

# KEYNOTES

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

*JUNE 2015*



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## **NEXT CHAPTER MEETING SATURDAY, JUNE 6**

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TRS, 40 Exchange Place  
12 noon

### **SETTING: FLESHING OUT GENERIC TOWN, USA**

Speaker: Kate McMurray

Setting is often treated as just window dressing, but it can inform every part of a story, right down to plotting and pacing and how characters speak and behave. In this workshop, we'll discuss how to turn Generic Town, USA, into a living, breathing place that your characters inhabit. We'll talk about how to make real places come alive on the page—even places the author has never set foot in, even places that don't actually exist. We'll talk about how to use little details to ground the reader in the setting and make her see the world around these characters. And we'll talk about what tools you can use to help research and flesh out your Generic Town into a place your reader wants to visit.



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### **AUTHOR OF THE MONTH: LAQUETTE**

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LaQuette is an author of Interracial, African American, Erotic, and Romantic Suspense romance novels. 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. LaQuette 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. Visit her at [www.LaQuetteLikes.com](http://www.LaQuetteLikes.com).

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**2015 CHAPTER CALENDAR**

Jul 11	Aug 1	Sep 12
Oct 3	Nov 7	Dec 5

**KEYNOTES DEADLINE**

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!

**RWA/NYC BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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 Michael Molloy, Maria Cox  
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**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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**NEXT MEETING DATE:**

Saturday, July 11, 12noon  
 TRS, 40 Exchange Place

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**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: CONFESSIONS OF A PROCRASTINATOR**  
**BY URSULA RENÉE**

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My name is Ursula Renée and I am a procrastinator.

When it comes time to write, I can always find something else that needs my attention. The litter boxes need to be completely emptied and scrubbed until they sparkle. All of my plants need to be repotted and pruned. Or, I need to design an aquatic garden, which also means a three hour trip to the fish store.

Of course, there are always emails that need to be answered, updates that need to be posted on social media accounts, blogs that have to be read and articles (like this one) that need to be written.

Though I am a firm believer in research, this can also be a time waster for me. I can spend hours touring museums or historic sites to get a sense of life during another time period. I may read newspapers to determine the issues that concerned people and the attitudes they had towards each other, the government and the world. Or, I may browse magazines to get a sense of the fashions of the day or watch movies and listen to the popular songs to get a better understanding of the entertainment.

Because I have a tendency to procrastinate, I cannot plot my novels beforehand. Once I have made a decision about the characters' names, the setting, and the time period, I jump into a novel. I move from one scene to the next until my characters achieve their happily-ever-after.

After I complete the novel, I create the outline or fill in profile sheets. I refer to these as I edit to ensure the hero and heroine stay in character and I have a clear idea of their goals and the conflicts that prevent them from achieving their goals.

For many people, this is not the ideal way to write. However, as a procrastinator, I need to focus on getting the words on paper. Once I have achieved that goal then I worry about making the manuscript perfect.♥



*Thanks to the support and encouragement of the members of RWA/NYC, Ursula signed her first publishing contract in 2013 for her historical romance, SWEET JAZZ. As President of RWA/NYC, Ursula wants to offer the same encouragement and guidance to other RWA members. Visit her at [www.ursularenee.com](http://www.ursularenee.com).*

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**WELCOME NEW MEMBER**

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Elizabeth Fels

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**MEMBER NEWS**

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**Deborah Blumental, Katana Collins** and **Kate McMurray** will be reading at Lady Jane's Salon on Monday, June 1st, 7-9pm, Madame X. There is a \$5 entrance fee that goes to charity.

**Kitsy Clare** and **Isabo Kelly** read at Lady Jane's Salon on May 4. In the audience were fellow chapter members Stacey Agdern, Maria Ferrer, Kate McMurray, Ursula Renee, Julia Tagan, Hope Tarr and Sofia Tate.

**Alyssa Cole, Lena Hart** and two other authors collaborated and released **THE BRIGHTEST DAY**, an African-American historical romance anthology commemorating the 150th anniversary of the end of slavery, on June 1.

**Jean Joachim's** book, **TO LOVE OR NOT TO LOVE**, placed Second in the Short Contemporary Category in the New England RWA Reader's Choice contest.

**LaQuette's** **PROTECTED HEART**, book #3 in her Queens in Kings series, is out now from Hot Ink Press. Get an insight into LaQuette's writing method on page 10.

**Alice Orr's** **A YEAR OF SUMMER SHADOWS** will debut on June 22. This is book #2-- Mark and Hailey's story-- in her Riverton Road romantic suspense series. The book is set in and around Riverton, New York, featuring the Kalli family and the fortunate people who find safety and a warm welcome at Kalli Corner on Riverton Road. Read all about Alice's writing process on page 15.

**Jess Russell's** **THE DRESSMAKER'S DUKE**, from The Wild Rose Press, released September 2014, is a finalist in the National Readers Choice Awards for both the Best First Book category and the Historical category.

**Xyla Turner's** second novel, **THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT**, is out now from Azina Media Publications. Read her article about opposites attracting on page 20.♥



**ROMANCE FESTIVAL: JUNE 20**

RWA/NYC and the Morris-Jumel Mansion are proud to host their Second Annual Romance Festival on Saturday, June 20, starting at 1:00pm.

The keynote speakers are Maya Rodale and Laura Willing.

There will be readings, presentations, book signings, prizes and house tours for a nominal fee. Family and Friends welcome!♥

**2015 GOLDEN APPLE AWARD WINNERS**

And the winners are:

- Lifetime Achievement Award: Thea Divine (top photo)
- Publisher of the Year: Carina Press
- Editor of the Year: Kristine Swartz, Berkley
- Agent of the Year: Kimberly Whalen, Trident Media Group
- Media Source of the Year: HEA/USA Today
- Librarian of the Year: Jacqueline Woolcott, NYPL
- Author of the Year: Jeanine McAdam (bottom photo)



Congrats to RWA/NYC members, Thea and Jeanine!!  
Venue and date details will be announced shortly.♥

**CHAPTER CALENDAR**

June 1 --Opening of When Sparks Fly Contest  
June 6 --Chapter Meeting  
June 20 --Romance Festival at Morris-Jumel Mansion  
July 22-25 --RWA National Conference\*  
August 31 --Deadline to enter contest  
October 23-25 --Fall Chapter Retreat

*\*NOTE: If you are attending the National Conference, please let President Ursula Renee know.*

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**CHAPTER HISTORY:  
KATHRYN HAYES  
“WHEN SPARKS FLY” CONTEST**

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The original RWA/NYC Contest was called the “Love and Laughter Contest.” For over ten years, entrants were asked to mail in five copies of a synopsis and a humorous chapter. Even Harlequin wanted in on our action and launched a “Love and Laughter” romance line. Unfortunately, that line is now defunct but our Chapter Contest lives on.

In 2002, the Chapter Board renamed the Contest in honor of the late Kathryn Hayes, a Founding Mother and first Chapter Secretary. She was a wonderful woman, an accomplished author of children’s books, and a mentor to many members of the Chapter. Fast forward another ten years, and the Contest undergoes its first transformation. In 2012, the Contest theme was changed from laughter to “We Need A Hero.” However, this year, the Board changed the theme again to better tap into the heart of the Romance industry.

Let’s hear a big welcome to the Kathryn Hayes “When Sparks Fly” Contest.

Per Contest Chair, Vice President Vanessa Peters: "Under this year's theme of 'When Sparks Fly' we are asking unpublished writers to submit a work of fiction which exemplifies the first spark of attraction and/or passion featuring their hero and heroine. It's that moment we live for in romance... the kiss, the look, the encounter...it's the moment when the heat of love and attraction is ignited between our hero and heroine and the sparks fly."

The Contest opens on June 1 to all unpublished writers, and closes on August 31. We’ve gone high tech and are only accepting electronic submissions, which make things easier to “ship off” to the judges and send score sheets back to the entrants. Members are encouraged to enter. All entrants will receive a detailed score sheet judged by published members. The member judges select three finalists, and the winner will be determined by an editor. This year our Final Judge is Esi Soagh, Editor, Kensington Books.

Please note that several past winners of our Chapter Contest have gone on to final and win RWA’s Golden Heart contest and have sold their manuscripts to top publishers. We wish you the same luck and many “sparks” in your future! Happy Writing.♥

*Maria Ferrer is a Charter Member of RWA/NYC. She’s been Chapter President, Secretary and Newsletter Editor. Today, Maria oversees the Chapter’s Blog and social networks. She invites all to visit the Chapter Blog at [rwanycblogginginthebigapple.blogspot.com](http://rwanycblogginginthebigapple.blogspot.com).*





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**BE PRO!**  
**BY MARIA COX**

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Hello fellow writers, I'm pleased to announce my new appointment: RWA/NYC's PRO Liaison. I am very excited at the prospect of having more members join PRO, I hope you are also. Think of this, becoming PRO will not only help you fulfill your responsibilities as general member (as it pertains to 2014-2015 RWA's revised guidelines), but becoming PRO will also help boost your writing career. How you may ask? Well, in becoming PRO you are one step closer to earning your PAN

eligibility...that's great motivation, don't you think?

Now, let me share with you a few things about PRO as presented in myRWA:

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.

(Revised guidelines, April 2015)

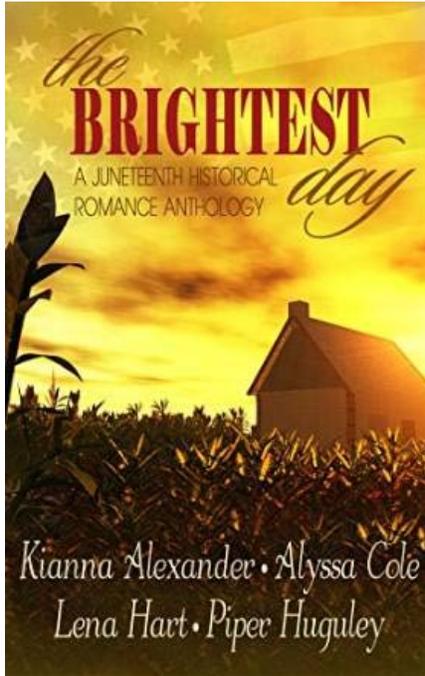
How to Join PRO: To be eligible to join the PRO community, RWA members must submit an application and a digital copy of the qualifying work(s) to the RWA Office.

Questions: If you're interested in becoming PRO and/or would like more information, you can email me at [maria@mywritingden.net](mailto:maria@mywritingden.net).♥

A green square containing a quote by Steven Wright. The text is in a purple, serif font. The quote reads: "I'm writing a book. I've got the page numbers done." -Steven Wright.

"I'm writing a book.  
I've got the page  
numbers done."  
-Steven Wright

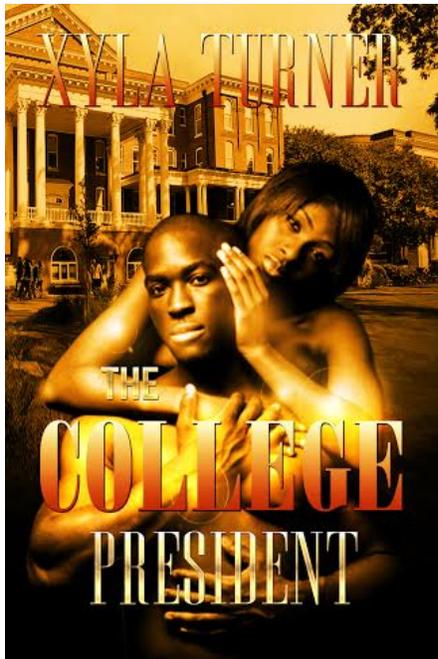
MEMBERS ON THE SHELF



**THE BRIGHTEST DAY**  
 Anthology  
 with Alyssa Cole & Lena Hart



**PROTECTED HEART**  
 Book 3, Queens of Kings series  
 by LaQuette  
 Hot Ink Press



**THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT**  
 by Xyla Turner  
 Azina Media Publications





*Our theme this month is  
PLOTTER vs. PANTSER*

*Here's what that means  
to some of our Chapter Members.*

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#### **FOUR RECOMMENDATIONS FROM A DIE HARD PLANNER BY BRIANA MACPERRY**

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I'm a die-hard planner. I love charts and tables and prompts and little fill-in-the-blank worksheets that make me think about a character's favorite snack before I even think about tackling a meet-cute. Mainly because I believe a character map is the backbone of any good character-driven story. And if I don't know my character inside and out before I start writing, I feel like I'm wasting time.

That said, my story ideas typically flutter into my head with images, quotes, or imagining the meet-cute, without any prior planning or prompting. But I keep it there. In my brain. Simmering in the intangible, until I've properly mapped out my protagonist. The ideas might beg to be let out, screaming like a lobster trapped in a boiling pot, but until I've set the table, prepared the garnish, and waited long enough for the

crustacean's meat to sweeten and tender, I won't relent.

My experience as a therapist has helped me tremendously in being able to map my characters in advance. Once I know the basic goals, motivations, and conflicts of my protagonist, there are only so many predictable ways in which the story could go. You also know what kind of man would rattle her cage. If you know your character's internal conflicts, you already know the end of the story. And a knowledge of archetypes will draw a pretty detailed map to get you there. Here are four recommended readings if you want to try your hand at planning.

1. **THE COMPLETE WRITER'S GUIDE TO HEROES & HEROINES, SIXTEEN MASTER ARCHETYPES** by **Tami D. Cowden, Caro LaFever and Sue Viders**. This book is the most practical guide I have ever read that helps you understand the relationships between archetypal characters, while cluing you into their conflicts in a succinct and insightful way. It makes planning a joy instead of a homework assignment.

2. **SAVE THE CAT by Blake Snyder.** A screenwriter's guide for using The Hero's Journey to map out a block busting story. Snyder has a wonderful voice and manner of explaining plotting devices so that you understand how they work, and why.
3. **THE WRITER'S JOURNEY by Christopher Vogler.** Based on the work of Joseph Campbell, this is an easy to understand break down of major archetypes and mythology, and how they appear in well-known films and stories. Always gets the ideas percolating.
4. **GOAL, MOTIVATION, AND CONFLICT, by Deborah Dixon.** A must-have book that will be dog eared, tattered and highlighted up the wah-zoo once you're done with it. Keep this one on permanent display next to your desktop, because you don't have a story without it.

Even if you're a die-hard pantsler, it's worth it to read these books above, so when it comes time for pitching and writing that dreaded synopsis, you have the tools necessary for building your romance-writing empire.♥

*For several years, Briana MacPerry has practiced as a Licensed and Board Certified Creative Arts Therapist in New York City, working predominantly with traumatized women and addiction. Currently, she teaches graduate level thesis writing and works for a brain research and diagnostic facility. When she is not corralling her four-year old son, she is slaving away at her passion's pursuit. To learn more, please visit her blog at [www.brianamacperry.wordpress.com](http://www.brianamacperry.wordpress.com), or follow her on twitter @macperrytweets.*

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## THERE GOES THOSE PLANS...

### BY LAQUETTE

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I'm two and half weeks away from a deadline and I'm about halfway into my sixty thousand word novel. For some, this might be a cause for panic, for me, not so much. I am the person that didn't begin writing her Master's thesis until a month before her scheduled defense—sssh don't tell my former professors.

Am I a procrastinator? No, not at all, in fact I plan most things in my life down to the very last detail. So how can someone so anal about everything else in her life be so fast and loose

with her writing? Here's the easy answer to that question, I'm a pantsler.

A pantsler is someone who writes without the benefit of outlining a story prior to actually writing the story. In essence, when I sit down to begin a new story and I'm opening up that blank document, I usually have no idea what's about to happen until I type the words—just in case you were wondering, I'm actually doing the same thing right now for this article.



When I sit down to write a book, I usually have three big scenes in my head. I see these scenes in isolation and I have no idea how I'm going to connect them into a cohesive plot. All I know is that these three major ideas have to come to life in the book. Once I have those major ideas, I usually just sit down, plug my mp3 player into my ears, and write what comes to mind. By some miracle I figure out ways to weave all of the unconnected ideas together and make them into one understandable storyline—or sometimes two, just

depends on what creeps up while I'm writing.

Some might say I've just been lucky so far, I like to think I'm just that creative. I know, it's crazy, but don't knock it 'till you've tried it. These unguided writing sessions have yielded very positive results for me. Remember that Master's thesis I mentioned earlier? I earned an A on the paper and I successfully defended that paper before a very tough panel of literary scholars. Go me!

I can't do outlines; I'm actually allergic to them. Every time I've attempted to sit down and write one I feel as if the walls of my throat are closing in and I'm fighting for each breath. They're just too constrictive and restraining for a writer like me.

Writing has to be organic for me, I can't force it. Either the words come or they don't. I need the freedom to change things at a moment's notice when a new idea pops into my head. I can't be imprisoned by the fear of destroying a very carefully crafted and immovable storyline that has been plotted to death by that evil outline.

So if you're thinking pantsers are slackers that just aren't dedicated enough to get the job done, you couldn't be more wrong. I usually write a novel in about 4-6 weeks. Yeah, me...the pantsler, I did that. If all goes well, in a twelve month period I will have published four novels in a year and I can promise you, not a single one of them will have been outlined prior to me typing the very first word.♥

*LaQuette—Romance Author: Embracing my crazy...one character at a time. Author of Interracial, African American, Erotic, and Romantic Suspense romance novels. A native of Brooklyn, New York, LaQuette 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. Visit her at [www.LaQuetteLikes.com](http://www.LaQuetteLikes.com). And, contact her on Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, and her Facebook group LaQuette's Lounge.*



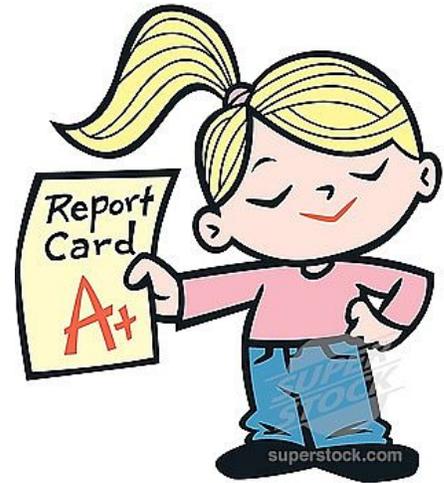
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**PLOTTING FOR PANTSERS****BY KATE MCMURRAY**

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Don't hate me, but when I was in high school, I was the sort of student who could crank out an essay the lunch period before it was due and still get an A. By the time I was writing short stories for my creative writing classes in college, I thought that kind of spontaneity led to good fiction, so for a long time, my approach to a new story was just to open a new document and start typing.

I changed strategies a little when I started participating in NaNoWriMo every year. Knowing in advance that I'd be spending November writing a novel meant I naturally thought a little about what I wanted to write in advance. That fundamentally changed how I approached the blank page. It took some trial and error, but I found that, when I know what's going to happen, the words come much more easily.



Short version of this story is that, the more I write, the more I have changed from a pantsier into a plotter. And it had made a significant difference in my writing (for the better).

But this is just what works for me. I'm also a Type A personality and something of a control freak, and I am rarely happier than when I'm buying brightly-colored office supplies, so my general nature lends itself well to plotting before I write. That's not true for everyone, so feel free to take the rest of this column with a grain of salt.

"Plotting" is not just outlining. Although I outline, I don't write the traditional outlines with Roman numerals. I tend to write what I think of as narrative outlines, which kind of resemble a synopsis in that the outline is a series of paragraphs describing the action of the story. I also like to fiddle around with the index card view in Scrivener.

Developing plot is actually really tricky, and one of the things I struggled with for the longest is structure and pacing. I figure, even though I'm a published writer, there are always more things to learn and things I can improve upon, so I set out to learn to get better at plotting. This involved reading craft books. Two I recommend: *ROCK YOUR PLOT* is cheap (in ebook) and short but offers a number of exercises that help you plan out your book's plot. *SAVE THE CAT* is also really good. It's primarily about screenwriting, but it helps you think about structure and pacing, and the plot beats described can easily be applied to any fictional medium.

But developing plot is not the be-all, end-all. Plots can change as you write, even if you have a tight outline. Something doesn't work or you get a better idea and suddenly everything changes.

It's essential to think about character and setting, too. Setting, I think, gets short-shrift in the discussion of writing craft, but I love a well-developed setting and think it can really enhance a novel. So knowing where your book is set and doing some research on that setting in advance can help flesh it out.

Having a sense of your characters before you begin can make the writing process smother, too. I use a lot of tools for thinking about characters, but two I recommend: CHARACTERS, EMOTION, AND VIEWPOINT by Nancy Kress is a pretty great overview of characterization (although I think the chapter on genre fiction character types is too restrictive). You can also choose your character's personality type through the method of your choice. I like enneagrams (which are 9 personality types) but maybe you like Myers-Briggs or horoscopes or tarot readings. Choose the framework of your choice and work out which type best applies to your character, and then flesh that character out from there.



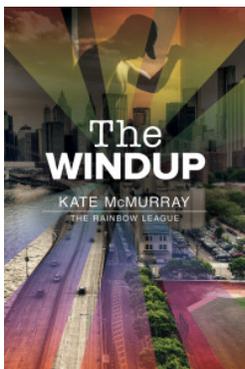
Keep in mind, it's good that *you* know all these things, but not all of it will find its way into your story. The key to not overwhelming your reader with detail is to only include what they need to understand how the story progresses. This is stuff to keep in mind to write a stronger first draft that takes fewer left turns and needs less pruning of dead weight as you work out the plot.

My point is that, even if you don't outline, there is still plenty you can think about before you sit down to write that will hopefully help make the blank page less daunting. I think of this process of preparing to write as plotting for pantsers—it's not a strict outline, but it is thinking about the story elements in advance of writing the book.

Of course, now that I'm a plotter, I keep notes. I like to outline on paper instead of on my computer, so I buy a spiral notebook for each project and put all my notes (and flow charts and maps, which I like to draw, too) in one place. I created a whole bible for my new baseball series, with lots of cheat sheets, character lists, team rosters, apartment addresses, etc.

You can do what works for you: make collages or vision boards; choose images to represent your characters; visit the places your story is set and take photos; really, anything that will get you thinking about the story. Even if you write by the seat of your pants, any bit of advance thinking can only help you moving forward.

Try something new with the next book, maybe, and find out what works for you. Good luck, and happy writing!♥



*RWA/NYC VP 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. She lives in Brooklyn, NY. Visit her at [www.katemcmurray.com](http://www.katemcmurray.com).*

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## WELCOME TO MY WRITING DEN! MY LIFE AS A PANTSER BY MARIA COX

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In my early teens when I began writing, I didn't even know there were different styles of writing. As a young woman, I was just thrilled with the idea of world building. I discovered I had the power to change a person's fate with a few simple keystrokes and that fascinated me.

As the years went by and more responsibilities were piled onto my plate writing became secondary soon I'd stopped writing altogether. It wasn't until just a few years back that I delved into world of fiction again employing the only method I'd ever known, the make-it-up-as-you-go-along method.

When I set out to create my first short story *Captive* I started with nothing but a blank Word document and the hero's voice in my head. The plot and supporting characters would emerge during the course of that first draft.

As you might imagine my initial attempt at this short story didn't go so well as plot lines were changed and/or added along the way. The second and third manuscript drafts were just slightly better. But, the more I wrote, and rewrote the more *Captive* began to resemble a cohesive storyline.

Most pantsers will tell you that allowing our imaginary friends to direct the course of a book is the most exciting aspect of the writing process. Pantsers might also tell you that this technique can be as equally frustrating.

Now, I've tried plotting and using character sheets before, but the process didn't feel natural, so I reverted back to my pantser ways. However, once I began to adhere to stricter deadlines I realized I had to have a much more structured path to follow so I decided to give the plotting idea another spin.



I agree with those who say that plotting can be dull. Yes, planning and outlining is a departure from the spontaneity of 'pantsing', but bottom line, plotting makes me far more productive.

Don't get me wrong, I'm an exploratory writer at heart, but with continued practice I hope to get much better at this plotter thing. ☺♥

*Maria Cox has a degree in Business Administration with a Minor in Computer Applications. She also has an accreditation from the Project Management Institute. 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. Her first published novel, WICKED LUSTFUL TALES, was released through Melange Books in October 2013. Maria writes sensual romance, stories that showcase strong, sassy, and sexy characters. When she's not writing, Maria works a technical writer. She lives in Queens, New York. Please visit her site [www.mywritingden.net](http://www.mywritingden.net) and/or follow her on Twitter. Maria is a member of Romance Writers of America (RWA) and a member of RWA/NYC & RWA Desert Rose. She is also is the past President of the Phoenix Writers Club.*



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**ASK ALICE: ARE YOU A PLANNER OR A PANTSER?****BY ALICE ORR**

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**Answer:** Back when I was first a book editor then a literary agent and still a publishing author I was a Planner big time. I even wrote an article “The Painless Synopsis” for *Writers Digest Magazine*. I was devoted to planning my stories in detail up-front. I had to do that because my writing life was regularly interrupted by my day job.

My workday mind had to be deep into agent tasks. I needed a synopsis to keep on track with my story as I dragged my head back and forth between my agent brain and my writer brain. My guess is that most people juggling a full-time job with a writing regimen need to do the same.

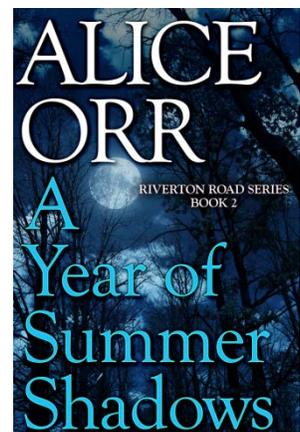
Now that I’m a full-time writer I can indulge myself with what feels to me like the joy of making it up as I go along. Because I write Romantic Suspense I start out with three characters – a murder victim, a heroine and a hero. I also know the conflict that motivated the killing and at least a little about how the heroine and hero fall on opposite sides of that conflict.

I also try to have an idea how the story ends – who committed the murder. But I’ve written two books this way so far and by the end of the book the identity of the killer had changed and the story was better for it. I now understand that I shouldn’t cast the ending in stone up-front. It’s better to leave room for my imagination to find its way.

Kurt Vonnegut compares this approach to driving at night. You can see as far as the headlight beams allow you to see. A former client of mine Jo Beverley calls it “Flying into the Mist.” I call it fun. I’m playing with my story and my story is playing with me. I can afford the luxury of this playfulness because my head is pretty much always in the story. I no longer have to interrupt the flow to bury my gray cells in my day job.

In my case at least the choice between Planner and Pantser couldn’t always be about preference. It had to be about my circumstances. Like so many of us – I did what I had to do.♥

*My current novel is A WRONG WAY HOME, is Book #1 in the Riverton Road Romantic Suspense Series. Next is A YEAR OF SUMMER SHADOWS –Book #2 – Mark & Hailey’s Story, which launches June 22. These are my 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> novels, and both were Pantser born and brought to life. Visit Alice at [www.aliceorrbooks.com](http://www.aliceorrbooks.com).*



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**THE GIDDY GRAMMARIAN:  
LESS MAY BE MORE, BUT IT IS NOT FEWER  
BY LISBETH ENG**

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"Fewer" and "less" have similar meanings but there is an important difference. The quick and dirty rule is that if you can count the individual items ("countable" nouns), use fewer. If you can't (uncountable or "mass" nouns), use less. Here are some examples.

"There were fewer snowstorms in 2014 than there were in 2013."

But...

"There was less snow this year compared to last."

(You can count storms or inches of snow, but you can't count the mass noun snow.)

"I drink fewer glasses of water a day than she does."

But...

"I drink less water than she does."

(Glasses are countable; water isn't.)

"The doctor recommended that I use less salt on my food and eat fewer doughnuts."

You get the idea.

However, like any rule there are exceptions. In this case, the exceptions are for money, distance and time. Although you can count dollars, miles and hours, "less" (not fewer) is preferred in these cases:

"We have less than \$1,000 in the bank."

"We're less than 50 miles away."

"He can fix the roof in less than 12 hours."

Now that we've covered "fewer" and "less," it seems only fitting to balance scarcity with abundance (i.e. "many," "much" and "a lot").

"Many" modifies countable nouns, while "much" modifies uncountable (mass) nouns. We write many scholars, many lamps, and many songs, but much knowledge, much light, and much music.





The distinction can be tricky in a few rare cases. For example, though “many thanks” is more common than “much thanks,” the latter appears fairly often because we can think of thanks, like gratitude, as a mass noun. But we can also think of thanks as an abbreviation of the plural noun thank-yous, in which case many is appropriate. Then there are mass nouns that sound plural. Kudos, for one, is a mass noun that happens to end in s, so the phrase “many kudos” is more common than “much kudos,” even though “many kudos” is technically incorrect. (You would never reward someone with just one kudo!)

On a similar theme, the phrases “a lot” and “lots of” are used with both countable and mass nouns:

“There were a lot of tourists in the park on Sunday.” (Countable)

“We had a lot of fun ridiculing the tourists on Sunday.” (Uncountable)

“Lots of,” on the other hand, is more informal, though it is used in a similar way:

“There were lots of commuters on the subway.” (Countable)

“There was lots of traffic this morning.” (Uncountable)

And please, please, please remember that “alot” is not a word and should *never* be used.

So now, you'll make *fewer* grammatical errors and have *less* angst about writing perfect query letters and flawless emails.

Much thanks (or is that *many* thanks?) for your interest and attention!♥

*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).*

“Easy reading  
is damn hard  
writing.”

– Nathaniel Hawthorne

**REVIEW: SLEUTHFEST: THE PERFECT CONFERENCE****BY BARBARA BENT****SUPER SLEUTH****CLUB**

Sleuthfest is a three day conference sponsored by the Florida chapter of Mystery Writers of America. Typically held, the last few days of February into the beginning of March, this conference offers a great chance to leave New York and go to Florida in the dead of winter.

With 300 or so attendees, Sleuthfest is large enough to attract top New York agents and editors, such as Mel Berger, from William Morris and Editor Neil S. Nyren, Senior Vice President, Publisher and Editor in Chief of G. P. Putnam'S Sons. However, the venue is intimate enough that attendees run into the authors, agents and editors in the hallways, at lunch and at the Editor Agent cocktail party where the winners of the gorgeous raffle baskets are announced.

While the official conference begins on Friday, Thursday's panels are devoted to improving your craft and moving new writers toward publication. Attendees can pick the track that best fits where they are in their careers --from the very basic how to write workshop to dealing with critique groups, and of course staying positive about the hard business of writing and publishing. I think this day is the best.

The panelists are published authors and are extremely generous with their time and ideas. While you might have a workshop on building sexual tension at a romance writers' conference, the special workshops at Sleuthfest center on tips for good mystery writing.

My favorite Thursday panel was taught by Victoria Landis (also the conference co-chair). Like many writers, she has a day job—in the construction industry working with kitchen and bath design, decorative and faux murals and special effects painting. Her workshop gave us the inside scoop on where the bodies could be buried—or not as well as tips on hiding evidence.

First of all know the floor plan of the interior of the house or castle so people can move around quickly. For mystery writers, the author is always looking for an easy escape for the character. If you want a fast escape, no hand crank or louvered windows.

Want to bury a body in the floor boards? Not so fast. In the old days, floorboards were fastened to supporting beams leaving a fair amount of space under the board. Now there is tongue and groove flooring. No Room for bodies, or notes or guns.

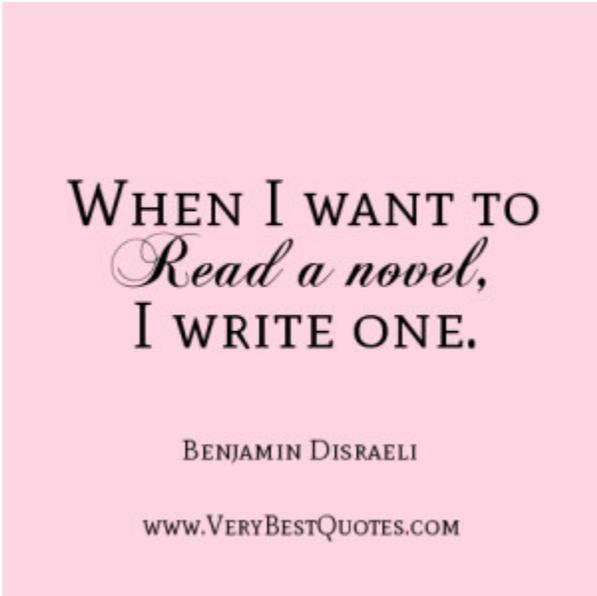
You can hide notes in chair or table legs, or in the air conditioner by taking the filter out tucking papers behind it.

Poor quality paint is very absorbent. A blood stain on a cheaply painted wall will never come out. If there is cheap carpeting on the floor the dents left by heavy furniture won't come out because the carpet doesn't have good recovery. No moving the furniture at the last minute to hide the evidence.

And one other thing to know. The workmen become invisible to the owners when they're working on a home. But the tradespeople talk among themselves. If the owners aren't nice, they will leave things like food, beer cans, cigarette butts, or worse in your wall.

If your characters are asking "why do I have bug problem?" maybe they weren't nice to the people building their home!♥

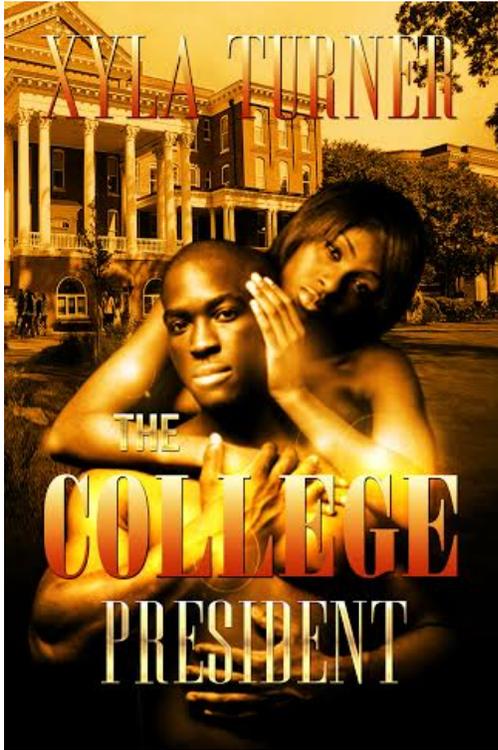
*Barbara Bent is a Charter Member of RWA/NYC. Her stories have been published in numerous magazines, including Star. Barbara attends a number of writers' conferences throughout the year to learn, network and pick up on the vibe. She finds the energy is different at all of them.*



WHEN I WANT TO  
*Read a novel,*  
I WRITE ONE.

BENJAMIN DISRAELI

[WWW.VERYBESTQUOTES.COM](http://WWW.VERYBESTQUOTES.COM)

**ATTRACTION: OPPOSITES & ENEMIES****BY XYLA TURNER**

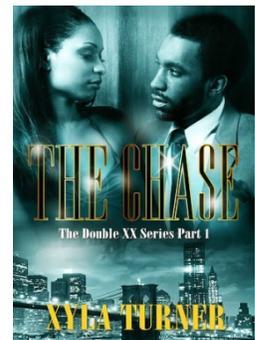
As an avid romance reader, the books that stick with me the longest and resonate with me, usually include the least likely couples. The good girl and bad boy, the employer and employee, or the hard to love and the easily loved. This notion of opposites attract has had plenty of research, but the one that stands out for me is we are looking for balance. There are definitely traits that I admire in people that are also in me, but the things that attract me to others, include those characteristics that I may not be the best at or would like to improve. Then there are our enemies; the people we swore we would never talk to, speak with, be with. These contentious relationships are usually present in our leading heroines and heroes.

In *THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT*, the hero T.R. Matthews is a new leader who has made it his mission to clean house. He graduated from a community college and continued to pursue his education at an Ivy League school. Therefore, when he took over Far Rockaway Community College (FRCC), his approach is both no nonsense and executed like an Alpha. He realized that certain departments did not fit

into the type of community he wanted for FRCC. This included eliminating the adjuncts or part-time professor positions, including one, Imara Winters. Imara was a middle-school teacher, but left her job due to the lack of leadership and took a part-time position as an adjunct for FRCC. She liked the flexibility, helping students make the transition from high school to college and the atmosphere. When this was disrupted, Imara told Dr. Matthews where he could shove his job.

These two are on opposing sides, so the drama lies in how they get together and what they see in each other, besides the sexual tension that causes them to let go of all good sense. What this story will reveal is that T.R. Matthews is attracted to Imara's strength and she is attracted to his leadership skills. There is more to their desire to want to be with one another, but their perceived enemy possessed abilities that each other admires.

My debut novel, *THE CHASE*, is about two strong-willed people who are looking for balance. Xena is the strong independent woman, while Xavier is the controlling alpha man. They are both highly successful, ambitious, and have their own businesses. However, Xena realizes that even though she has achieved these great accomplishments, she has no one to share them with. In walks Xavier, who sets his eyes on her and she becomes his obsession. She is sweet, kind, volunteers, and runs a school.



Xavier is a ruthless business man, who will remove any obstacle in his way. They are both similar, but also approach things differently and are looking for the other to provide that balance. They unconsciously crave for what they are lacking.

These are the things that make good stories! The most unlikely characters making some sort of transformation or compromise and living happily ever after.♥

*Xyla Turner is a Vice-Principal at a Brooklyn High School. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, writing, experimenting with dangerous adventures, and spending time with her family, especially her nieces and nephews. Her second novel, THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT, was just released by Azina Media. You can reach her on Facebook/Twitter/GoodReads and her website: [www.xylaturner.com](http://www.xylaturner.com).*

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## **SOCIAL NETWORKING FOR AUTHORS: USING #HASHTAGS**

### **BY MARIA C. FERRER**

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Hashtags are keywords that you can use when you are tweeting about life in general or when you are promoting your book. The hashtags may be different in these instances, but the purpose is the same – to expand your audience by getting people to read your tweets and share them with others.



Hashtags began about 2007 on Twitter and quickly became popular. You can easily recognize hashtags as they all start with a “#.” And, fortunately – and unfortunately! -- anything can be a hashtag. For example, hashtags can be subjects, people, TV shows, book series, countries, politics, et al. Below are some real hashtags:

#romance	#cowboys	#Scandal
#erotica	#NavySeals	#Outlander
#amwriting	#Alpha	#Cuba
#amreading	#newadult	#Ayotzinapa
#WNDB	#YA	#MomKnowsBest
#weneeddiversebooks	#freereads	#RWA2015
#multicultural	#TuesdayTales	#blacklivesmatter
#BooksOverBoys	#BookoftheDay	#whitegirlproblems
#NaNoWriMo	#streetart	#JeSuisCharlie
#craft	#Fiftyshades	#ReadyforHillary
#mmromance	#FSOS	#MayThe4thBeWithYou
#romcom	#LatinasWriteRomance	#mylifewouldsuckwithoutyou
#skirtsandspurs	#MLK	#youmaybewriter

If enough people use the same hashtag, then that hashtag becomes a “trend.” And the more people that use it, the wider the audience of potential readers. For example, the TV Show “Scandal” is a big hit and while it’s on thousands of people tweet about the show and all use the hashtag #Scandal -- that’s a trend; that is product promotion and product recognition at its best. You want readers to talk about your books like that.

Another good thing about hashtags is that once you use them they become a searchable item so you can search for them and you can see who, when and where your hashtag is being used.

Remember, your goal is always to get more readers, whether you are tweeting about books, authors, the weather, politics, the latest episode of “Outlander” or you are promoting your book; using hashtags is a big contributor to that goal.

Here are some tips on how to use hashtags:

- Use hashtags whenever you tweet.
- Use hashtags that relate to your post.
- Use hashtags that are easily recognized.
- Use the hashtag(s) that are trending, that others are using. This will keep you in the mainstream and also expose you to more readers.
- You can use hashtags on everything and everywhere. Use your hashtag on Facebook, your website, promotional material, etc.
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NOTE: When you are talking about a specific person, store or event don’t use a hashtag, instead use their Twitter handles. For example, at the Lady Jane’s Salon reading in May, I posted that Isabo Kelly and Kitsy Clare were reading there. Here are my posts:

@IsaboKelly reading from her latest #fantasy at @ladyjanessalon. Her hero is like Loki, a “hunky ass.” #romance

@KitsyClare also reading tonight at @ladyjanessalon. Looking forward to her new story.  
@crossoverwriter #romance #newadult

I added hashtags but when talking about the authors themselves and Lady Jane’s Salon I used their Twitter handles. By using their handles my tweet is now added to their “page” and whoever looks them up will see my tweet.

I read somewhere that you shouldn't use more than two hashtags per post. I don't agree. I try to add as many as I can fit AFTER I have written my post because I want to make sure the reader knows exactly what I'm talking about and also because maybe one of my hashtags will seduce them into retweeting me and sharing my post with their audience.



You can start using hashtags today. **Be bold.** And now that you are tweeting and using hashtags, here are two that you can have fun with -- #FF and #ThrowbackThursday.

#FF – This hashtag means #FollowFridays. To use it you post on a Friday only and then you list people that you follow. It’s a nod to the people who follow you or have retweeted your message. This is a good one to use weekly.

#ThrowbackThursday – another popular hashtag. This one is used for people to post old photos of themselves, their family, their friends, etc.

#HappyTweets #hashtagsrock #socialmediaforwriters♥

*Maria Ferrer loves Twitter and using hashtags. She believes the more the merrier, but when in doubt, one will do. Visit her on Twitter at @MariaFerrerNYC, @mydelCarmen and @latinawrite.*

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## CHAPTER BLOG TOURS

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**JUNE:** There will be two blog tours in June.



June 3- 13 -- **Happy Endings Blog Tour.** Here's the line up:

June 3-- LaQuette	9--Maria Ferrer
4--Julia Kelly	10--Stacey Agdern
5--cover, Julia Kelly	11--Alice Orr
6--Anna DePalo	12--cover, LaQuette
7--Cathy Greenfeder	13--Briana MacPerry
8--Troy Storm	

June 21-29 -- **Hero Blog Tour**



**JULY:** We invite all members writing historical romance (through the Vietnam War) to participate in this tour. To enter, send in the following:

- 1) Book summary /synopsis
- 2) Opening paragraph of your book (150 words)
- 3) Author bio and social network links
- 4) Book cover or photo (send as an attachment)

**DEADLINE:** Please email your materials to ferrerm@aol.com by June 15.

**JULY KEYNOTES -- I LOVE NY ISSUE**

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WANTED! The RWA National Conference will be here in our backyard this July. We want to pack our newsletter with lots of articles and information on the greatest city in the world -- New York.

Help us by sending us YOUR Favorite:

- Places to write
- Places to do research (libraries, museums, etc)
- Places to visit
- Places to eat
- Places one must visit while in NY
- Places to shop (including discount stores)
- Places to take Selfies
- etc etc etc



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**FREE PROMOTION!**

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**Keynotes is a FREE Promotion Opportunity.**

Have a new book out? Enter/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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**THE END**

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Are you participating in RWA National's THE END challenge?

Let President Ursula Renée know. This is a one way to prove you are seriously pursuing a writing career. Happy Writing!♥

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**CHAPTER MINUTES FOR MAY**

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Please note that there are no Chapter Minutes from May as we had a Chapter Brunch instead of a regular meeting.♥