wonderful plot lines, and can make getting to the 'happily ever after' so much sweeter. Happy writing!♥

*Maria Ferrer believes in second chances in life and in romance writing. Visit her at [www.marializaferrer.blogspot.com](http://www.marializaferrer.blogspot.com) and visit her alter ego, Del Carmen, at [www.mydelcarmen.com](http://www.mydelcarmen.com).*

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**SECOND CHANCE ROMANCE: FOUR MUST-HAVES IN A LOVABLE UNDERDOG  
BY BRIANA MACPERRY**

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*This article was first published on Briana MacPerry's Blog, yellowbrickscommunity.wordpress.com, on 12/16/15.*

Why do we love second chance romance? Because it's darn American to root for the underdog. In a second chance romance, any tumultuous history between the hero and heroine only serves to intensify the emotional journey, because it elevates the heights to which the hero must climb. What makes for a lovable, sympathetic canine? Here are four must-haves in crafting the perfect comeback kid.

**Suffering**

First of all, if your hero (or heroine) messed up royally, he better have suffered enormously for it—bad enough to tip the reader's sentiment from, "he got what he deserved," to, "awww, he deserves a second chance." It's a special bonus if you can get the reader to flip sides entirely, and feel anger towards the heroine for being so punitive. This is easier to do if you give him an even more tortured past, which basically explains how he blew it the first time. His suffering must also have taught him pride's futility, as demonstrated through acts of humility.

**Extenuating Circumstances**

A circumstance that renders the hero's conduct less serious and thereby serves to reduce (emotional) damage to the heroine is considered "extenuating." A tortured past could be an example of this. Or if the "bad behavior" that caused the initial rift was in some way protective towards a family member, friend, or otherwise redeemable character—perhaps unbeknownst to the heroine, at the time. Whatever they are, make the extenuating circumstances paint your blackened hero in a lighter shade of gray, intensifying his suffering while garnering the reader's (and eventually the heroine's) sympathy. Fear of commitment is a common flaw but won't fire the embers in a same way because it is a self-centered, narcissistic fear. Make the original rift a shrouded act of self-sacrifice and the story will write itself.

**Impossible Choices**

Damned if you do, and damned if you don't—an impossible choice arises when there is no obvious solution, or all solutions have an unpalatable outcome; a "Catch 22." Usually, these are at the crux of the hero's inner and outer conflicts. Keeping the heroine in the dark about an extenuating circumstance could be the result of an impossible choice, for example. Even better, if the hero's apparent rejection was to keep the heroine out of harm's way, to his great emotional detriment. (Remember, he must be left feeling remorseful, longing, and suffering.) The second time around, however, the hero must shrug off the illusion of impossibility and find a way for them to be together, despite all odds (this is romance, after all).

## Heart

Sometimes good people do bad things. The hero of a second chance romance must convince us of this truth. Well, he must convince us of two truths: 1. The thing that he did in the first place wasn't really so bad and 2. The hero still feels bad about the not-so-bad thing anyway, and will never do it again. His demonstration of Heart will make us believe him. Heart is taking pleasure in doing something meaningful for someone else's benefit. Heroic Heart is summoning the courage—against great odds—to do so. Remorseful suffering, humble acts, and self-sacrificing choices are all examples of Heart. Another easy trick to achieving this is to throw in a rival that is superficially "perfect" but whom the readers well know is a snake in the grass. This sheds a favorable, comparative light on the hero, who wears his flaws on his sleeve. Suddenly, the second chance hero doesn't seem flawed at all; he's simply authentic. And authenticity = Heart.

So, there you have it. Now, go have fun re-writing history the American way.♥

*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](http://www.yellowbrickscommunity.wordpress.com), or follow her on Twitter @macperrytweets.*



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**CRAFT CORNER: GETTING TO THAT WIP  
(WHEN EVERYTHING ELSE SOUNDS LIKE MORE FUN)  
BY ISABO KELLY**

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If you're anything like me, the first few weeks of January are full of renewed energy and motivation to achieve your writing goals for the year. Enthusiasm is high and the stories are begging to be written.

Then, like with diets and gym memberships, motivation...waned. Why this happens is as individual as the writer. But at one time or another, most of us have trouble getting to the page, despite how much we enjoy storytelling.

When laundry and dishes start to look like a better option, try these tips and tricks to get you to your story:

- (1) **Bribery.** I am a huge believer in bribery. I use it with my kids. I use it on myself. This is my most frequently employed motivational technique. It works. And it doesn't take much (you don't have to blow other New Year's resolutions to do this!). Promise yourself a treat in exchange for writing *one paragraph*. Don't try to bribe yourself into writing more than one paragraph (or if time works better, a five minute writing session) because you'll make excuses not to open the computer. We're writers, we're good with excuses. You have to give yourself an easy to accomplish amount of writing in exchange for the promised treat, something you can do in a spare few minutes before moving on to other things.

Some of the bribes I frequently offer myself: watch TV, read a book, go to sleep (this one is *very* motivating for me as I'm constantly sleep deprived), have that glass of wine, eat chocolate (I don't make weight loss resolutions), play another game of Mahjong. Whatever you like to do, whatever you're using to avoid the writing, promise yourself you can do that thing so long as you write just one paragraph. Chances are good you'll write more. In fact, you might find that half an hour and several hundred words later, you no longer have any interest in that TV show or reorganizing your closet. The point is just to get your fingers moving. And even if all you get done is that one paragraph, Yay! You've reached your goal for the day and can go to bed without guilt.

- (2) **Switch gears.** So your current WIP is giving you fits and heartburn? Try writing something else. Something silly is best, something completely ridiculous that makes you giggle like a maniac. Something you're not worried about being "right" or "good" or even "readable", just something that gets you to open your computer and remember that writing should be fun and feel a little (or a lot) like playing.
- (3) **Play.** While no one is looking, act out bits of dialogue for your current WIP, especially scenes of high emotion of one kind or another. It's fun! And when you stumble across those lines you *just have to write down*, go write them down. While the WIP is open, maybe you tweak the



lines a little, maybe you add in some details around the setting or the physical actions of the characters. Before you know it, a few hundred words have been added to your manuscript and all you were doing was playing.

(4) **Read or watch something that triggers your imagination.** Inevitably while I was in a history class in college, I'd have all these really great ideas for fiction stories—usually stories that had nothing to do with what I was learning in the history class, but that's beside the point. If there's something you do that almost always triggers your imagination, do that thing. Then run to your computer and write down whatever it is your imagination tells you. This harkens back to numbers (2) and (3) above. Writing should be fun, a place you go because you *want* to and because it's infinitely more exciting than dishes or laundry or closet reorganization. Sometimes, all it takes is convincing your imagination it would rather play in your fictional worlds than figure out a great way to re-order all your t-shirts (by color or season...).

- (5) **Creativity date.** This sounds a little counter-intuitive because it takes you away from writing, but sometimes the lack of motivation is down to feeling drained, like you're out of ideas and your creativity has shriveled up in the corner like that plant you forgot to water for a year. If you don't fill the well of your creativity, you won't be interested in bringing your stories to life on the page.

Go out and do something fun, something that makes your brain take flight. It can be anything—and free is good if money is a problem. Take a walk in a new garden, visit a museum (old favorite or new place to explore), visit a coffee shop you've never been to, peruse a music store (real one, not online!), take yourself to lunch, to a musical, to a concert. Go watch a session of glass blowing, or explore the countryside. Visit a working farm and see how to milk a cow. Take a cake decorating class. Whatever! It's not the activity itself so much as your enthusiasm to do it. Refill the creativity well, give yourself a shot of energy, and you'll be able to come back to your WIP with a lot more to give.

- (6) **Deadlines.** On the opposite end of the spectrum from play are deadlines. Deadlines can be VERY motivating. Especially ones that have negative consequences associated with them (like you won't get paid, or you'll default on a contract). If you are the type of person who just can't stand to miss a deadline, who thrives under pressure, give yourself a hard and fast date to get something done. Even when you're tired, you'll still open the damned computer and get a few words added to the book so you don't miss that deadline.
- (7) **Consequences.** Personally, I'm more motivated by positive reinforcement, but often the thought of negative consequences works wonders for a person's motivation. Even if the consequence is just embarrassment that you haven't finished your book yet, that can be enough to get you to the page. Tell someone what your goal is and let them hold you accountable. Take away something you like if you don't get that one paragraph written today (really, I personally hate this kind of motivation. I'd rather give myself something than take it away. But taking a toy away *can* be motivating—it works on my kids.)



(8) **Group writing session.** This isn't always possible, but writing with a group can be very energizing—especially if you have a rule that there's no discussions until the writing session is done. This combines a little human interaction with work that is typically very solitary, it gives you an appropriate bribe to get to the WIP if you like chatting with friends, and it holds you accountable to a group of people who are expecting you to get something done. Getting together with others to write can be a great way to get you out of your need to do dishes (because you're not around them anymore anyway, so you don't notice how high the pile in the sink has gotten). And if you can't get out to a group of writers, meet them in cyberspace—for example, the #1k1hr hashtag on Twitter is a great way to do a cyber group write in. Someone is always around, hoping for a little extra push to the page, too!

- (9) **Finally, remember, you don't *have* to do this.** We write because we love it, because we can't seem to help ourselves, because we literally can't imagine *not* doing it for very long. But no one is holding a gun to our heads and demanding we tell stories. No one will die if we stop writing. Okay, we might feel some embarrassment when asked how the writing is going and we say we gave it up, but that's a momentary embarrassment. The fact of the matter is, you don't have to keep writing if you don't want to. But the thing is, most of us want to. We actually *do* like the work. Sometimes just the reminder that we can do something else if we want to, but we actually don't want to, is enough to get the creative juices flowing.

Despite our love of storytelling, getting to the page isn't always easy, and the excuses can look very legitimate. Sometimes they are. If you're sick, if you have family difficulties, if the day job just kicked up a notch, or you've been surviving on three to four hours of sleep a night, give yourself a break. It's okay that you aren't writing while you get things sorted and can get back to a better state of mind.

But if your excuses involve things you would normally run screaming from, it's time to employ some motivational tactics. Do what works for you, shake things up, rotate through the various options, and get to that page. Because once you start writing, when you get lost in your story and you blink and an hour has passed and your fingers hurt from writing fast because you were dreaming on the page, you'll be glad you kicked your own motivation into gear. And when you're looking at your finished book, that satisfaction will be motivation all its own.

Have fun! Write lots. Have a great year.♥

*Isabo Kelly is the award-winning author of multiple fantasy and science fiction romances, and under the name Kat Simons, writes best-selling paranormal romances. Her favorite form of motivation is bribery, which she employs with abandon. For more on her books, visit [www.isabokelly.com](http://www.isabokelly.com) and [www.katsimons.com](http://www.katsimons.com)*

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**THE GIDDY GRAMMARIAN: WHEN IS A WORD NOT A WORD?  
BY LISBETH ENG**

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The subtitle of this column is a bit of a red herring, and I hope you'll forgive my slightly devious way of using it to suck you in. A word is always a word. What I am referring to are collections of letters that seem to be words, that we use as words, but that are not in fact... words.

**Alot:**

One of the most irritating of these "words that are not words" is alot. Alot is not a word. When you wish to refer to an abundance of something, the correct term is "a lot," for example, "Stockbrokers make a lot of money."

**Irregardless:**

I may get an argument about this one, because frequent usage has made it acceptable in some circles. I do not, however, concur, especially in formal English. Confusion occurs due to the similarity to "irregular," which is the opposite of "regular." Regardless is the correct word to describe without regard or consideration. The "less" at the end clearly denotes the negative; there is no need to add a negating prefix.

**Supposably:**

I know that you know that this is not a word. But just in case you have less literate friends who use it, this will give you the moral authority to lay down the grammatical law. You can assure them that what they really mean to say is "supposedly."

**Undoubtably:**

Sigh. Not a word. The correct word is undoubtedly.

**Conversate:**

No! This is not a word! The verb is converse, the noun, conversation.

I'll end this discussion on a tasty note, with a word that isn't a word in either the English language or in the Italian language from which it is borrowed. There is no such thing as espresso. Please don't order one from a restaurant or coffee house. The correct word in Italian and in English is espresso.♥

*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](http://www.lisbetheng.com).*



*I write therefore I am.*



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

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A good reader makes a good writer. Writers have heard this time and time again.

Experts in every field know perfecting a craft takes great practice; weeks, months, years even. It stands to reason that to become a great writer we need to invest in our craft and for the serious writer this means dedicating time to reading and writing every day. As writers need to immerse ourselves in writings of others, quality writing at that. And, reading voraciously doesn't only mean reading material in the genre in which you focus, but across multiple genres.

I'd like to share my three top favorite authors and point out in which way each has helped me define my own writing.

**Sandra Brown**

Ms. Brown blends suspense with an element of contemporary romance. I enjoy Ms. Brown's ability to skillfully incorporate the romantic element in her stories. I also like reading her books because the stories are well-plotted and they offer just the right amount of tension.

**Rachel Gibson**

Ms. Gibson writes contemporary romance weaving stories that are sexy, provocative, and emotionally satisfying. Her characters are 'real', and by real I mean they are flawed. The heroes in her books are not all 'sensitive-guy meets Viking-god meets white-in-shining-armor'.

**Iris Johansen**

Ms. Johansen is a master at creating sizzling sexual tension with elements of mystery. I enjoy reading her books because the stories are suspenseful and the level of tension is outstanding. The characters flirt, disagree, fight, flirt, argue; all foreplay, of course until the moment they surrender to their sexual urges. Awe-some!

Happy reading!♥

*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 site [www.mariacox.net](http://www.mariacox.net) and/or follow her on Twitter.*





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