

KEYNOTES

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

MAY 2015

NEXT CHAPTER MEETING: MAY BRUNCH

Saturday, May 2

12:00-3:00pm

Manhattan Proper

6 Murray Street, NYC

(This event is for members only)

Keynotes speaker:

Sara Humphreys

Sara Humphreys is a graduate of Marist College, with a B.A. Degree in English Literature & Theater. Her initial career path after college was as a professional actress.

Some of her television credits include, *A&E Biography, Guiding Light, Another World, As the World Turns* and *Rescue Me*.

In 2013 Sara's novel *UNTAMED* won two PRISM awards—Dark Paranormal and Best of the Best. She loves writing hot heroes and heroines with moxie but above all, Sara adores a satisfying happily-ever-after. She lives in New York with her husband, their four amazing sons, and two adorable pups. When she's not writing or hanging out with the men in her life, she can be found working out with Shaun T in her living room or chatting with readers on Facebook. Visit her at www.novelromance.net.♥



NEW MEMBERS



Rebecca Brooks

Tanille Edwards

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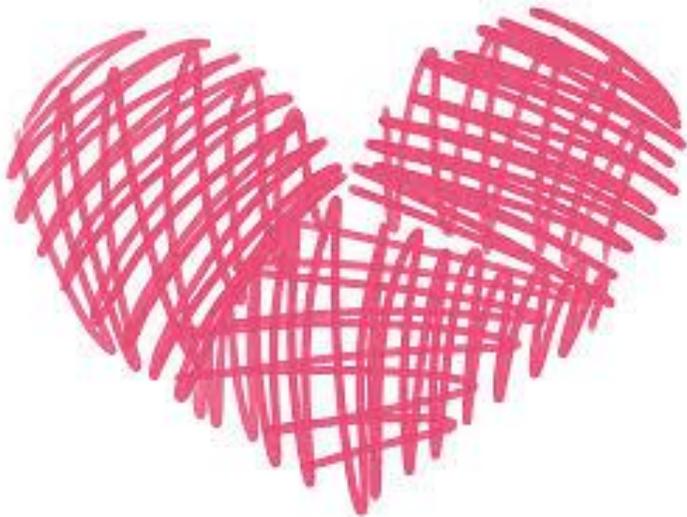
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2015 CHAPTER CALENDAR

Apr 11	May 2	Jun 6	Jul 11	Aug 1
Sep 12	Oct 3	Nov 7	Dec 5	

KEYNOTES DEADLINE

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

**RWA/NYC BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

President: Ursula Renée
 Vice President/Events: Kate McMurray
 Vice President/Contest: Vanessa Peters
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 PAN Liaison: TBD
 Blog/Social Media: Maria Ferrer
 Critique: Mimi Logsdon
 Keynotes Editor: Briana MacPerry
 Publicity: Jeanine McAdam, Jean Joachim
 Michael Molloy, Maria Cox
 Website: Ursula Renée

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

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

RWA/NYC

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 New York, NY 10163
www.rwanyc.com
info@rwanyc.com
rwanycblogginginthebigapple.blogspot.com

NEXT MEETING DATE:

Saturday, June 6, 12noon
 TRS, 40 Exchange Place

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: GETTING THE WORD COUNT**BY URSULA RENÉE**



Chantal glanced across the room at Ahmal. His eyes did not sparkle with humor; the corners of his mouth did not twitch; and the lines in his face remained smooth. There was no hint as to whether or not he had been joking. But, surely he could not be serious.

Yes, he was fearless and craved adventure like an infant carved its mother's breast. But, no one was foolish enough to go after the Kraken...at least, not single-handedly, with nothing more than his wit and charm. To do so would be suicidal. For, if the beast did not kill him, she would.

To ensure they were keeping to their mission of advancing the professional interests of career focused romance authors, Romance Writers of America (RWA) revised the rules for General Members. To prove serious intent, a member should either be in PAN or PRO; have published a work of romance fiction of at least 20,000 words or multiple works of romance fiction that have a combine for a total of at least 20,000 words; or complete a work of romantic fiction of at least 20,000 words or complete multiple works of romantic fiction of that have a combine total of at least 20,000.

Since changing their requirements, RWA set out to help members reach their goals by creating The End. The goal of the challenge is to write at least 2,000 words every month from February to December. Individuals who complete the challenge each month will have at least 22,000 words written by the end of the year. This is 2,000 more words that are needed to prove serious intent.

With jobs, family and life obligations getting in the way if our writing, 2000 words may seem like a lot. However, it works out to approximately 67 words a day. A more adventurous person could round this number up to the 100 words.

So, what exactly does 100 words look like? The total word count for the first two paragraphs is 102 words. They were typed on a cell phone while waiting for my breakfast to be prepared at a diner. It is not the most riveting piece of literature written, but it is something. And, as people will continue to say, over and over and over again...you can't edit a blank page.

Participants can join a loop, where they are cheered in by other members. They can also sign up to receive daily motivational emails from established authors. Finally, each month, everyone who completes the challenge is entered into a raffle.

RWA/NYC not only encourages members to participate in the challenge, they hosts monthly write-ins and bi-monthly critique meetings to help individuals reach their goals. We also cheer members who participate in NaNoWriMo, which takes place in November, and the CampNaNoWriMo events held during the spring.



While RWA is there to help advance the professional interests of its members, they cannot write the works for the authors. It is up to the individual to determine her goals then make the commitment to achieve them.♥

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.

MINUTES: APRIL 11 BY PAST PRESIDENT MARIA FERRER

Present:

- President Ursula Renee
- Vice Presidents Kate McMurray and Vanessa Peters
- Treasurer Tamara Lynch
- Past President Maria Ferrer
- Publicity Chair Jeannine McAdam

Absent: Secretary Shirley Kelly

Members present: 23

President Ursula Renee opened the meeting at 12:17pm.

Minutes: Approved.

May Brunch: Vice President Kate McMurray mentioned that author Sarah Humphreys will be the keynote speaker at the Brunch. Members need to RSVP by April 25. The Button is up for members to pay.

Treasurer's Report: \$9490 in the bank. There are still bills to pay.

--84 members paid. April meeting is the deadline for renewals.

Loops:

--Craft Loop: Isabo Kelly is the moderator; she is posting once a week with helpful advice.

--Critique Loop: Mimi Pizzaro is the moderator. Next critique meeting is April 14 at Citicorp Building.

Keynotes: Maria Ferrer mentioned that the May theme was the Power of Kindness and how it inspires writing.

Chapter Blog: Maria mentioned that there will be a Heroine tour in May and a Hero tour in June. There will also be blog tours in June and July to help launch the Chapter Contest.



No act of kindness,
no matter how small,
is ever wasted.
- Aesop

Golden Apple Award: Kate mentioned that the polls were open for members to vote. Polls close on May 1. Winners will be announced at the May Brunch on May 2.

--Kate is looking for new venue for reception.

--GAA is a great opportunity to meet editors and agents. All members are encourage to attend.

--A volunteer sheet was sent around.

Contest: Vice President Vanessa Peters stated the contest theme was "When Sparks Fly." Contest will open June 1; close on August 31. Contest opened to unpublished authors.

--Guidelines and entry form will be on Chapter Website on May 1.

--Vanessa is still looking for more judges.

Liaisons: President Ursula Renee announced that Maria Cox is the new PRO Liaison. She is still looking for a PAN Liaison. The Chapter Liaison is Lisbeth Eng.

--PRO status is a goal to work for. There will be special PRO workshops at the National Conference.

Publicity: Jeannine McAdam announced that the 2nd annual Romance Festival will be held on Saturday, June 20, from 1:00-4:30pm. Our keynote speakers are authors Maya Rodale and Laura Willig. Ron Hogan will be the MC.

--author tables are still available. On May 1, tables will be made available to other chapters.

--the Festival Team has targeted specific resources: Racheline Maltese will help with print media; Julia Kelly will help with TV announcements; Jean Joachim will help with radio media; Maria Cox will work with bloggers to get the word out.

--the Morris Jumel Mansion is excited about having us back.

--Kwana and Falguni are doing a great job with the gift baskets for the meeting. May 2 is the last day for members to make a donation.

--Michael is getting the volunteers together.

Chapter Retreats: Spring retreat has been cancelled. The Fall Retreat is possible so far there are four members interested in attending.

Chapter Website: Ursula will be updating the chapter website. Members were asked to send in any updates to the website.

Meeting adjourned 1:20pm.Meeting was followed by Round Robin with members; a talk by the Author of the Month Jessica Evans; and the April speaker and pitching sessions.♥

MEMBER NEWS



Sylvia Baumgarden (wa Sylvia Halliday) and **Wendy LaCapra** read at Lady Jane's Salon on April 6. (Photo: Wendy in back; Sylvia in front)

Ruth A. Casie has had three releases from Timeless Scribes Publishing -- TIMELESS TREASURES: STORIES OF THE HEART anthology (Oct 2014) and THE DRUID KNIGHT TALES: A SHORT STORY (Mar 2015) and KNIGHT OF RAPTURE (Mar 2015). (Cover below.)

Zoraida Cepedes (wa Mercedes Cruz), **Maria Ferrer**(wa Del Carmen)and **Vanessa Peters**(wa Vita Perez) all read from their short stories in the TIE ME UP anthology from Riverdale Avenue Books at the Between the Covers reading series on April 13. (See photo on page 27.)

Kwana Jackson signed three- book deal with Kensington/Dafina imprint.

Julia Kelly will have a new short story in the ONE WEEK IN HAWAII anthology, which debuts May 1.

LaQuette's DIVIDED HEART, book two in her Queens in Kings series, is out now from Hot Ink Press. She will be doing a tradeshow at York College.

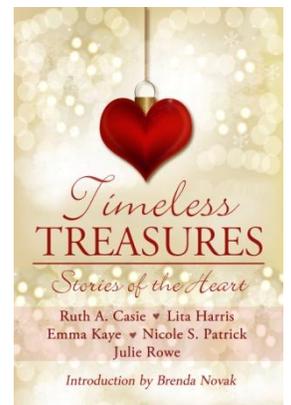
Tamara Lynch's second erotic multicultural romance, DOING LONDON, under the pen name Chloe Blaque is out now.

Kate McMurray's new baseball romance is out now, THE WINDUP. It's the first in her Rainbow League series. She will be reading at Lady Jane's Salon in June, and her first historical romance will be out in October from Kensington.

Ursula Renée signed a contract for a second book, A BOOKIE'S ODDS, with The Wild Rose Press.

Sofia Tate's third book in her erotic series, FOREVER WITH HIM, will be released on August 4th by Forever Yours (Grand Central Publishing).

Xyla Turner's first novel, THE CHASE, was released on April 13 by Azina Media Publications. ♥



FREE PROMOTION!



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. Articles will also be published on the Chapter Blog for DOUBLE the promotion!

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

ROMANCE FESTIVAL

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 free house tours. Family and Friends welcome!



CHAPTER BLOG TOURS FOR MAY AND JUNE
BLOG MISTRESS MARIA FERRER

All members are welcomed to participate in the upcoming May and June blog tours dedicated to heroines and heroes, respectively. We are doing Character Interviews; the questions are below. First come, first served so please get your answers in ASAP.

QUESTIONS FOR HEROINES / FOR MAY

- 1) Which do you prefer -- Jimmy Choos or flats? Why?
- 2) Does sex mean love?
- 3) Does love mean marriage?
- 4) What attracts you first about the hero?
- 5) If you and your hero were stuck in an elevator, how would you pass the time?

Please include mini synopsis (3 lines) and mini bio of the author. Do include social networks.

QUESTIONS FOR HEROES / FOR JUNE

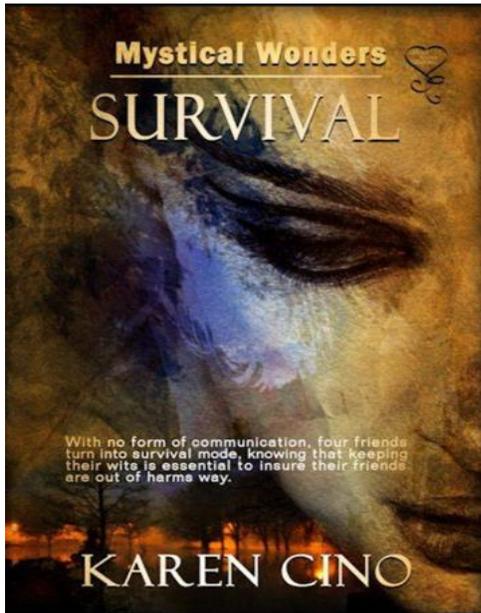
- 1) Which do you prefer – baseball or football? (There can be only one!)
- 2) Do you believe in love at first sight?
- 3) Does sex mean love and marriage?
- 4) What attracted you first about the heroine?
- 5) If you have sex on the first date, would you respect your Heroine in the morning?

Please include mini synopsis (3 lines) and mini bio of the author. Do include social networks.

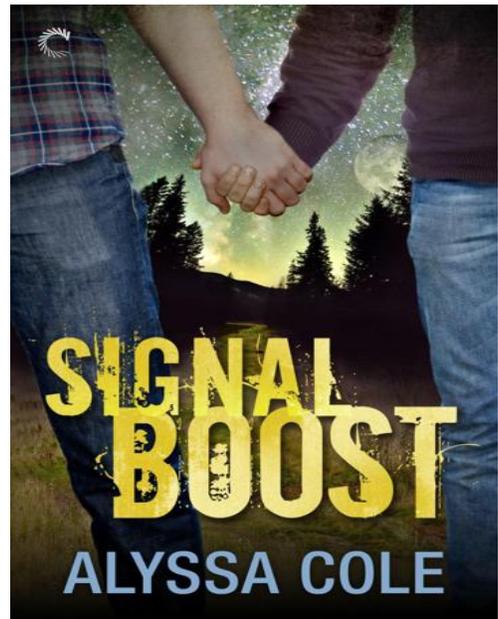
EMAIL your Heroine's / Hero's answers to ferrerm@aol.com.

Thank you for your participation.--m

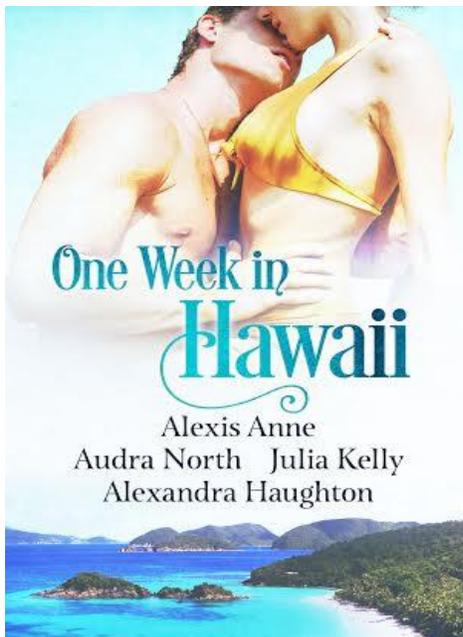
MEMBERS ON THE SHELF



MYSTICAL WONDERS: SURVIVAL
by Karen Cino
Secret Cravings Publishing



SIGNAL BOOST
by Alyssa Cole
Carina Press

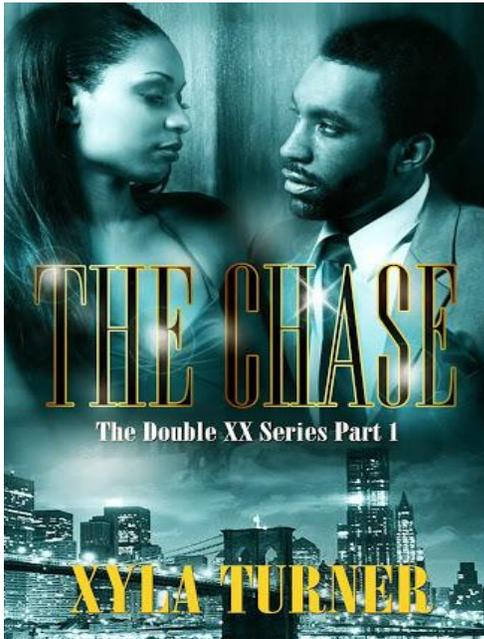


ONE WEEK IN LOVE
by Julia Kelly
ONE WEEK IN HAWAII anthology

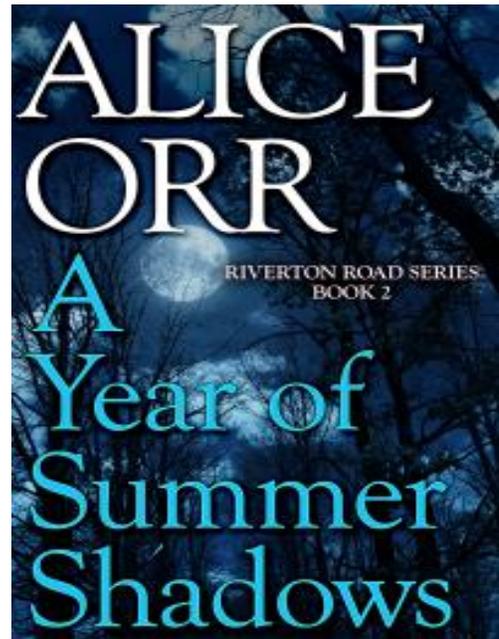


KNIGHT OF RAPTURE
by Ruth A. Casie
Timeless Scribes Publishing

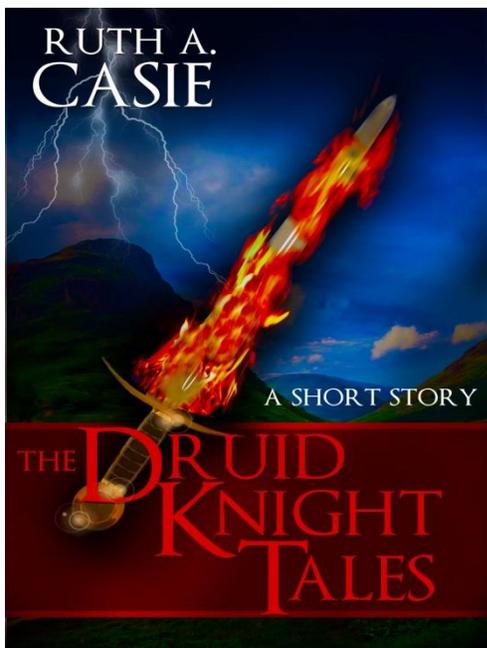
MEMBERS ON THE SHELF...CONTINUED



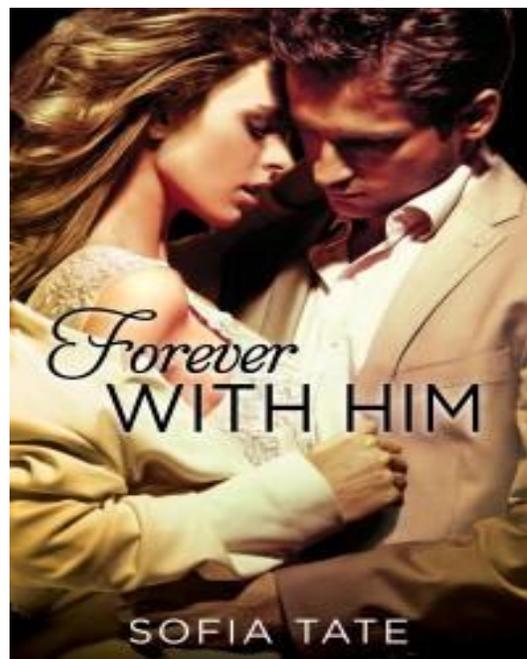
THE CHASE
by Xyla Turner
Azina Media Publications



A YEAR O SUMMER SHADOWS
by Alice Orr
Alice Orr Books



THE DRUID KNIGHT TALES
by Ruth A. Casie
Timeless Scribes Publishing



FOREVER WITH HIM
by Sofia Tate (August release)
Forever Yours / Grand Central Publishing

something else with a hard deadline. Organization does not come naturally to many people, myself included, but it's a skill worth acquiring if you see writing as a long-term career. Otherwise, you risk driving yourself crazy.

3. **Get a writing posse.** There are times when no one is going to understand how stressed out you are---not your parents, not your significant other, and not your best friend. This is when having a writing posse comes in. Your writing friends know what you're going through, and better yet, they're always cheering for you to succeed. They know that "Why don't you just take a break?" is not the response you're looking for when you complain about being burnt out, and they will always cheer you on when you need it the most. That said...
4. **Take a break.** This is the essence of being kind to yourself. Yes, writing is our job, and much more personal than something we do when we clock in and clock out at an office every day. But if you allow writing to become something you're doing all the time, you also miss out on the things that are essential to good writing: interaction with other humans, reading lots of books, keeping yourself healthy and your mind sharp. Setting off blocks of time that are just for you, whether it's a long walk with the dog, getting a pedicure, or watching a silly movie, are all important to your well-being as a writer.
5. **Treat yo'self.** There's a point in writing stress when you can forget why you're doing it in the first place. Finishing a book or story is no longer a huge accomplishment because you have three other things after that waiting to be done. Be sure to take a moment to acknowledge how amazing it is that you have created something for the enjoyment of others at the end of every project. Treat yourself to a night out on the town, a new comic book, amazing new shoes, or whatever makes you happiest in life. Rewarding yourself for a job well done is a great way of distressing. Retail therapy is real, and it's fabulous.

There are lots of other things you can do but, to paraphrase Kurt Vonnegut: Goddammit, writers, you've got to be kind--to yourselves! ♥

Alyssa Cole is a science editor, pop culture nerd, and romance junkie who lives in the Caribbean and occasionally returns to her fast-paced NYC life. When she's not busy writing, traveling, and learning French, she can be found watching cat videos on the Internet with her real-life romance hero. Her latest release, SIGNAL BOOST, is out on May 4, 2015.



THREE KINDS OF KINDNESS THAT BUILD BETTER CHARACTERS

BY BRIANA MACPERRY

If there is one commandment beaten over the head of every writer who dared put pen to page (or finger to key) it is this: conflict drives character, and character drives plot. This is particularly true of the romance genre, but can be said for any form of writing or entertainment. To create the deepest conflict, put a character's unconscious, internal needs in opposition to their conscious, external behaviors and/or wants.



For example, a man needs to feel loved but the idea makes him feel weak, unworthy and subject to rejection and abandonment, so, he does everything in his power to push love away. It's a basic formula and yet it produces blockbusting characters such as Edward from *TWILIGHT*, and Mr. Grey from *FIFTY SHADES*. Some say it's the darkest parts of ourselves that are drawn to these vexingly sexy creatures. I would argue, however, it's the contrast that piques our interest—the striving to be something better than what we perceive ourselves to be. And nothing shines so bright against a black backdrop, than an unexpected act of kindness.

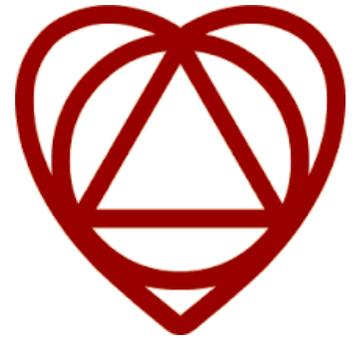
There are three kinds of kindness, each one coloring your character in different ways. Whether your protagonist is a villainous hero or a heroically-disguised snake in the grass, it's helpful to know what kindnesses landed him or her in your plot and what role he or she will play.

1. Conditional Kindness: This form of kindness is based on the humanistic theory of conditional worth posited by psychologist, Carl Rogers. Rogers believed for a person to grow (emotionally, mentally, and spiritually), he needs an environment that provides him with genuineness (openness and self-disclosure), acceptance (being seen with unconditional positive regard), and empathy (being listened to and understood). Without these, relationships and healthy personalities will not develop as they should, much like a tree will not grow without sunlight and water. He also believed when a person achieves their goals in life, self-actualization takes place. As writers, we might think of self-actualization as the protagonist's "return with the elixir" (according to Christopher Vogler, author of *THE WRITER'S JOURNEY*), or the final resolution that brings the character's story arch full circle.

A large impediment on the path to self-actualization is the presence of conditions of worth. In other words, tit for tat. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. You can't get something for nothing. If you want to create a deeply conflicted character that struggles with emotional openness and vulnerability, give him or her a context in which emotional needs are conditionally met.

For example, perhaps your protagonist has grown up believing if they don't join the family business he will be ostracized from his or her loved ones, or the larger community. This is a major threat because it challenges the character's sense of self and identity. It also creates a lot of gray areas that manipulate your readers' perceptions of a "good" or "bad" character. Think Al Pacino in *The Godfather*.

2. Manipulative Kindness: This is when someone uses seemingly selfless acts of kindness to trick you into perceiving them as essentially good and honorable. Why? For two reasons:



A. Because he is deceiving you for personal gain. Somewhere along the line, this person or character learned sincerity was detrimental to getting what he needed and/or wanted. To cope, he developed a mask, or "persona," (as psychoanalyst Carl Jung referred to it) to present to the world, paving the path of least resistance. These are usually the type of villains that show up as overly helpful friends in the beginning of a story, and by the end, the protagonist comes to realize this character is always around to lend a helping hand, because he *orchestrated* every catastrophic event. Although these characters have a clear sense of who they really are and what they want (which is usually an external, physical goal), unfortunately, they don't really care if it is selfish or immoral. Think Prince Hans in Disney's *Frozen*.

B. Because if you believe he is good, he'll believe it too. Inside, these characters are usually fractured due to a terrible life event or childhood, and harbor a lot of repressed anger and pain. Instead of confronting it, they learned to cope by layering fantasies of goodness and perfection on top; fantasies they need desperately to believe.

But this stacks a house of cards on a cracked foundation. On the one hand, this type of person or character is very seductive and lavishes you with attention and affection. Then, for seemingly no reason, he not only takes it all back, but punishes you for "making" him act in a way that leaves him feeling intolerably vulnerable. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) might classify these types of characters as "Narcissistic" or "Borderline." Equally, people who grew up in families with serious alcoholism or addiction are likely to be familiar with this erratic pattern of relating (according to Dr. Janet Woititz, New York Times Best-Selling author on addiction, and author of *STRUGGLE FOR INTIMACY*).

Conditional Kindness may not encourage self-actualization, but at least it behaves predictably. This is more like, "There is nothing you can say or do because you are merely a mirrored reflection of the psychodrama going on inside my head." Think Joan Crawford in *Mommie Dearest*. Or the husband from the classic flick, *Gaslight*.

3. Cathartic Kindness: This is just what it sounds like, the kind of kindness that breeds its own reward. One might argue you cannot call it a "selfless" act because selfless acts make us feel good about ourselves—but that's okay. Actually, that's a good thing. And the better you feel about yourself, the kinder you are towards others. In fact, researchers at University of California, Los Angeles, and University of Cambridge and University of Plymouth in the United Kingdom have proven kindness is contagious.

Researchers performed two experiments in which they showed viewers either a nature documentary, a funny TV clip or an uplifting segment from the Oprah Winfrey Show, and then asked them to voluntarily help with another task. In both cases, participants that watched Oprah and subsequently experienced the elevated feeling were more likely to help.

"When you feel this sense of moral 'elevation' not only do you say you want to be a better person and help others, but you actually do when the opportunity presents itself," said lead researcher Simone Schnall of Cambridge. "Human nature is essentially good. And this study proves that seeing good things actually makes us better."

In another study, designed to identify cause-and-effect links, people were divided into groups of four, given 20 credits each, and asked to secretly decide what to keep for themselves and what to contribute to a common fund. When political scientist James Fowler of the University of California, San Diego, and medical sociologist Nicholas Christakis of Harvard University, analyzed the results of this so-called public-goods game, they found when one person gave, others in their group tended to be generous during the next two rounds of play. Recipients of their largess became more generous in turn, and so on down the chain. When a punishment round was added — players could spend their own money to reduce the rewards of selfish players — generosity lasted even longer.

As a writer, this kind of generosity is most effective when enacted at a pivotal moment in your character's emotional development. Make your character work his or her way up, and the rewards will be ten times more satisfying. This is true for both the protagonist and the antagonist.

For example, in the movie *Kinyarwanda*, a teenager is confronted with her parents' killer, and he begs her forgiveness. As an audience member, all you want is for her to punish him for what he has done. Instead, she forgives him, and you realize true victory is hers. For an example of a villain transforming through kindness, Darth Vader in *Star Wars*, starts off as a terrible enemy, but by the end of the series, he sacrifices his life to save his son, and redeems his soul.

Whether you are developing a villainous character or a protagonist with a heart of gold, layering his actions with the appropriate form of kindness can add dimension to his internal conflicts, and enrich your story arch. The more you layer, the harder your protagonist has to work to dig himself out, and the better your best-seller will sell.♥

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, or follow her on twitter @macperrytweets.



MOMENTS OF KINDNESS IN CLASSIC NOVELS
BY KATE WELLS

My favorite fictional scenes reveal characters' connecting with each other in ways that demonstrate a deep, almost spiritual bond. Here are five of them:

1) WUTHERING HEIGHTS,

Emily Brontë: Reconciliation: Heathcliff, determined to destroy all who kept him from his beloved Catherine, wants Hareton and Cathy to hate each other. While Cathy complies, Hareton hides his love, rebuffing her subsequent efforts to reconcile.

"You hate me as much as Mr. Heathcliff does, and more."

"You're a damned liar... why have I made him angry, by taking your part, then, a hundred times?...."

"I didn't know you took my part.... But now I thank you, and beg you to forgive me... ' after remaining an instant undecided, she stooped and impressed on his cheek a gentle kiss."



2) FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD, Thomas Hardy: Steadfastness: Although years ago Bathsheba refused Gabriel Oak's proposal, he faithfully oversees her business matters, but resigns when rumors threaten her reputation. Bathsheba, *"wounded that the possession of hopeless love from Gabriel, which she had grown to regard as her inalienable right for life, should have been withdrawn"* reveals her love, acknowledging she is courting him. *"And quite right, too....I've danced at your skittish heels, my beautiful Bathsheba, for many a long mile.... It is hard to begrudge me this one visit."*

3) FRENCHMAN'S CREEK, Daphne du Maurier: Empathy: Dona, tired of frivolous society, leaves London for her seaside home, where she befriends the French pirate hiding his boat in her creek. He draws her portrait, dismaying her:

"The truth is—when I looked upon your drawing—I was ashamed because for the first time someone else had seen me as I too often see myself." He responds, *"Supposing the artist bears a similar blemish...?"* *"You mean, there would be a bond between them?"* *"Exactly."*

4) A TALE OF TWO CITIES, Charles Dickens: Sacrifice: Sydney Carton trades places with his look-alike, Charles Darnay, going to the guillotine so Lucie, the woman they both love, can be with her husband. In his last moments, *"I see her, an old woman, weeping for me on the anniversary of this day. I see her and her husband... and I know that each was not more honoured and held sacred in the other's soul, than I was in the souls of both."*

5) COTILLIAN, Georgette Heyer: Humility: At Kitty's request, Freddy agrees to a sham engagement, knowing she desires cousin Jack. Jack appears a romantic hero until his crass character emerges, contrasting with Freddy's kindness and decency. Refusing Jack's eventual proposal, Kitty apologizes to Freddy. *"No, no! Very understandable thing to do. Devil of a fellow, Jack!"*

Trouble is – wouldn't make you a good husband, Kit. Been worrying me for a long time. Thought you was in love with him. Don't mind telling you it was as much as I could do to keep a still tongue in my head when he asked you to marry him tonight. What I mean is, like you to have everything you want. Wished it was me, and not Jack, that's all.'”♥

Kate Wells recently joined RWA-NYC. She is working on a series of contemporary romances set in NYC, where she lives with her family.

BE KIND TO CINDY BY MARIA FERRER



Poor Cinderella.

Her mother is dead. Her father remarries and presents her with an evil stepmother and two awful stepsisters. Then, her Dad dies and poor Cindy becomes a servant in her own home.

Now, while there is no kindness at home, Cindy is shown kindness by strangers –animals and human alike – and it is this goodness, this caring from and for others that has become the blueprint of many a Cinderella tale.

In the first Disney version, the animals of the forest are Cindy's friends and when her dreams of meeting a Prince Charming and being rescued seem to be just a dream, Poof!, along comes a good fairy with a stunning dress, a royal carriage and the latest in glass wear.

Unfortunately dreams –aka windows of opportunities– only last so long and at the stroke of midnight Cindy is back on her knees, figuratively speaking. That was the old Cindy. Modern Cindy also has to serve and take abuse, but she is tougher than she looks; just look at these examples.

In *Ever After: A Cinderella Story*, Danielle (aka Cindy played by Drew Barrymore) rescues the Prince by carrying him across her shoulders out of the den of thieves. This action impresses not only the outlaws, but the Prince. Of course, he wants to get to know her better.

In *Ella Enchanted*, Anne Hathaway plays Ella who sets off to find her Fairy Godmother and change her fate only to realize at the end that she had the power all along. The Prince is enchanted and joins the search. In fact, he is so captivated that he will forgive her anything, including trying to stab him in the back.

In *Enchanted*, Amy Adams plays Giselle, a fairy tale princess lost in New York City, who is handy with a sword and goes after the dragon to rescue the man she loves – and it's not Prince Charming!

So the moral of this article is to always be kind to family and strangers alike. Kindness can lift spirits, can launch dreams and can ignite passions. And of course, remember to always be nice to Cindy... or she'll kick your ass!♥

Maria Ferrer is looking forward to seeing the newest Disney version of Cinderella at the movies this May. She hopes this new heroine is also a kick-ass-kind-of-girl. Visit Maria at www.marializaferrer.blogspot.com, and visit her alter ego, Del Carmen, at www.mydelcarmen.com.





PAYING IT FORWARD, IS PAYING IT BACK BY XYLA TURNER

In the movie, *Pay It Forward*, a young boy started a movement that started with one act of kindness. His only request was for the receiver to perform another act of kindness to someone else. In my opinion, this movie was both rousing and transformational. Without giving the movie away, his acts of kindness started a revolution that spread across the nation.

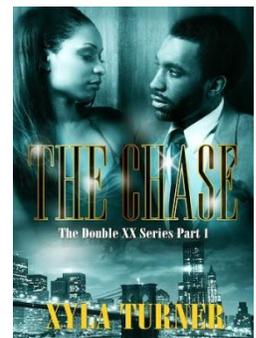
As a brand new author, I found it to be extremely difficult to break into this new world of writing, promoting, networking and all that accompanies this industry. Surprisingly, there were several authors and readers who graciously helped me along when I had questions. They spoke with me over the phone, shared their resources, and continually provided encouragement. These people did not know me personally and there was no immediate reward for their intangible service.

This past week, I happened to be in a shipping store, sending off swag, prizes and my very first book to winners that participated in the release party. There was a woman that wanted to make a shipment, but she was short a few dollars. I was so busy sealing my packages; I almost missed the opportunity to pay it forward. After I had offered to pay for her shipment, the woman was not only surprised, but extremely grateful and kept insisting if she ever saw me again, she would buy me a drink. The irony is that I was in that store at that moment, partly because of those people that helped me get there. I cannot pay them back, but I can pay it forward to others because that is what was done for me.

When I was a child, my mother taught me a song titled, *I Can do Anything*. She often tells the story of the time she came downstairs to find me struggling to put on tight, thick white stockings. All while singing my song at four years of age. We always laugh at about that memory, but we always conclude that the song is still my motto for life. My mother will always be acknowledged in my books, always be my biggest fan, and always support me, but I could never repay her for all that she has instilled. A gift on Mother's Day is just a token of my appreciation, but what I can do is pay it forward.

We may not be able to pay back the people that have helped us publish that first book, mentored us in our careers, raised us until we were adults and imparted their wisdom. What we can do is be that for someone else and continue to show kindness regardless of the return. One act of kindness has the potential to start a movement and it can also repay the movement that was started within us by others.♥

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. She just released her first novel, THE CHASE (contemporary romance) and has many more to come. You can reach her on Facebook/Twitter/GoodReads and her website: www.xylaturner.com.



ASK ALICE: HOW SHOULD I BE KIND TO MYSELF AS A WRITER?**BY ALICE ORR**

Answer: You can be kind to yourself as a writer by changing your attitude about the hard times in your career.

You can and will make it through whatever hard times you may have in your writing career. You can make it because you have the skills and resources you need to do that. You will make it because that's your only choice if your passion is to write and bring your writing to the world.

Your first step is to fight back fear. You must struggle against fear as relentlessly as the heroines of your stories struggle against the obstacles they confront in their journey to survive and go on to thrive in the end. Will yourself through the scary places. Every morning say to yourself – “I will not be afraid today. I refuse to let anxiety infest my spirit today.”

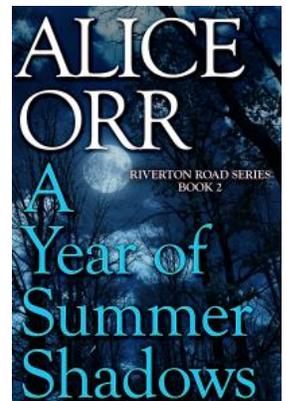
Fight back fear by changing your thinking about now and the future – about today and tomorrow – especially in terms of your goals for yourself. Stop thinking about your goal as far away. Stop thinking of your progress as painfully slow. That kind of thinking ends in discouragement and drains your hope. You lose what Ralph Waldo Emerson called The Power of Enthusiasm. Never let go of your Powerful Enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is the energy you need to fuel you through testing times.

Get your psyche on your side. See your goal as right here with you today. See yourself as progressing toward that goal today. If you see any progress at all – even a small step – then this is a successful day. A day when you've made progress toward your goal. Do this every day. One day at a time. Set a goal for each day. Know what you want to accomplish that day. Make sure it's a realistic goal. Don't defeat yourself before you start by filling your plate impossibly full.

If you want your psyche on your side make sure your To Do List is on your side. Beware the tyranny of the To Do List. It's the monster you create for yourself all by yourself. Set a reasonable realistic self-sensitive goal. Pursue that goal that day deliberately – with intention without anxiety or rushing. Haste really does make waste. It wastes your ability to experience your achievements and savor them as they happen.

Do each day intentionally and well. Think of each day as a jewel on the thread of your career. Place it artfully and never underestimate its worth. Most important – never forget to admire its beauty.♥

My next story is A YEAR OF SUMMER SHADOWS – Riverton Road Romantic Suspense Series Book #2 – Mark & Hailey's Story. Available May 15th at amazon.com/author/aliceorr. This is my 13th novel and I was kind to my author self the entire time I was writing it. Visit Alice at www.aliceorrbooks.com.



THE GIDDY GRAMMARIAN: “WHO OR WHOM?”
BY LISBETH ENG



In a previous column, I discussed the differences between subject and object. Now, I'd like to examine a subset of this issue, the oft-confused pair: “who” and “whom.”

"Who" is used as a subject, the person performing the action of the verb:

"Who left all these dirty dishes in the sink?"

"Whom," on the other hand, functions as an object, the one receiving the action of the verb:

"Do you have any idea to whom you are speaking?" "You" are doing the speaking, so "you" is the subject. A clue that "whom" is the object is the preposition "to."

You may also say, "Do you have any idea whom you are speaking to?" Though some persnickety grammarians swear by the rule that you should never end a sentence with a preposition, I'll go along with Winston Churchill, who purportedly ridiculed that theory by stating, “This is the sort of bloody nonsense up with which I will not put.”

You may even say, "Do you have any idea who you are speaking to?" since "who" is now almost universally accepted as a replacement for "whom," and used as an object, as well as a subject.

So why would you ever use "whom" if "who" can be used instead? You will have to use your internal ear to tell you what sounds right. If "whom" sounds too formal or stuffy use "who." Both are acceptable as objects, though "whom" is NEVER acceptable as subject. For objects, however, is a matter of style and setting.

Formal: Whom did you meet this morning?

Informal: Who did you meet this morning?

Formal: He is someone to whom I owe a great deal.

Informal: He is someone who I owe a great deal to.

If the preposition is right next to the object, I would opt for "whom," such as in the common salutation:

"To (preposition) Whom (object) It May Concern."

Be conscious of whom you are addressing and in what context (formal or informal; written or oral) to help determine whether the object should be "who" or "whom." But beware the pitfall of using “whom” as a subject, just because it sounds more erudite. “You’ll be shocked when I tell you whom called me last night,” is always wrong.

I'm always open to suggestions for my column. Should you have any grammatical topics you'd like to see covered, please email me at lisbeth@lisbetheng.com.

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.

SOCIAL NETWORKING FOR AUTHORS: MAKE IT PRETTY

BY MARIA C. FERRER

Let's face it, social media is King.

Nowadays, a website and a blog are not options; they are necessities for all writers. They are just as important as your presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, etc. Remember that editors, agents and fans are checking your website and blog so my advice to you is to Make it Pretty.



WEBSITE

Your website is a reflection of you and your writing. Make sure it contains a great photo of you that the press and bloggers can use on their sites when writing about you. Also, your website should be visually appealing. Dress it up with appropriate photos. If you have book covers, post them on the front page of your website. You can also add other pictures of your genre for atmosphere. For example, if you are writing Regencies, then decorate your website with Lords and Ladies. A photo of you in Regency dress would be fun and memorable. If you write contemporary romances set in New York, then photos of the City and lovers are a must. And, a photo of you in front of the Statue of Liberty would be a welcomed addition. You get the idea.

BLOG

Your blog should also be equally appealing. Remember this Golden Rule – every blog post, no matter how short or long, should *always* include a photo or a video link. A picture is worth a thousand words, and (hopefully!) a thousand readers. Your photo can be as sweet or provocative as you want. It can be a book cover or a photo you took on your new iPhone6 Plus or that you fell in love with on Pinterest and have permission to use. And, remember, a photo can be a whole blog post! Once your blog post is up, you want to share it on your social networks. Make sure you link to specific posts and not just to your general blog or website. You want people to reach your post immediately. If they have to search for it, they will more likely pass on it all together.

So make your website and blog pretty by adding photos and video links, and then share on your social networks. Your goal is to capture the attention of editors, agents, writers and readers alike. Good luck and Happy Writing!♥

Maria Ferrer always adds photos to her blog posts – it makes them longer. LOL. Visit her at www.marializaferrer.blogspot.com and www.mydelcarmen.com.

CRAFT CORNER: WAIT...WHAT?**CREATING SUSPENSE AND SUBTLETY OR JUST CONFUSING READERS****BY ISABO KELLY**



In the last Craft Corner I wrote about pumping up your suspense, but I purposefully left out one of the most frequently given pieces of advice for increasing suspense in a story: delay revealing vital information for as long as possible.

The reason I left this out is because after years of writing, being edited, and editing other writer's stories, I've discovered that this bit of advice is one of the hardest things for writers to actually follow successfully (myself included). Not that the advice itself is flawed, but the execution of this advice all too often is. Writers leave out all the wrong information, things that a reader *needs* from the start, and when the writer finally pulls the detail out, it seems to come from nowhere and feels

contrived and forced rather than the dramatic reveal they were hoping for.

Now, I know many authors can do subtlety well. They string readers along, hinting at the difficulty to come without revealing it until the most dramatic moment of the story. If you are able to pull this off, by all means, keep it up. But frequently, I read (and write) stories where the author has left out a key detail to reveal later for dramatic impact and to increase reader suspense, yet all it's really done is annoy the reader because that information *should* have come earlier, foreshadowing the approaching drama.

And there's the keyword—foreshadow. Creating suspense isn't so much a matter of leaving out information as foreshadowing how bits of information could lead to trouble for your protagonist. To hint at those difficulties successfully, you often have to reveal that bit of information you've been holding in reserve. (At least you have to let *readers* know about it. It's okay if your protagonist doesn't know right away.)

Just like you have to let readers know ahead of time that a gun is on the mantel before you have your heroine grab it in the final climactic scene, you can't throw a huge story curveball at them without hinting that the curveball is coming. And "hinting" doesn't mean you say your heroine glanced at the mantel a few times and noted its contents while never revealing those contents to the reader. It means you let the reader know the gun is on that mantel well before the heroine needs it.

So how do you know what information to include and what to hold back to increase suspense?

My suggestion: try including everything right from the start.

I know, I know, that goes against all conventional wisdom—but try it anyway.

Now, I'm *not* saying info dump. But if a fact that will later play a part in the story could naturally come up earlier, reveal that fact to readers. Don't hold out and demure. Don't try to be subtle.

Revealing this fact will help with foreshadowing that something more is going to happen. Readers will get to the point in the story where this detail turns the plot on its head and they'll say, "Ah ha! I knew something would come of that!" You will have made your reader feel smart and *still heightened suspense* because they've been waiting all that time for the other shoe to drop.



And maybe this is a better way to think about "withholding information". It's not that you want to leave out things the reader needs to know. It's that you want them wondering what those things will mean.

How about a couple of examples? This first is from my own writing (a series I'm writing under another name):

When my shifter hero first moved to a small town, he helped the locals by getting rid of a pack of werewolves causing trouble. At the start of the story, this little bit of drama is about five years in the past and something the hero doesn't like to talk about.

In the original writing of this story, I hinted that the hero had done something for the town but didn't reference the werewolves at all until only a few pages before I introduced them as a plot twist. On editing it myself, knowing my penchant for doing subtlety wrong, I mentioned the werewolves earlier, but I still didn't bring them into the story as early as I could have.

The very first editor who looked at the book pointed out that readers needed to know much earlier that there were werewolves somewhere out there. There was a scene in the third chapter where I could bring them up quite naturally and did. This single change both foreshadowed their presence, kept me from irritating my readers, *and* heightened suspense—because of course at that stage, the reader is wondering when those wolves will show up again.

Let's take another example from one of my favorite historical romance authors, Julia Quinn. In her most recent release, *THE SECRETS OF SIR RICHARD KENWORTHY*, she hints at the "secrets" for most of the book without actually making them known to the reader until almost the very end of the story when it all comes out in a big reveal. From my reader perspective, she mostly succeeded in this "suspense by withholding information" because I did keep reading to see what the secrets were (and felt very clever for having guessed correctly by the time the big reveal happened).

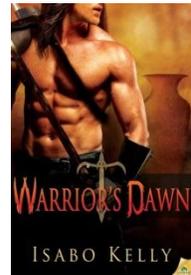
But she actually withheld the information a little too long for me. Once I'd guessed what was coming, I just wanted her to say it outright and get on with things. It wouldn't have lessened the suspense of the story for me at all. I would have still stayed up late reading to see how things worked out. In fact, she could have introduced the "secrets" in the first third of the book and I would have still found it a suspenseful read wondering how all this would play out and end happily.

Even a master storyteller like Julia Quinn can push a reader close to the annoyance line using this technique. She treads the line well, and I very much enjoyed the novel. But it is a technique to be treated with great care and caution—more caution than the advice often leads writers to believe is

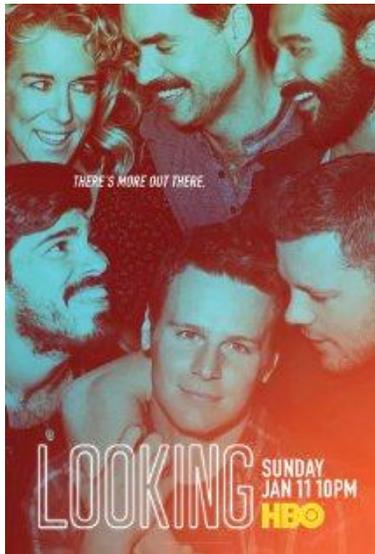
necessary. If you can still create a suspenseful read without keeping those details from the reader, you might be better served by revealing them early.

Try it yourself. Fly in the face of “common writing wisdom” and include all the important stuff up front. Experiment with increasing suspense not by withholding vital information but by revealing it early so readers will wonder at its significance. Forget about subtlety and try for blunt. See if it works for you. It certainly does for me.♥

Isabo Kelly is the award-winning author of multiple fantasy, science fiction, and paranormal romances. Her last fantasy romance, WARRIOR'S DAWN, is out now! For more on Isabo and her books, visit her at www.isabokelly.com, follow her on Twitter @IsaboKelly, or friend her on Facebook www.facebook.com/IsaboKelly. (And if you're curious about her other pseudonym, feel free to email her and ask—she really can't do subtlety and secrets well.)



AFTER THE FIRST BOOK: LOOKING AT CHARACTERS BY KATE MCMURRAY



HBO announced not long ago that it was canceling its show *Looking* after only two seasons. I, for one, was bummed, and not only because the second season finale left a few things up in the air that I wanted to see resolved. I suspect it's being canceled because it was only me and, like, three other people watching it. I think where the show failed was mostly in its marketing; it was sold as a Gay Show, which limited its audience, but its themes ended up being more universal than that.

I'll try not to spoil anything if you haven't seen it yet, but I've seen every episode, and for what it's worth, here's my take: the first season was a little slow, but the second season was fantastic. The Internet seems to largely revile Patrick, Jonathan Groff's character, but I found him the most relatable. Patrick is neurotic in a way I find... familiar, let's say. I didn't always agree with his choices, but the way he obsesses about things is the way I probably would, too. The show

handles some gay issues, but the more interesting stuff is the relationships between the characters. In the end, the genders of the players in the big love triangle don't really matter, for example. The conflicts between the characters are based on a lot more than their sexuality.

On Facebook the other day, I saw someone mention that she'd never read a gay romance novel where coming out wasn't part of the plot. I was like, “Well, I just wrote a whole series about guys who play in an LGBT baseball league, so all of those characters are out.” I mean, it seems unlikely a closeted guy would join an LGBT baseball league, you know? That necessarily forced me to find different

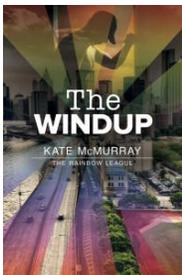
kinds of conflict to drive the stories forward. To me, that makes a more compelling narrative and helps flesh out the characters. If all of their problems stem from being gay, those characters are going to end up being fairly one note, right?

So, writers, I propose a thought exercise. Pretend your characters live in a world where nobody cares about gender or sexual orientation. There are no stigmas in this society about race or mental illness. Your characters meet. What is keeping them apart? Not their sexuality/race/etc., because nobody cares. If you can't think of something, maybe reevaluate your plot.

The best kinds of gay romance, to my mind anyway, don't ignore gender and sexuality. Obviously we live in a world where these affect us daily. But these books have a lot more to them than the gay issues. That's what I liked about *Looking*. For example, the second season spends some time on the friendship between Dom and Doris, which has grown codependent, but it has nothing to do with either of their sexualities. They have to learn how to have a healthy relationship with each other that doesn't ripple negatively out to their other relationships. That's a pretty universal theme.

This is a lesson we can apply to other sorts of characters, too. For example, I've attended a few conference panels about writing characters of color, and there's always someone in the audience who is afraid of getting it wrong. The advice from writers of color is almost universally, "Write characters." Any given character in a story is not his sexuality or his skin color but is instead a thinking, feeling person, just like you and me.

Another example: I recently finished Heidi Cullinan's novel *CARRY THE OCEAN*, which is a new adult romance between a man with autism and a man with clinical depression and anxiety. That sounds like a lot, but the novel is so well crafted, it never becomes melodramatic or wallows too much in pathos. It's a gay romance, but the bigger issues in the novels are those of perception, how others perceive us and how what's going on under the surface differs from that perception. Heidi (who I know personally, full disclosure) could teach a master class in writing characters who have flaws and limitations but are not defined by them.



So when thinking about character and conflict think beyond the cardboard. Besides what's on the surface, what else is keeping these characters apart? Finding the heart of that can help you write a more compelling novel.♥

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. Her tenth novel, WHEN THE PLANETS ALIGN was published in December 2014 by Dreamspinner Press. Visit her at www.katemcmurray.com.



TIPS FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING
BY MARIA FERRER

Last month, the TIE ME UP anthology from Riverdale Avenue Books was published, and it included short erotica stories from RWA/NYC members **Zoraida Cepedes** (wa Mercedes Cruz), **Vanessa Peters** (wa Vita Perez) and yours truly (wa Del Carmen). [Many thanks to RWA/NYC Treasurer Tamara Lynch, aka Chloe Blaque, for coming to show her support.]

We were very excited at our publication, and then scared when we were asked to read in public. A date was set in mid-April, then moved to May. We thought we had plenty of time to get ready when on April 9th we got an invitation to do a quick read the next day. -Gulp!- Of course, we all said yes.



*Authors: Chloe Blaque, Mercedes Cruz,
Del Carmen and Vita Perez*

The reading was exhilarating and scary.

I have spoken in public before, and I direct meetings for a living, but the thought of reading my work in public – in all its graphic glory! – was frightening. First, because the topic was sex; second, because I would be exposing my work to strangers. Maybe I am a prude at heart? Or maybe I'm just shy? What if the audience didn't like my story? (Nothing like a public reading to bring out the insecurity in a writer.)

There must have been about 30 people in the audience. I was the fourth to read. I took a deep breath and reminded myself that the majority of the audience was strangers and with any luck I wouldn't see them again.

Believe it or not, five minutes can last a long, long time.

I read. I lived. And, I got the pictures to prove it. There's a video somewhere, but I hope it never makes it to You-Tube. Yes, I would read again from my work. Maybe I won't be as nervous next time.

Here are some tips on reading in public that I learned from my experience:

TIPS

- 1) Select a provocative or an action-packed scene to read so you can readily capture your audience's attention.
- 2) Print a copy of the selected reading in a LARGE font, double spaced.

- 3) Introduce yourself when you take the stage and give a mini intro to your story. You want to “set the stage.”
- 4) Look up at your audience every two paragraphs. You want to connect with them as you read.
- 5) When you finish, look up at your audience and thank them for listening. Don’t run off the stage immediately; no one is chasing you!



MORE TIPS!

Here are more tips from other writers who have recently read in public:

Practice, practice, practice in front of the mirror or with someone. –from **Mercedes Cruz**, “Three Knots,” TIE ME UP anthology, Riverdale Avenue Books

Project your voice and speak clearly. You never want your listeners to feel like they are straining to hear you. Also, in doing this, it projects confidence to the listeners even when you’re extremely nervous. – from **Vita Perez**, “Love on the Line,” TIE ME UP anthology, Riverdale Avenue Books

Take a deep breath and relax. If the audience intimidates you, look over their heads whenever you look up from your reading. –from **Sylvia Halliday**, MARIELLE, Diversion Books

Slow Down. No matter how nervous you are or how much you want to get off the stage. If you read fast nobody will understand what you’re saying so slow down and breathe. –from **Alice Orr**, A WRONG WAY HOME, Riverton Road Series, Alice Orr Books

I hope these tips prove useful when it’s your turn at the mic. Until then, Happy Writing and Happy Reading.♥

Maria Ferrer writes contemporary romances under her own name and erotica under the name of Del Carmen. Her short stories have been published by Cleis Press, Ravenous Romance and Riverdale Avenue Books. They have also appeared in Cosmopolitan for Latinas, Penthouse and Star magazines. Visit her at www.marializaferrer.blogspot.com and www.mydelcarmen.com.

THE END

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!♥