

KEYNOTES



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

JULY 2016

**NEXT CHAPTER MEETING: SATURDAY, JULY 9
TRS, 40 EXCHANGE PLACE, 3RD FLOOR, 12-4PM**

**TOPIC:
PITCHING: CREATING THE HOOK FOR YOUR BOOK**

SPEAKERS: RAYNA VAUSE & CATHY TULLY

Pitching your novel is a daunting task. For the unpublished writer, the thought of sitting across from an editor or agent and convincing her/him to read your book is intimidating. Even multi-published authors often break a sweat thinking about pitching a new project and pitching doesn't stop once you've acquired an editor or agent. It doesn't end when you've sold your first story. Boiling your book down to its hook is an important skill. Future proposals, ads, and cover copy are just three uses of a good elevator pitch. In this interactive workshop, we'll cover the basics of writing a successful pitch, the dos and don'ts of editor/agent appointments and offer tips on keeping your cool during your appointment. We'll also give examples and tips on creating that tag line for your story because, nerves aside, in the end it's all about the book and its hook.



Rayna Vause (top) is fascinated by the paranormal and she loves a good romance. That probably explains why these two elements perpetually crop up in her writing. A book worm from a very young age, her love of stories drove her to earn a degree in English Creative Writing. Once she discovered RWA, she charged down the path toward publication, and has been fortunate enough to have achieved that dream. When she takes off her writer's hat she is a cat lover, martial artist, video game enthusiast, and a massive Disney fanatic.

Cathy Tully (bottom) has been writing contemporary romance, sweet romance and women's fiction for twelve years. A PAN member of RWA and LSFW, Cathy believes in continually honing her craft. Cathy is a second-degree brown belt in Isshinryu Karate, and loves the sense of independence and self-confidence it gives her. Cathy lives in central New Jersey with her husband and their two rescue dogs, Oliver and William.♥

CALENDAR

Jul 13-16-- RWA National Conference
Aug 6-- Chapter Meeting at TRS
Aug 18-21-- BDSM Writers Con
Aug 31-- RWA/NYC contest deadline

Sep 18-- Brooklyn Book Festival
Sep 22-- Golden Apple Awards
Oct 14-15-- NJRW Conference



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THANK YOU!

To Our Contributing Writers
 Stacey Agdern, Maria Cox, Maria Ferrer,
 Isabo Kelly, LaQuette, Kate McMurray,
 A.C. Rose, Troy Storm

2016 CHAPTER CALENDAR

Jul 9 Aug 6 Sep 10 Oct 1 Nov 5 Dec 3

KEYNOTES DEADLINE

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

RWA/NYC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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 Publicity: 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.

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AUGUST THEME

HOT ISSUE!
 Think naughty and nice



**CHAPTER MINUTES: JUNE
BY SECRETARY STACEY AGDERN**

Presiding officer: President Kate McMurray
Board Members Present: Kate McMurray, Tamara Lynch, LaQuette,
Maria Cox, Mimi Logsdon, Maria Ferrer, Ursula Renée, Stacey Agdern
Meeting Started: 12:15

Minutes: April minutes accepted; Mimi Logsdon moved/Seconded by Ursula Renee

Treasurer's Report: \$7,491 in the bank

Membership: Our chapter has 79 Members in good standing as of the time of the meeting.

GAA: Emails went out to the winners so preparations are underway. A save the date letter will be sent in July, with a more formal invitation to come in September once the venue is secured. The chapter is also moving forward with a new vision for the ceremony that involves a focus on conversation, mingling between the chapter members and the invited guests.

Contest: The chapter is still searching for a judge, but plans are underway to follow the same timeline the contest has followed in previous years. Entries must be ORIGINAL-from previously unpublished material.

Blog: Participation is encouraged in Book Cover Friday. Also, the next big blog tour will feature conversations between your characters, answering questions provided by Maria Ferrer, our amazing blog and social media hostess. There was also a discussion of a possible summer reading list, created out of chapter member recommendations.

Keynotes: July's theme is civil servants with a deadline of June 15th. However, you don't have to stick with the theme to send an article. You can send our editor reports (complete with pictures!!!) from conferences or other events you've attended.

Critique Group: IF you would like to lead our chapter critique group, please volunteer.

PAN: PAN members please contact our PAN liaison, LaQuette, with questions and ideas you may have.

PRO: PRO members, contact our PRO liaison, Maria Cox, with questions and ideas you may have.

Publicity Committee:

--Romance Festival at Morris-Jumel Mansion on June 25. Panels are put together, one more volunteer is needed, tables are only 35 \$; arrive for the first shift at the festival at 1:30 in the afternoon.

--Brooklyn Book Festival: Preparations are underway. Buy a table and volunteer.

Website: Please send book covers, member news, website links when you have them so that the website can be updated more regularly.

Meeting ended: 12:36 ♥

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: FLIPPED UPSIDE DOWN
BY PRESIDENT KATE MCMURRAY**

I'm a strong advocate for writing, by which I mean that I believe it's crucial for writers to write instead of just thinking or talking about writing. Writing is my second job. It's my passion as well as my occupation. In good months, I aim to do it every day, and although I'm not one of those writers who tries to achieve a set word count each day, I do set both short and long term goals and meet them most of the time.

If one is going to seriously pursue a career as a romance writer, one must prioritize writing over other things. That's a key part of the process, because it's easy to let other things get in the way: work, family, walking the dog, cleaning the house, checking Facebook, weekly appointment TV, and so on, all grab our attention. But this is old news to most of you. A writing career seems have a component to it that is constantly trying to balance writing with the rest of our lives.



Still, I try to prioritize writing over a lot of other things. Under normal circumstances, I write for a few hours every day, or I squeeze it in between other things if I'm busy.

But what happens if you just... can't.

Extraordinary circumstances can often either take away your writing time or else make it difficult to focus when you sit down to write. I'm not talking normal distractions, like a long day at work or taking the dog to the vet or a kid with a skinned knee. I'm talking about significant shake-ups in your routine.

Basically, what do you do when your life gets flipped upside down?

This has been a rough last eight months or so for me on a number of fronts. I got hit with a lot all at once: a job change, some family drama, a new nephew, and as I write this, I'm in the process of moving house. This on top of work, writing, and presiding over this fine group, among other things! It's been a lot, is what I'm saying.

Writing is one of my coping mechanisms. Working on my novel *The Long Slide Home* helped me cope with a close family member's death. My novella *Save the Date* was my way of coping with drama in my personal life. But the last few months, I've felt myself pulled in so many directions that writing just falls by the wayside.

So how do we as writers cope with that kind of thing? Well, here are some suggestions:

1. Give yourself a break. As a Type A, overachiever type with anxiety, I have a hard time letting go sometimes, and I'll beat myself up for not making more time for writing, which means I'm fretting about not writing and thus not focusing, etc. Sometimes all I need to calm down is to just tell myself it's okay to take a day off. Or five.

- 2. Do what you can manage.** Scale back. Write a few hours a week instead of a few hours a day. Write something ridiculous just to keep writing if you can't focus on your other projects. Do some research or prewriting instead of writing itself.
- 3. Self-care.** Take care of yourself. Get rest. Eat well. Go do something fun. Spend time with a loved one. If you feel good and are well-rested, you'll be able to focus better and write more.
- 4. Keep your head in the game.** Even if you aren't writing, participate in discussions about romance on social media, attend RWA meetings, chat with your friends about writing. Read a lot in your sub-genre or jot down ideas as they come to you. Generally be thinking about writing so that it's still a habit when you're ready to write again.
- 5. Think about the long game.** What are your long-term goals? Would you like to finish a novel in the next few months? By the end of the year? What are your writing plans for next year? Having a plan can help soothe your frazzled nerves.

I keep telling myself that this too shall pass. And that's important too—don't let the rough times discourage you. I know I'll get back to my writing once my life settles down again, and that goes for you, too, and whatever difficulties you're dealing with.♥

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



RWA NATIONAL PROPOSED BYLAWS AMENDMENTS

Reminder. In September, General Members will vote on proposed amendments to the RWA Bylaws. The bylaws were printed in the June 2016 RWR.♥



GOLDEN APPLE AWARD WINNERS
BY MIMI PIZARRO LOGSDON

Mark Your Calendars for September 22 for this year's Golden Apple Awards, and follow our hashtag: #GAA2016. Watch here and the Chapter loop for more information. Here are this year's winners:

Lifetime Achievement Award
Author of the Year

Editor of the Year:

Agent of the Year:

Publisher of the Year:

Media Source of the Year:

Isabo Kelly
LaQuette

Kerri Buckley, Carina Press

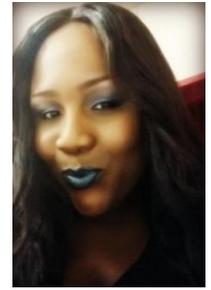
Linda Camacho, Prospect Agency

Kensington Books

Phoebe Jordan, *New York Times* Romance Review



Isabo



LaQuette

MEMBERS NEWS



Anna DePalo's **SECOND CHANCE WITH A CEO** was given a starred review in the *Library Journal*.

LA LISTA DE MATRIMONIO, the Spanish translation of **Jean Joachim's** **THE MARRIAGE LIST** has made the GooglePlay recommended bookshelf.

RWA/NYC loves to party at Lady Jane's Salon! Present at June's Salon (pictured) are **Becca Brooks, Kate McMurray, Alexis Daria, Falguni Kothari, K.M. Jackson & Hope Tarr.**♥

You fail only if
you stop writing.

— Ray Bradbury

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.

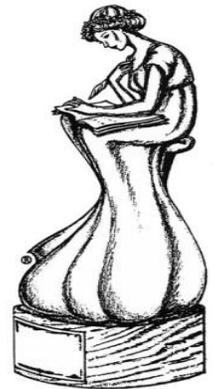
This program is available to any active General or Honorary member who: (1) is not PAN-eligible and (2) has one complete original work of romance fiction of at least 20,000 words, or multiple complete original works of romance fiction which combine for a total of at least 20,000 words.♥

ABOUT PAN (PUBLISHED AUTHOR NETWORK)

The purpose of the Published Authors Network (PAN) is to establish within the RWA framework a network of communication and support to effectively promote and protect the interests of published romance authors; to open channels of communication between those romance authors and other publishing industry professionals; and to encourage professionalism on all levels and in all relationships within the publishing industry.

To be eligible for General PAN Membership: RWA General or Honorary members in good standing should have earned at least \$1,000 on a single novel or novella that meets the definition of Romance Fiction.

To be eligible for Provisional PAN Membership: RWA General or Honorary members in good standing should have: (1) contracted for the publication of a novel or novella for an advance of at least \$1,000, but said work is not yet commercially available ("Option One"); or (2) published an novel or novella, but not yet earned \$1,000 ("Option Two").



Works offered through Predatory Publishing companies shall not qualify.♥

FREE PROMOTION!



Keynotes is a FREE Promotion Opportunity. We welcome all subjects.

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

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

**REVIEW: ROMANCE FESTIVAL & PHOTO ALBUM
BY MARIA COX**

For our 3rd Annual Romance Festival, we had a lovely summer day, breezy, sunny; certainly conducive to romance talks.

About 100 lovers of romance visited the Morris-Jumel Mansion on June 25th. Interesting presentations were given by award-winning authors Rochelle Alers and Joanna Shupe. Author panels discussed different romance topics: historical, contemporary and the evolution of romance. Also, a few authors conducted readings from their works. Our festival would not have been complete without a BDSM presentation delivered by Dr. Charley Ferrer.

I'd like to say a big Thank You to all who helped make this year's festival possible. See you next year!♥



Ursula & Jennifer



Jennifer & LaQuette



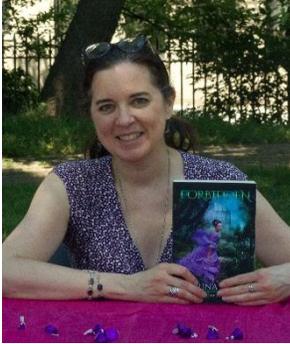
Kwana, Jennifer Proffitt, Lena



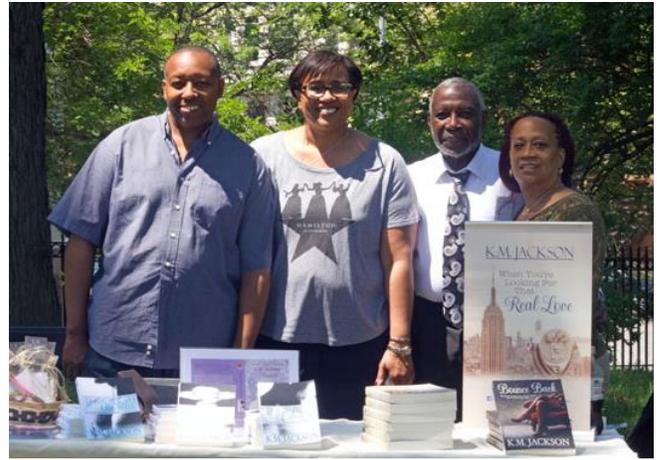
Kwana, Lena & Kate



Catherine Maiorisi & Mom



Katrina Snow



Kwana with dear hubby and friends



Lena & friend



Tanya Goodwin



Kay Blake (purple) with her fans.

Deborah Blumenthal & friend





Doctor Charley & Sister Diane



Racheline



Rochelle



Lena & Kate

The Bobbsey Twins
Doctor Charley & LaQuette





GOING THE INDIE ROUTE: NOT THE END ALL AND BE ALL BY TROY STORM

When Maria proposed a series on self-publishing written by RWA/NYC authors who had gone through the process, as one of the survivors, I was enthusiastic to share my recently hard-earned words of wisdom. But as several months have gone by during which I've appraised my own efforts and the results of those initial glassy-eyed weeks that terminated in self-satisfied euphoria at having achieved a handful of self-published books that, on the whole, I'm very proud of – I've come to realize self-publishing is not the end all and be all.

I learned some important lessons during my initial self-publishing efforts, but outside of the technical aspects, whether those lessons would apply to another writer or not would depend on where they find themselves along the writing career trajectory of what they want to achieve and how they want to achieve it.

Self-publishing takes time and effort. It is now a powerful motivational force in helping me put fingers to the keyboard in that it is an aspect of the business that I had no power over before. That is no longer true. Anyone who can navigate websites and follow instructions can hold a book of their own in their hands.

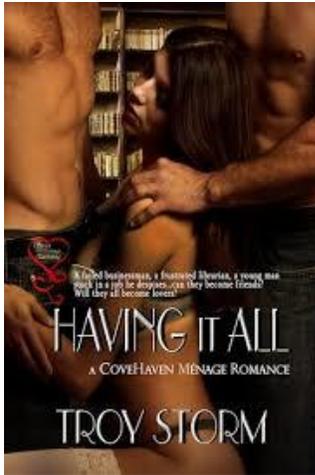
Self-promotion, which follows as night the day, takes even more time and effort. All away from writing. But for those of us who fought through the days of having no other options than finding an editor and/or nailing a publisher, being able to self-publish is like the sun finally coming out after a long, slogging winter. If I now submit a manuscript to a publisher and it's turned down, I have the option of putting it out there myself. Previously published stories to which I've had the rights returned now have a chance at having a new lease on life.

Your needs as a writer may be different. You may need the validation of outside editors or designers, or not feel you're truly arrived until you've been published by a traditional publisher. But for those writers who feel they can produce a professional manuscript on their own or with the aid of an editor of their choosing, or for those writers with a previously validated manuscript, self-publishing is a godsend.

And the royalties are spectacular.

If you have been reading this series, you already know how. If you haven't been reading this series, Google "self-publishing" and be ready to be amazed. There are websites to help you edit, or find an editor; websites to help you find a designer for your cover, or design your own; and lastly sites to guide you in getting your book up on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and many other websites. And all for free, if you choose.

In fact, "choose" might replace "publisher" and "editor" in the Writers' Scariest Words Lexicon. We, as writers, have been given more and more choices as technology has advanced. Whatever your needs



or motivation as a writer, a major roadblock in getting your book before a reading public has been eliminated. You can now self-publish!

We in RWAN/C are truly in a great place. We are surrounded by published writers who are willing to share their expertise and their enthusiasm, or they wouldn't be at the meetings ready to put themselves in the line of fire. Every month, when we get together, we have the opportunity to ask questions, make connections and have another fear eliminated. You've spent your money, come and use the opportunity you've been handed.

Choose to be a published author.♥

Troy Storm has nine self-published books in his writer's arsenal. His Cove Haven ménage series: HAVING IT ALL (MMF), GETTING IT ALL (FFM), WANTING MORE (MMM), and NEVER TOO LATE (FFF). Hearts of Braden, Book Six, NO LOVE LOST (MMF). TROY'S JOCK BOYS (MM short stories) – First Down, – Second Inning, – Third to Go; and MERRY MANHATTAN MÉNAGES, six sexy Christmas stories. All available on Amazon.

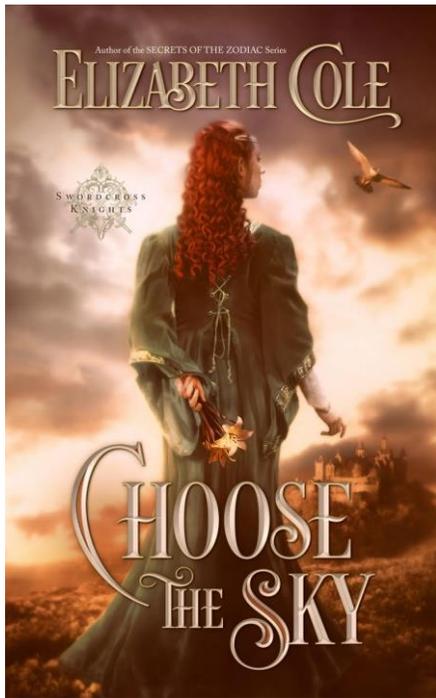
MEMBERS ON THE SHELF



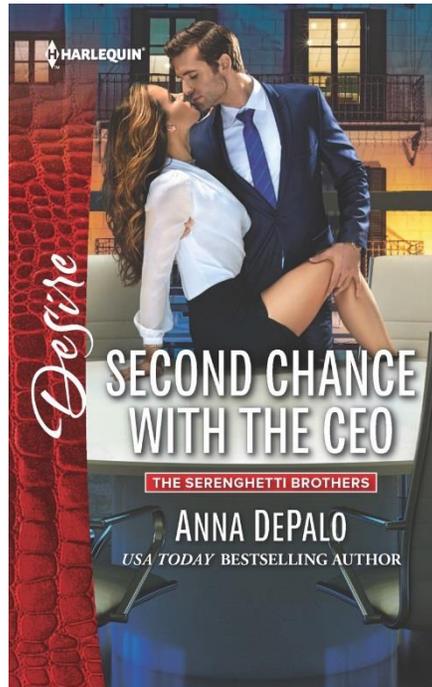
HURRICANE KISS
by Deborah Blumenthal



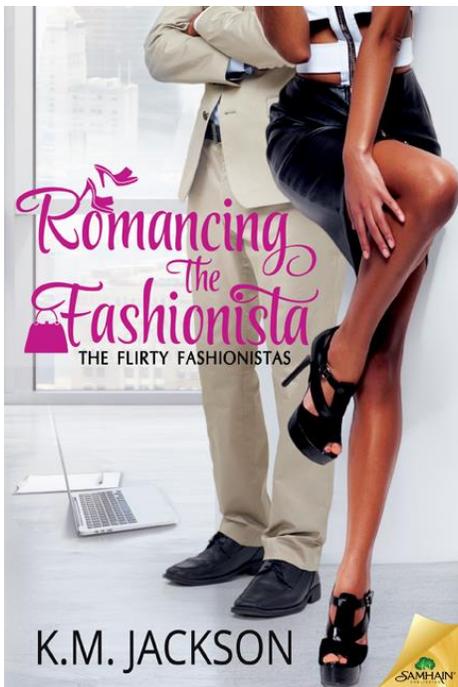
MEMBERS ON THE SHELF-- CONTINUED



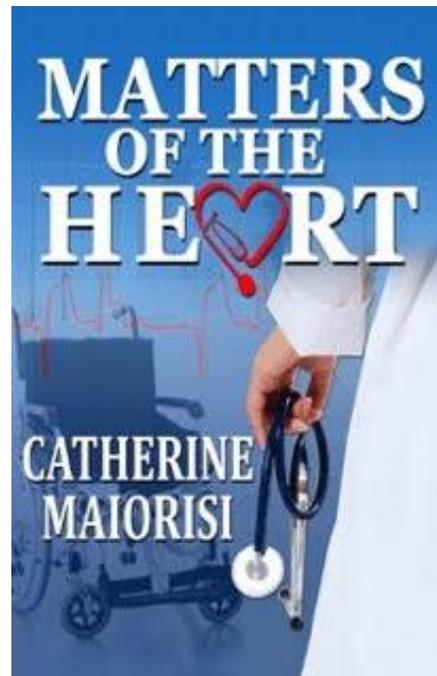
CHOOSE THE SKY
by Elizabeth Cole



SECOND CHANCE WITH THE CEO
by Anna DePalo



ROMANCING THE FASHIONISTA
by K.M. Jackson
Samhain



MATTERS OF THE HEART
by Catherine Maiorisi



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

EMBRACING MY PARTICULAR BRAND OF CRAZY BY LAQUETTE

WILL THE REAL ANTAGONIST PLEASE STAND UP?

Many writers assume the antagonist of the story has to be another character. Oftentimes we characterize this antagonist, this person that opposes the protagonist, as the villain of the story. This is a fair and standard method of characterization. However, you know I'm all about showing you alternatives to the standard that will yield equally if not more powerful results. According to Dictionary.com the word antagonist means, "The adversary of the hero/protagonist of a drama or other literary work." I find it interesting that what it doesn't say is that this adversary has to be a separate character.

My characters usually serve as their own antagonists. Meaning they *are* the thing they must fight against to overcome their circumstances. In essence, they're their own worst enemy. Fighting against an internal foe can be much more difficult than any external villain. It's instinctive to attempt to prevent others from hurting us, but we're frequently blinded to the fact that we can and do hurt ourselves.

I find this technique useful because it keeps the reader frustrated with your character. They know the protagonist has some lovely qualities, they want the two main characters to finally get together, but they're also screaming at their e-readers as the protagonist makes another bone-headed move that pretty much sabotages his/her chances to further their relationship with their love interest.

In conjunction with self-sabotaging protagonists, I often use other elements as an antagonist to create conflict. Family secrets, occupational demands, professional, or person obligations, even failing health, all of these things can become the entity that stands between your protagonist and his/her goal.

For example, in my book, HEART OF THE MATTER: QKB1, the female lead, Heart MacKenzie, is a stubborn police lieutenant who never allows anything to come before the job. This makes things very interesting when she finds herself in lust with a person of interest in an active investigation. She fights her love interest, but eventually has to decide which is more important, her feelings for this man, or the job she's always adored. In this scenario, the NYPD just became Heart's antagonist.

This is LaQuette, your friendly erotic romance author, embracing my crazy... one character at a time.♥

2015 Georgia Romance Writers Maggie Award Finalist in Erotic Romance, 2015 Swirl Awards Finalist in Romantic Suspense, bestselling erotic romance author, LaQuette, is a native of Brooklyn, New York. She spends her time catering to her three distinct personalities: Wife, Mother, and Educator. LaQuette loves hearing from readers and discussing the crazy characters that are running around in her head causing so much trouble. Contact her on Facebook, Twitter, @LaQuetteLikes, her website, www.NovelsbyLaQuette.com, Amazon, her Facebook group, LaQuette's Lounge, and via email at NovelsbyLaQuette@gmail.com.

**HOT ROMANCE: MARIE FORCE ON
SELF-PUBLISHING FOR ROMANCE AUTHORS
AND JACK'S HOUSE**
BY A.C. ROSE

Many romance authors want to be *New York Times* bestselling author Marie Force when they grow up. She has published 50 contemporary romances, including the Gansett Island Series, which has sold more than 2.2 million books, and the Fatal Series from Harlequin Books, which has sold more than 1 million books. In addition, she is the author of the Green Mountain Series from Berkley Publishing as well as the new erotic romance Quantum Series, written under the slightly modified name of M.S. Force.

As a successful hybrid author, who has independently published over 30 books and also has popular series with major publishers, she is a romance role model. She is also highly respected for all she gives back to the industry by helping up-and-coming and aspiring authors.



She owns E-book Formatting Fairies, which helps writers correctly format and organize books for publication on all platforms. And she recently launched Jack's House Publishing, where she is working with select authors to publish edgy contemporary romance.

In addition, she is moderator of the Self-Publish Yahoo Group and the Author Support Network Facebook Group that offers a platform for discussion and advice for self-published, traditional and hybrid authors. She also hosts several virtual workshops each year on craft and publishing industry topics.

Recent studies have shown that the majority of self-published authors are women, with many in the romance field. According to *Publishers Weekly* in 2015, thirty-one percent of e-book sales on Amazon's Kindle Store are self-published books. The numbers continue to grow as more and more women throw their hats into the self-publishing ring.

I chatted with Marie about self-publishing and how to break in to the romance field.

How has self-publishing changed the publishing landscape and created opportunities for authors?

MARIE FORCE: Self-publishing has changed everything for authors. Primarily, it has given us **OPTIONS** that we didn't have before, which is enormously freeing. If a publisher doesn't want your book or won't pay what you think the book is worth, you can say thanks anyhow and go on with your plans to publish the book yourself. That's a huge shift in the landscape from what authors were contending with five or six years ago, when the only way to get to readers was through publishers that had limited spots available on their schedules. Now there are unlimited spots available. It's also put a lot of the power over our careers back in our hands, which is where it should be.

Although self-publishing has created opportunities, authors also must strive to create the best content for readers. Should authors write a book first and *then* work on self-publishing, or should they be learning the industry from the moment they decide they want to be part of it?

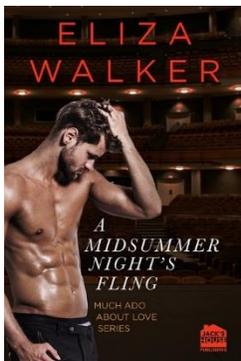
MF: Absolutely perfect the craft and the book before even thinking about how to publish the book. Lack of attention to the craft of writing is one of the unfortunate side effects of the rush to publish. There are no shortcuts to learning how to write a book that people want to read, and pushing a book out the door before it's ready is never a good idea. That said, it's never too soon to start tuning into the industry and networking with other authors.

What are some of the biggest mistakes you see with self-published authors?

MF: As mentioned, the all-fired rush to publish RIGHT NOW often leads to books that are poorly written, poorly edited and poorly packaged. The cream always rises to the top, and putting out the best possible book you can should always be the goal. Cutting corners on editing and cover design and proper formatting can leave you with negative reviews that stick to you and your book forever. Quality should always be Job 1.

Do all self-published authors also have to learn to be business people? Why?

MF: Authors are running businesses these days in ways we never have before, and it's important to think like business people at all times, especially when it comes to paying taxes and figuring out if or when it makes sense to incorporate, etc. People tell me all the time that they couldn't do what I do because they aren't business minded. I like to tell them that I wasn't born knowing everything I know now, but when my books began to take off, I had no choice but to figure it out and get my house in order.



Is your Jack's House Publishing taking submissions?

MF: Yes! We are looking for books that rock and that are edgy and sexy and provocative. Finished books should be at least 50,000 words in length. We encourage you to submit your very best work to better your chances of making the cut. The more polished your book is, the more interested we will be. We ask for ONE book per author at this time. You can submit a second book after you've heard from us about the first one. Our books so far include: A MIDSUMMER'S NIGHT FLING, WICKED BEAUTIFUL, WICKED SEXY, PERFECT TEN. You can find out about it at: <http://jackshousepublishing.com/>♥

Learn more about Marie Force here. <http://marieforce.com/>

Learn more about Jack's House Publishing here. <http://jackshousepublishing.com/>

A.C. Rose is a love, romance, and entertainment columnist and author of steamy romance books. Look for her forthcoming romance, STAY AFTER CLASS. Visit her at <http://acroseauthor.net/>.

CRAFT CORNER: FIVE TIPS FOR DEALING WITH SETTING DESCRIPTIONS
BY ISABO KELLY



Describing settings in your stories might be something that comes easy for you, or it might be one of the harder parts of a book to write (that would be me). Our job as writers is to paint pictures with words and build stories with those pictures. But if we fail to paint a complete image of the settings, our characters risk being talking heads in white rooms—and that makes for pretty boring reading.

Whether you love writing setting descriptions or find you have to cycle back and fill in those details (that would be me), here are some basic things to keep in mind that will ensure your settings come to life:

(1) Your POV character’s perspective rules all. All setting details will be filtered through your point-of-view characters. And those characters will have different perspectives and opinions of the settings. A lot of what they notice will depend on whether the setting is new or familiar to them, and how they feel about their surroundings. If it’s a new location, for example, they’ll probably notice more of the overall appearance. While if it’s a familiar setting, they’re more likely to notice things that are new additions, well-loved elements, or something that’s out of place or needs doing. You can give the reader a full description of the setting, putting them completely into the location, by ensuring all the details are filtered through your POV character.

(2) Avoid vague descriptive words. Words like “car” or “barn” or “tree”, without any other details around them, can leave readers to form their own images of those things. But their image of a “barn” may not have anything to do with what your fictional barn looks like. You risk throwing readers out of your story because they’ve gotten confused about something basic in the setting. Once the setting has been established and we know the trees around your heroine’s house are mostly pine and birch, then you can write about the “trees outside her window” without confusing readers. But the first time any detail is presented, be sure you’re clear in describing that detail.

(3) New settings require more description. To the point above, the very first time a reader sees a new setting, it has to be described as thoroughly as your main character can through their perspective. After that, however, there’s no need to continue going into excessive detail about a setting you’ve already established. A few reminder hints dropped here and there will be all that’s necessary to keep readers inside the setting. Just be sure those dropped hints are something your POV character will notice.

(4) Use all five senses as much as possible. I know that unless you’re at a restaurant or talking about a meal, getting taste into a setting description can be hard. But it’s not impossible. Cold air can have a sharp, fresh taste, like ice. I often “taste” the tree pollen in the air that I know will irritate my allergies. Scents and taste often go together and can be co-mingled. The more of your character’s

senses you use to describe a setting, the more thoroughly a reader will be immersed. Don't just get caught up in the visual picture. Remember to add feel, smell, sound...and really try for taste where you can. The visceral feel of the setting will bring it off the page for readers, putting them inside your story as if they were actually there.

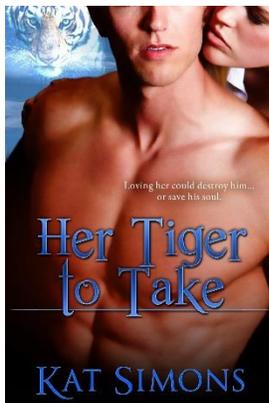


(5) Find the significant details. With the above advice, it could be easy to think you have to describe absolutely everything in excruciating detail. And you would be wrong. Too much and you'll overwhelm and bore your readers. The point is to give them just enough detail to paint the image, set the scene, without going into so many minor, insignificant details they start skimming. Again, filter everything through your POV character's perspective and you'll avoid going over the top.

Think about the room you're sitting in now. What are you noticing about your setting and why? I bet you're not noticing every little detail, but you do have some very specific things you're aware of—maybe the color paint on the walls, the feel of the rugs under foot, the smell of coffee coming from the kitchen, the fact that you're reluctant to go into the kitchen, even for the yummy French vanilla coffee brewing, because you don't want to see the dishes piled up in the sink... By ensuring the details are filtered through your POV character, you'll also ensure those things are the important stuff the reader needs for them to see the setting without going too far.

And as a little reminder: if you need a gun on the fireplace mantel in Chapter Twenty, and the first time the fireplace is described is in Chapter Two, ensure you put that gun on the mantel in Chapter Two, or make sure when the gun does appear, it's something your character notices before they need that gun in Chapter Twenty!

(6) BONUS TIP: Setting can get you moving when you're bogged down in the story. If you're finding yourself staring at a blank page, not sure what to write next, try getting into your character's head and describing their current setting using all five senses. This will get your fingers moving, eliminate the "blank" part of the blank page, and can help trigger your imagination to pick up where the story needs to go next. Sometimes just getting that next sentence written, or adding a good 200-300 words to the book, can get the story flowing again.



Setting description is an essential part of a fully fleshed out story. Getting the balance right will pull your readers deep into your fiction and keep them immersed in the richness of your tale. If they can see and feel your story as if they were walking through it themselves, you've done your job!♥

Isabo Kelly is the award-winning author of science fiction, fantasy and paranormal romances. She also writes best-selling shapeshifter paranormal romances as Kat Simons. For more on Isabo or Kat, visit www.isabokelly.com and www.katsimons.com

PAPER DOLLS: CELEBRATING OUR HEROES BY MARIA FERRER

As we celebrate Independence Day, let's think of all the Heroes working to make our world a better place -- Soldiers, Firemen, Policemen, EMTs.

Heroes are important and they deserve a happy ending, and as writers we can give them that. Here are two Heroes in need of a story. What do these photos say about them?

Is she thinking of the man she left behind?
Or making plans for her future now that she's finished her tour?



What about him? Is he putting out fires or making some lucky woman hot?

Look at them—face, body language, setting.

What are their names? their rank? What kind of romance do they deserve? Sweet? Sexy? A little of each?

Let's play Dolls and bring our Heroes to life.♥

Maria Ferrer loved playing with paper dolls as a child and still does. She rips photographs of people and places regularly from magazines, and now with the internet she also copies photos she finds on Facebook and Twitter. As her collection grows so do the ideas in her notebook; sometimes it's a scene; sometimes a character profile. Paper Dolls are great inspiration. Visit her at www.marializaferrer.blogspot.com, and visit her alter ego, Del Carmen, at www.mydelcarmen.com.

