



KEYNOTES

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

MAY 2016

MAY BRUNCH: MAY 7, 12noon
ST. ANDREW'S PUB, FEE = \$35 (see below)

TOPIC: WHY DIVERSITY IS SO IMPORTANT

SPEAKER: JENNIFER BAKER
PANEL ORGANIZER / BRAND MANAGER
WE NEED DIVERSE BOOKS



Jennifer Baker currently works as a production editor as well as a writing instructor and social media director for Sackett Street Writers Workshop. Additionally, Jennifer is a contributing writer on the subject of books, publishing, and the intersections of media for Forbes.com. She's also written pieces for Bustle's books section. Jennifer is a long-time member of the nonprofit We Need Diverse Books, formerly as social media manager and now in the role of panels organizer. Jennifer is also the creator and host of the podcast Minorities in Publishing, where she's interviewed over three dozen publishing professionals on the lack of diversity in the industry. She is also the

Panel Organizer/ Brand Manager for We Need Diverse Books. Learn more about WNDB at www.wneeddiversebooks.org.♥

MAY BRUNCH LOCATION & FEE

ST. ANDREW'S PUB
140 West 46th Street (btwn 6th and 7th Avenues)
right off Times Square

Fee = \$35
includes meal, drink and gratuities
Pay online at www.rwanyc.com, go to Members Section.

See you there!♥





WE NEED **DIVERSE** BOOKS
www.diversebooks.org

MORE THAN JUST A HASHTAG,

We Need Diverse Books™ is a grassroots organization created to address the lack of diverse, non-majority narratives in children's literature. WNDB™ is committed to the ideal that embracing diversity will lead to **acceptance, empathy, and ultimately equality**. We recognize many kinds of diversity, including (but not limited to) LGBTQIA, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and ethnic/culture/religious minorities.

OUR MISSION IS TO

- Promote or amplify diversification efforts
- Increase visibility for diverse books and authors
- Empower a wide range of readers, including (but not limited to) librarians, educators, parents & students

AS PART OF THIS GOAL, WNDB'S INITIATIVES INCLUDE

- The Walter Dean Myers Award and Grant program recognizing diverse authors and books
- A Diversity in the Classroom program to bring diverse authors into Title I schools across the country
- Development of an educational kit to introduce teachers, librarians & booksellers to select diverse books
- WNDB's inaugural Kidlit Diversity Festival
- Internship program providing grants and mentorship for publishing interns from diverse backgrounds

OUR PARTNERS



**We could not do this without
 our dedicated core of volunteers,
 and every bit helps. **JOIN US!****



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info@diversebooks.org



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THANK YOU!

To Our Contributing Writers
 Stacey Agdern, Mercedes Cruz, Maria Ferrer,
 Isabo Kelly, Falguni Kothari, LaQuette, Kate
 McMurray, Alice Orr, A.C. Rose

2016 CHAPTER CALENDAR

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

KEYNOTES DEADLINE

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

RWA/NYC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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, PO Box 3722,
 Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
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rwanycblogginginthebigapple.blogspot.com

JUNE THEME'S

**BOY GETS GIRL:
 WHO ARE TODAY'S HEROES?**

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: TAKING IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL
BY PRESIDENT KATE MCMURRAY**

As I write this, I've just returned from the RT Booklovers Convention. It was held in Las Vegas this year, and was thus even more of a spectacle, but it was still a lot of fun and the sort of experience that makes you glad to be a part of this community of readers and writers. I always come away from events like that feeling energized. And thoughtful.

One of the things I'm focusing on this year for myself is meeting new readers and getting my books out to people who haven't heard of me yet.

A romance writing career is a long game, whether you're an instant success or more of a slow burn. Even if you sell 10,000 copies of your first novel right out of the gate, it takes work and effort to sustain a career. I've been slowly building my career for the last five years, but my sales have been steady for the last year or two, which is good and bad—I have a solid base of fans, but I'm not gaining a lot of new ones.

My fifteenth novel was published in March, and lately I've been wondering how to take my writing career to the next level. It's nice to have fans and to be able to put my work out there, but, frankly, I'd like to be selling more books so that I can spend more of my time writing.

Book marketing will make you crazy. A lot of it is throwing ideas at the wall to see what sticks. And the thing is, the goal isn't just to sell your latest novel. The goal is to sell your brand, your backlist. Every time I put a new book out, I want to get that backlist sales bump. That's how a real career is made.

I'm still a work-in-progress as far as branding goes, and it's something I intend to work on this year. Six years into my career as a published writer, and I'm still learning and rethinking and making changes. That's what I mean by a writing career being a long game. There's no magical "And now I've arrived" solution. You'll always be tweaking your marketing plan, your writing skills, your process.

I've worked out for myself that conventions are a good way for me to reach new readers. I'm not without charm, and I'm definitely not shy, so I have few qualms about walking into a con with 3,000 other people (as is the case with RT) and mingling, meeting, and interacting. Your mileage may vary with that; I get that the crowds are overwhelming and the pressure to do well is intimidating.

More to the point, you can't simply attend and wish for magic. Cons are hard work for writers. It's a financial commitment. I co-hosted a couple of events this year—and put up my own money to help with costs—and I sat on a panel and attended several publisher parties. That took prep work in advance of RT, plus lots of work on the ground. I dearly love talking with people and interacting with readers, but it can be tiring. (I also came down with a cold almost as soon as I arrived in Vegas, which complicated matters. I tried not to let it get me down, but I had decidedly less energy than I would have.) Anyway, my point is that I wanted to be sure I put myself out there, that I did the work to get noticed. That's





something to keep in mind if you plan to attend a future RT or similar event—you gotta put the work in. You can't merely attend and expect magic.

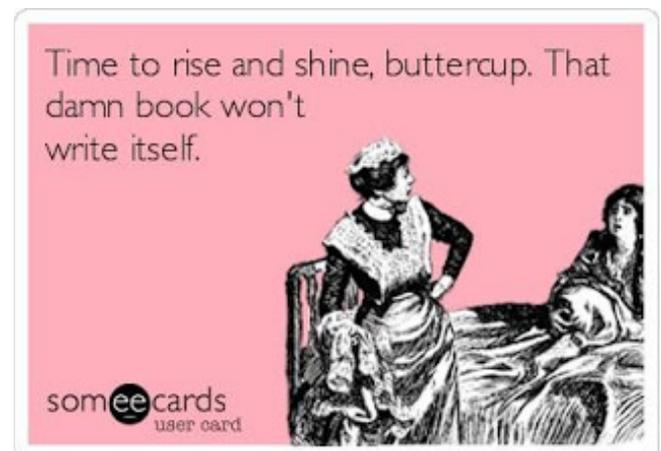
But here's the other thing with cons: a lot of writers put pressure on themselves to attend and spend hundreds of dollars because That's What You Do when you're a professional writer, right? Well, not necessarily. First, you don't have to spend a ton on swag; face time with readers is the real value of a con, so you want to make sure you're out and interacting with people, and then you have something readers can take away to remember you. If postcards are all you can afford, that's all you need. Don't break the bank buying a lot of stuff half the attendees are just going to throw away.

But more importantly, not every writer is built for a place like RT. If you're the sort of writer who is shy and introverted (most of you, probably; I understand I'm an extroverted outlier) and you're going to spend half of the con hiding in your room, RT may not be the place for you. If the cost of traveling to cons is out of your range—RT ain't cheap, unfortunately—don't put yourself in debt going, either; if you're fretting about money the whole con, you won't enjoy yourself.

Book marketing is all about playing to your strengths, not about doing what everyone else does. If you're shy but savvy at social media, that's where your emphasis should be. If big cons intimidate you, stick to small cons or online marketing. If you're good at long-form writing, but less good at Twitter, try a blog tour or submit articles to relevant news sources as a way to get your name out there. And if you do have some social savvy, maybe try out a small con and see how it goes before jumping feet first into RT.

Regardless, there is a strategy out there that will work for you. Make the most of your skills and get out there. Spend a little time now thinking about how to take your career to the next level—how do you finish and publish the next book, how do you find new readers, how do you get more books into the hands of people who want them? It's worth considering, and there aren't easy answers, but you can build a solid career with a little elbow grease.♥

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.





WELCOME, NEW MEMBER!

MARSHA BAUER

CHAPTER MINUTES: APRIL
BY SECRETARY STACEY AGDERN

Meeting called to order at 12:09.

Minutes of the last meeting: Moved by Maria Ferrer; Seconded Mimi Logsdon.

Treasury: We have \$6708.35 in the bank.

Membership: Renewals are still coming in; new members are still joining and all are welcome.

Golden Apples: Please send in your nominations. Freelance editors are acceptable, and nominees do NOT have to be New York based.

Contest: We're in the process of narrowing down the final round judge; we're also looking for earlier round judges. Note well that judging our contest will take less time than judging the RITAs.

Keynotes: Editor Ursula Renee said The May newsletter's theme is 'Who's That Girl', and about heroines. Send your articles (and achievements!) by the 15th. Let us know what you've been up to.

Liaisons: LaQuette is our new PAN liaison; Maria Cox is still our PRO liaison.

Brooklyn Book Festival: Is in search of a panel but nothing has been pulled together yet. We're looking for volunteers and for people to buy tables.

Romance Festival: Our third annual romance festival will take place June 25, from 2:30 to 5:30; the committee is working on the details. Links have been placed on the website for purchasing tables, and one table has already been purchased. Kwana Jackson and Falguni Kothari are making three beautiful baskets.

Future Meeting Topics: June: Publishing 2.0, with a round table of authors sharing knowledge of advanced topics in publishing; July: Pitching. The business part of the meeting ended at 12:29.♥



RWA'S COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

PRISCILLA KISSINGER, RWA PRO LIAISON



With the advent of Provisional PAN within PAN, we wanted to ensure that members were aware of the new qualifications to transition from PRO to PAN. **Communities of Practice** (CoP) are intended to assist members with a common interest in sharing ideas, finding solutions and networking. Membership in any of the CoPs is voluntary; yet it's important to note that once a member no longer meets the PRO qualifications and can transition into PAN or Provisional PAN, he/she will lose voting rights within the PRO CoP.

The following information (found on RWA's website) should provide some clarification.

PRO Community: www.rwa.org/p/cm/ld/fid=57

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. PRO focuses on the business side of writing rather than craft.



PRO 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. **Active RWA members retain PRO status until PAN-eligibility is met.**

Published Authors Network Community: www.rwa.org/p/cm/ld/did=9022

The purpose of PAN (Published Authors Network) 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. **Membership in the PAN Community of Practice is available only for active RWA members.**

General PAN Membership: Any RWA General or Honorary member in good standing who has earned at least \$1,000 on a single published **Eligible Novel** or **Eligible Novella** shall be eligible for membership in PAN, provided however that works offered through Predatory Publishing companies shall not qualify.

Provisional PAN Membership: Any RWA General or Honorary member who has (1) contracted for the publication of an **Eligible Novel** or **Eligible Novella** for an advance of at least \$1,000, but said work is not yet commercially available ("Option One"); or (2) published an **Eligible Novel** or **Eligible Novella**, but not yet earned \$1,000 ("Option Two") shall be eligible for provisional membership in PAN, provided however that works offered through Predatory Publishing companies shall not qualify.

If you have questions about applying for Provisional PAN or PAN, please email Donna Mathoslah at donna.mathoslah@rwa.org.♥



MEMBERS ON THE SHELF

The new IT Girl! Per Publishers' Lunch: RT award-winning and RITA-nominated author **Alyssa Cole's** multicultural Civil War romance **AN EXTRAORDINARY UNION**, was sold to Esi Sogah at Kensington, in a three-book deal, by Courtney Miller-Callihan at Handspun Literary (world). Alyssa is also a RITA Finalist for Best Novella. Way to go, Girl!

ROMANCE FESTIVAL



March your calendars for Saturday, June 25, at the Morris-Jumel Mansion.

There will be readings, house tours and book sales. Join us!

We also need some volunteers for the day. Let us know if you are available.

Our hashtag: **#RomFestNYC**

INDUSTRY NEWS

Harlequin announced their intention to launch a new sexy contemporary series in July 2017; no name yet. Hence, the Harlequin Blaze line will close effective June 2017. Also in July 2017, Harlequin Romance and Harlequin Historical series will only be sold online.

FREE PROMOTION!

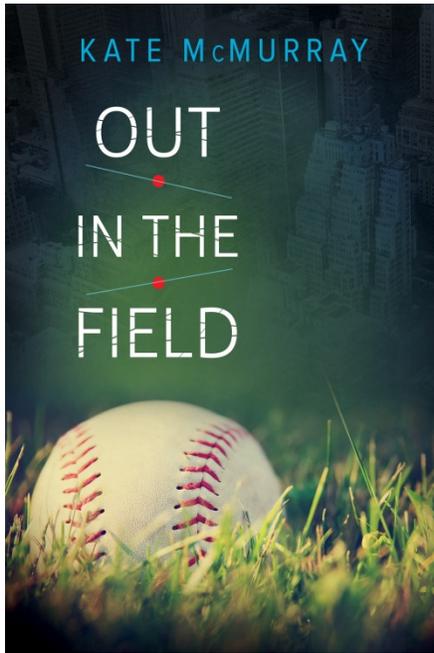


Keynotes is a FREE Promotion Opportunity. We welcome all subjects.

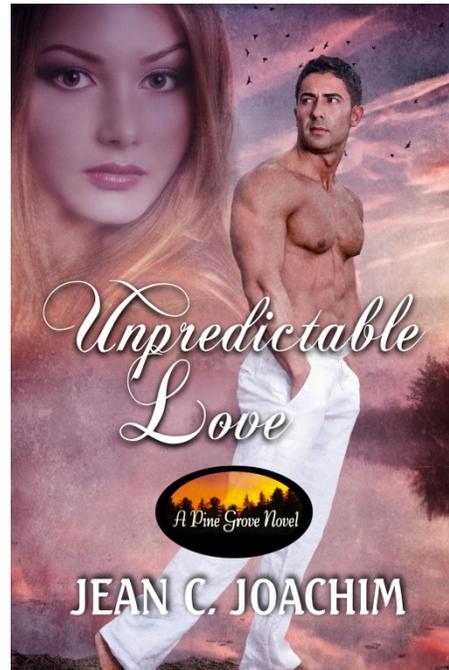
Have a new book out? Entered/won a contest? Interesting topic, research, tips to share? An event, book, conference you'd like to review? Send in your articles, news, book covers, reviews, etc., to keynoteseditor@gmail.com. Articles will also be published on the Chapter Blog for **DOUBLE** the promotion!

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

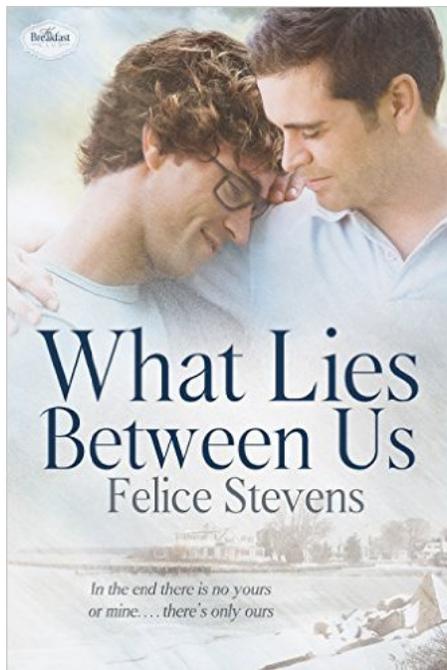
MEMBERS ON THE SHELF



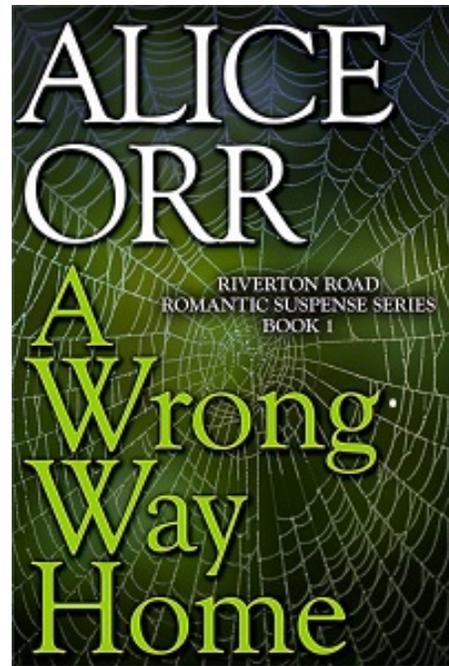
OUT IN THE FIELD (2nd edition)
 by Kate McMurray
www.katemcmurray.com



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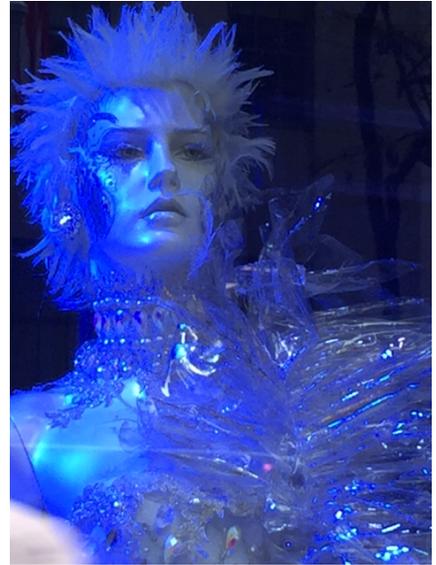
Our theme this month is

WHO'S THAT GIRL?

Here's what our members have to say.

WHO'S THAT GIRL? BY LAQUETTE

Twenty-two years ago I read my first romance novel at the age of sixteen. The book was *DEVIL'S PRICE* by Carole Mortimer and the heroine was named, Cynara. I read that book in one sitting and fell in love.



Cynara, like many heroines I'd come to read over the next two decades was a beautiful woman who fell for an alpha-jerk and allowed herself to be brutalized by his animalistic ways. It sounds kind of contrary to what you'd think you'd find in a love story, right? Please understand, this is no criticism of Ms. Mortimer or the many authors that came before and after her that created characters like this. It's what the industry and readers expected. What we all wanted, an angry beast to be gentled by the love of a demure woman.

As I said earlier, this was my first romance read, and it made a significant enough impression on me that twenty-two years later I still remember it, still read it. In my opinion, it was and is still one of the best books I've ever read in this genre. This type of emotional dynamic was a common expectation in romance literature, and if you wanted to be published, that's what you wrote, because that's what sold.

Women in these stories were often pursued or discarded based on how the hero perceived their actions. In Cynara's case, her jilted lover, Zack is furious over some assumed act of disloyalty and uses that as an excuse to treat poor Cynara terribly (even though he really loves her). And let me tell you, poor Cynara suffers. Every time I re-read this book, I want to jump inside of it and commence to kicking Zack's arrogant behind (only in my head, though. In real life, I'm really not a violent person) for treating that woman the way he did. However, I also want to throttle Cynara for allowing him to do so.



Whenever my anger at Cynara rises I have to shake my head and remind myself that you can't look on a problem of yesterday with sensibilities from today. It won't work, because today's perspectives and perceptions of woman are different.

Fortunately, in both real life and genre fiction, women are experiencing greater equality. In the more than twenty years I've been reading, and writing in this genre I've noticed a change I've been proud to witness. Women are no longer expected to be beholden to men who bully them into showing affection. Instead, today's heroines are strong, self-reliant, and most importantly, allowed

the freedom to call their lovers on their alpha B.S. They're allowed to have agency, to make decisions—whether they are right or wrong decisions—instead of just having things happen to them with no will of their own being exercised. It's still not perfect, but the strides have been monumental in comparison to the not-so-good-old-days of yesteryear.

How do I know things have changed? Today I'm able to write a book where the hero makes a very inappropriate comment—in the heat of anger mind you—about what appendage he'd like to use to shut the heroine up properly. To his defense, he realizes how wrong he is for saying such a thing almost immediately. But before he can retract his statement, the heroine smiles and replies, "If you think you're man enough to get me to put my mouth to use like that, Quillen, then make me. Or are you just all talk?" –A.J. Tenetti, *Power Privilege & Pleasure: Queens of Kings: Book 4* by LaQuette.♥

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.

TODAY'S HEROINE: MY KIND OF WOMAN BY MERCEDES CRUZ

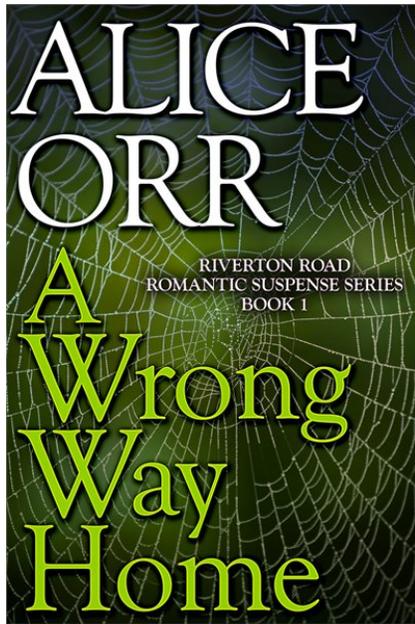


Today's heroine or my heroine is not just any female, she isn't hopelessly roaming the planet in search of 'Mr. Right'. She is a woman, grown, sure of herself as the Sun is that it will rise every morning at dawn. She pats herself on the back and doesn't need convincing that she is successful because she defines success for herself. She knows and accepts help when needed.

So why might she want a hero? My heroine is independent and not dead. She craves the attention of a man who thinks she's sexy at 6 a.m. before her shower and 6 p.m. after a long day. She enjoys the company of a man who is sincere, sexy with his words, and secure in his actions, and still knows how to get her wet.

My heroine is multi-talented, enjoying sex with her hero while sipping her white wine. She has a goal beyond finding love; she is looking to change the world to make it a better place one cup of decaf skim milk latte at a time.

Mercedes Cruz writes erotic romance and erotica. With her first novel, RETURN THE FLAVOR, expected to be released late 2016. She lives on a quiet tree-lined street in Brooklyn, NY. She enjoys frolicking through Brooklyn with her fiancé and girlfriends. Join Mercedes on her blog as she shares how she finds romance in everyday life, at MercedesCruz.com. Blog: MercedesCruz.com; Twitter: @MercedesAuthor; Facebook: Mercedescruz.



ASK ALICE: NOBODY IS LUKEWARM ABOUT KARA BY ALICE ORR

Question: Have readers ever complained about one of your heroines?

Answer: Actually nobody seems to be lukewarm about Kara.

I'm not used to readers reacting ambivalently toward my heroines much less getting upset with them. But that's exactly what's happened with Kara. She's the heroine of my 13th novel A WRONG WAY HOME which is also Book 1 of my RIVERTON ROAD ROMANTIC SUSPENSE series.

Ordinarily I don't think I'd mind much. Except that Kara Cartwright is a lot like me. She's headstrong and opinionated and sometimes abrupt. She doesn't put up with crap from anybody and she seems to have been served a short stack of patience.

In fact in her first scene with the hero of the story Matt Kalli she hauls off and socks him in the kisser. His left cheek to be exact. She has her car keys balled up in her fist when she does it too so you know she leaves a mark on him for sure.

As if that isn't enough to show him she means business and he'd better back off from his intimidating behavior – she's ready to apply a swift effective kick of her heavy Frye boots to his most vulnerable private parts. Personally all I have to say so far is this. "What's not to like?"

In the interest of full disclosure and to cut Kara a bit of a break I must tell you she's taken some hard knocks in the past. An especially hard knock came from the Kalli family – the mother to be precise. So Kara is definitely on the defensive with Matt and maybe she reacts too quickly.

Much of her behavior can be attributed to her hometown. Everything bad she's ever lived through happened in Riverton. She escaped years ago and swore never to come back but she's been lured to the North Country by the one person she cannot refuse – her beloved Aunt Dee. Even after death she calls Kara to return home and she does.

You'd think all of that would be enough for her to endure. But in addition the true villain of her former Riverton life has been murdered. Kara might be relieved if people she loves weren't suspected of the crime and caught in the crosshairs of some bad local police persons. Consequently Kara has her full feisty on. Just as I would. Just as you might too – or not.

It shakes out that there are I'm-in-Kara's-corner-all-the-way folks who say things like "I loved the saucy independent street savvy heroine." But there are also Curse-that-Kara readers. One of that tribe says "Belligerent and hotheaded Kara comes within the too stupid to live category."

Here's where I stand. Kara is my kind of gal. Especially when love grabs her by the heart and she scraps and kicks but can't make it go away.

Here's what I ask. Please give Kara a chance. My guess is you won't be able to help yourself. By the end of her story you'll love her too. Maybe almost as much as you love good old lovable me.♥

Alice Orr's "Ask Alice" column was born from many years of being asked questions about writing and publishing. She has lists and lists of those questions and attempts to answer some of them here. Alice would welcome your questions as well. A WRONG WAY HOME is Book 1 of Alice's Riverton Road Romantic Suspense series, and a free ebook on Amazon. A VILLAIN FOR VANESSA – coming soon – will be the fourth book of my Riverton Road Romantic Suspense Series featuring the Kalli family and the Miller family in stories of Romance and Danger. Visit Alice at aliceorrbooks@gmail.com or at <http://www.amazon.com/Alice-Orr/e/B000APC22E/> Here are her links: <http://www.aliceorrbooks.com>; <http://www.facebook.com/aliceorrwriter>; <http://www.twitter.com/AliceOrrBooks>

PAPER DOLLS: WHO'S THAT GIRL? BY MARIA FERRER

A picture is worth a 1000 words.

So what does this picture say to you about our heroine? Is she a dancer or is this the beginning of a great night?

What's her name? Her age? Her occupation?

What kind of novel would you write for her? Something steamy? Maybe she's sweet and innocent? Nah. Definitely steamy.

Look at her face, her body language, her clothes. Our heroine has a story. We just need to write it.

So let's play Dolls and bring our heroine 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.





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

Who's the Better Alpha Mate?

Embracing my crazy...one character at a time. A common assumption is a character with alpha traits must be paired with someone who is submissive, or erroneously referred to as a beta. An assumption, might I add, is not the same as a fact. Yes, there are many alpha/submissive or alpha/beta pairings that work very well together, but that doesn't mean two—or more—alphas pressed together can't make for a riveting read.

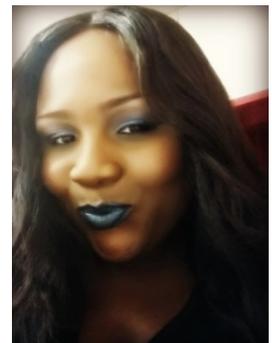
Honestly, the strong alpha needing to bang on his chest as he swings from limb to limb to save the delicate beta or submissive is a little dated, and not representative of how many real-life relationships work, not any that I've seen.

First let's dispense with this idea that being an alpha is all about banging on your chest and yelling through every scene. Being an alpha is about more than being loud and abrasive. It's about being confident, and understanding that when something needs to be done and you're capable of doing it, you have to step forward to get things done. Alphas are not alphas because they want to be in charge, they are alphas because they are willing to take on the responsibilities that others shy away from.

Since we're defining character roles, let's talk about this notion that betas are weak. It appears to be a trend that any time a story contains an alpha as a protagonist; the other protagonist must be weaker and less capable than the all-mighty alpha. This has perpetuated the perception that betas are submissive and to be submissive is to be weak. Again, assumption is not fact. Betas are not weaker than their alpha counterparts; they are often just as capable and strong as their alphas. The only difference between the two is that the beta is willing to step aside and support the alpha any way he/she can. Here's another thing about betas, betas are also ready, willing, and able to take up the mantle of leadership if the alpha should ever fall. That's not weakness, that's power.

As for the idea of who the alpha should fall in love with, I think it's much more interesting to have two alpha's fighting for control and figuring out how they can each win than just labeling the love interest of the decided alpha a beta. Just think of the organic conflict you can create if both your characters are fighting for the top spot from the start, to the bitter end. Thanks for spending a little time with me. 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.



**GOING THE INDIE ROUTE: EXCLUSIVE OR WIDE:
WHICH SIDE OF THE FENCE ARE YOU ON?
BY FALGUNI KOTHARI**



Right off the bat, let me confess that I'm a hybrid author, and new to indie publishing. I have only recently published my first indie novel, SOUL WARRIOR, and am looking forward to releasing my second on May 15th.

Being new at anything is a matter of settling in through trial and error, and hopefully learning from other people's smart decisions or their mistakes. The thing I find with indie publishing is that there is no set path to success. As with traditional publishing, the success of a book seems to rest mostly on fate, and a maybe (rarely) on a huge marketing budget. In other words, aim, shoot and pray that your dart hits its mark. If it doesn't, reload, choose a different mark and shoot, again.



Author Falguni Kothari

One of the common debates in indie is whether to go exclusive with Amazon/ KDP Select or not. Now, what does this mean?

Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) is Amazon's digital publishing platform, which any author can use. At the same time, said author can upload their content/ book to other similar platforms: iBooks, Kobo, Nook etc. That's called going wide with your content, and many authors choose this as their sales come from all these platforms.

In contrast, if you choose KDP Select you sign a contract with Amazon for exclusivity for a minimum period of three months. In this time, your content cannot be available on any other digital platform. You can have your printed books available everywhere, but not your ebook. Amazon rewards authors who go Select with such benefits:

- Higher royalties in some countries
- Enrollment in Kindle Unlimited (KU) which is a monthly subscription based library-like program and you earn royalties from a global fund, and Kindle Owner's Lending Library (KOLL) open to Amazon Prime members who are allowed to download one free book per month.
- Promotional programs like the Kindle Countdown deal and free download days. (Both promo programs really kick up your sales rank.)

So which side of the fence do you choose? KDP Select or going wide?

As I've been reading reams of info on both, and both seem to have worked for one or another author, I would suggest opting for both. If you're trying to build a reader base, go exclusive and allow Amazon's many Kindle owners to find you. If you already have a reader-base, then go wide and remind them gently and repeatedly that your books are there on all platforms. Market yourself sensibly, in either case. And remember, there is no set path to successful publishing.♥

Falguni Kothari is a New York-based hybrid author, and an amateur Latin and Ballroom dance silver medalist with a semi-professional background in Indian Classical dance. She writes

in a variety of genres sewn together by the colorful cultural threads of her South Asian heritage and expat experiences. When not writing, dancing or being a domestic goddess, she fools around on all manner of social media, and loves to connect with her readers. Her books are available worldwide.

Find out more at www.falgunikothari.com, Tweet her @F2Tweet and like her FB page at www.facebook.com/falgunikothari.author Or drop her a comment at www.falgunikothari.blogspot.com



CRAFT CORNER: WEAVING TOGETHER INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONFLICT BY ISABO KELLY



External and internal conflict are the meat and potatoes of fiction. Story *is* conflict. And almost all genre stories with any depth will have both internal and external things happen to thwart our intrepid heroes. Internal conflict is a vital part of Romance. It's primarily this struggle that drives the story of two characters finding a way to be in love and have a life together. But most modern Romance has plenty of external conflict to complicate the internal difficulties.

As a storyteller, where you start in building your various conflicts is up to you (and probably the story). Maybe you start with an idea for a great external fight between your characters, or a brilliant plot idea for a battle against other forces in which your two main characters will have to cooperate to win. Or maybe you start with the internal conflict, pairing up two very different characters with two completely different world views.

Either way, your goal is to interweave these two conflicts and make sure they play off each other to really mess up your main characters' lives. Because that's what good fiction is made of.

Starting with Internal Conflict

So let's say you start from the internal conflict. As an example, say you have a hero with two daughters, an ex-wife who took herself off to Borneo to live with the orangutans, and no female relatives—just a crusty old father who's excessively macho in his thinking. Our hero can tell, as his daughters get older, that they need a woman in their lives. Problem is, he doesn't trust women to stay, and he refuses to put his daughters through losing another potential mother.

Now you have a heroine who is a free-wheeling, hippy-dippy, happy with life, vivacious woman who is a little flighty—and doesn't know anything about kids. She is uncomfortable in their presence and has no idea how to talk to them. She was an only child raised by a mother and father who treated her as a little adult, so she doesn't even have many memories of "regular" childhood interactions. The trouble is, she thinks maybe she might like to have kids one day, but she feels completely inadequate to the task.

This basic internal conflict for both characters, the struggle within themselves, also creates an internal struggle *between* them that could prevent them from forming a lasting relationship.

Now, if this is where you start, you want to ensure your external conflict plays into and exploits these internal conflicts. You want to put your characters into situations that rub wrong and make that internal conflict even more difficult. For example, maybe something happens that causes the heroine to leave town unexpectedly. She has a great reason for this, but all the hero sees is another flighty woman abandoning him and his daughters. And maybe something comes up that forces the heroine to take care of the daughters all on her own, pitting her against her own insecurities and inadequacies, knowing the hero doesn't trust her to look after the girls.

Whatever external conflict you throw at them, it should all tie back into their internal difficulties, making it harder for them to overcome the things keeping them apart.

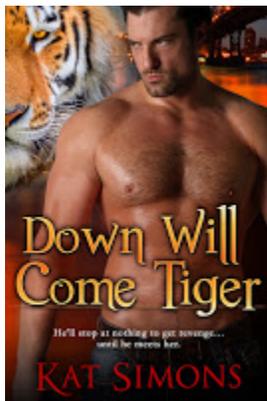
Starting with External Conflict

Now, let's start with an external struggle. Say you have a heroine who is trying to rescue her baby sister from a Bad Guy, and she's willing to do whatever it takes to do that. Then you have a hero who is a cop working undercover with the Bad Guy, and he can't risk blowing his cover to help the heroine and her sister because it could get him and several other people killed. Throw in the Bad Guy telling the undercover cop to kill the heroine, as a test of the cop's loyalty to the Bad Guy, just to really complicate things.

A nice, suspenseful set up of external conflict. Now give these characters internal conflicts that bump up sharply against the external conflict, making it impossible to see a good end to things.

Maybe your hero lost his wife to the Bad Guy, so he's out for revenge as much as justice. But he's falling for the brave heroine and can't stand to see her hurt by the very same man who murdered his wife. Maybe your heroine's father was a criminal and she finds herself drawn to hard men but at the same time wants a kinder life than the one her father raised her in. She might also have a knee-jerk distrust of cops, which will make falling for a cop who has been actively lying to her even more complicated.

As you can see from the examples, it really doesn't matter which conflict grabs your attention first. The trick is to interweave both internal and external struggles to really screw up your characters'



lives. The more intertwined these two conflicts are, the more satisfying the resolution will be for your readers.

Make things tough on your characters, from the outside and from within. Make readers doubt they'll ever be able to overcome these complicated forces. And you will keep readers glued to your book, unable to put it down until they see how you get your couple to their happily-ever-after.♥

Isabo Kelly is the award-winning author of multiple science fiction and fantasy romances. Under the name Kat Simons, she also writes bestselling shapeshifter paranormal romances. For more on Isabo and Kat, visit www.isabokelly.com and www.katsimons.com.

**INTERVIEW: MAYA RODALE ON ROMANCE, ROGUES & LADY BRIDGET'S DIARY
BY A.C. ROSE**



Bestselling author Maya Rodale pens smart, sassy romance books that often feature *devilishly* handsome, sexy, Alpha males from another century. Many of her gentleman rogues have dreamy British accents, and are skilled at the courtship rituals of polite society.

Everyone has been waiting for her new series, Keeping Up with the Cavendishes, which launched recently with LADY BRIDGET'S DIARY. The book is a blend of PRIDE AND PREJUDICE and BRIDGET JONES DIARY and the entire series is homage to her favorite Rom Coms.

Another three books are planned for this series, all following different characters, but in roughly in the same time frame. I chatted with Maya about romance, rogues, LADY BRIDGET'S DIARY, and about her staunch support of romance books and readers.

You've been a romance reader since your mom gave you your first novel in your teens, what was it about romance that so captured your attention?

MR: I just love a great, engaging story—especially one with a well-developed heroine, adventure, a love story and a happy ending. Romance novels are the best place to consistently find this type of story, so once I discovered these books I was hooked.

Why do you think your mom was so insistent about your reading them?

MR: She was a fan of romance novels, which is why she thought to recommend them. At the time, I was studying the role of women in fiction, as writers and characters, and she insisted I couldn't possibly do so without reading the most popular, profitable books by women, about women and for women. I couldn't argue with that, so I had to start reading them. The rest is history...

So how did you find your way to being a romance writer?

MR: I started writing romance novels really young—right out of college!—probably because I didn't know any better. I wrote through grad school and day jobs until my writing career and life was in a place where I could write full time.

Despite the fact that romance is a thriving industry, with devoted readers, critics call them trashy and low brow, and worse. You have been a champion of the genre and its readers. What do you most wish people could understand about why these books are good for the mind, body, and spirit?

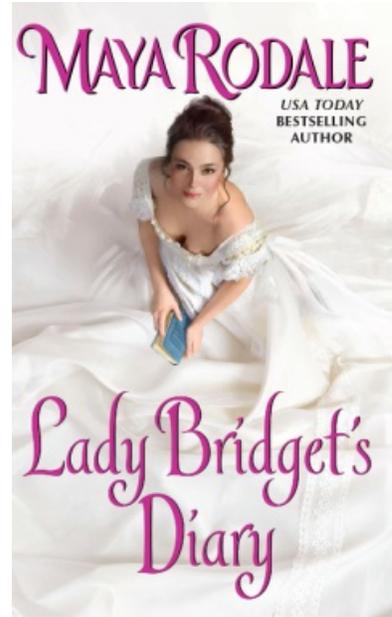
MR: I think it's important to have these engaging portrayals of goodness, love and happiness to inspire people to stay strong and hopeful, especially when the headlines are do depressing. I know I find them to be a great source of comfort and strength. And especially for women, romance novels are one of the only forms of entertainment that consistently portrays heroines as central to the story and shows heroines succeeding. It's important for us to have role models like that—and lots of them (over 9,000 romance titles were published in 2013 alone). These books are escapist, but they also do nourish the mind, body and souls of the readers.

We are all super excited about your latest book, *LADY BRIDGET'S DIARY*. And, hmmm, the characters sound slightly familiar: Lord Darcy and Lady Bridget.

MR: The book is definitely inspired by both *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* and *BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY*! I came up with my title—*LADY BRIDGET'S DIARY*.—on a lark, and it was pretty clear to me what the story had to be, which is a mash up of those two stories. To make it my own, though, I made the heroine American (in Regency England) and took some liberties with the secondary characters (my Rupert sort of plays the role of Willoughby/Hugh Grant, for example...but in a very, very different way).

In recent years we've seen a trend in sexy contemporary novels. Do think this is still a great time to be a historical romance novelist? And is there still an interest in new authors?

MR: For as long as I've been writing, everyone has been lamenting the death of the historical romance--first to paranormal, then to these super sexy contemporaries. But I think the historical romance will endure because it offers something these other subgenres don't: clear, consist rules of courtship and chivalry from book to book. Plus, stakes are high (marriage! forever!) when it comes to sex, so it automatically imbues the act with more significance and maybe even reverence. This is not to say that any other way is bad (no judgment here!), or that we don't see that in other subgenres, but I think it's more prevalent in historical. Sometimes that sexual tension that comes from passionate characters with these constraints is what we're in the mood for. And yes, I think there will always be an interest in new authors, because romance readers are so voracious and even the most prolific authors can only write so much.♥



Read more of this interview on the Three Tomatoes:
<http://thethreetomatoes.com/maya-rodale-on-romance-rogues-and-lady-bridgets-diary>

Find out more about Maya Rodale and *LADY BRIDGET'S DIARY* at her website.

<http://www.mayarodale.com/coming-soon/>

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

WHY IS IT SO HARD TO EDIT YOUR OWN WORK?**BY MAUREEN CASTELL**



A couple of months ago a friend of mine asked a bunch of us to beta read a novel he had written. The novel was set in late- to post-World War II England, framed as a memory of a woman in modern day. It was sort of a romance, sort of a mystery, and sort of a “biography”, and its intended audience was the over-fifty crowd (people who understood life during and after the war, and who knew what the terms “ration book” and “coupons” meant in that context).

Being in that “over-fifty” demographic and having also been born in England to two people who had fought in that war (not to mention being an aspiring writer myself), I felt I could provide a reasonable critique for him. So I trotted off to the local stationery store and bought a sharp pencil and a pack of 96 post-it tabs.

93 post-it tabs later, I had what I felt looked like a very intimidating critique.

To be fair, this was just a draft copy, and about half the tabs were for typos (most of which the other reviewers found as well), but the other half...well, let’s just say I wasn’t looking forward to the conversation we were about to have over lunch. I found point-of-view problems, tense problems, backstory dump, unrealistic actions, slow pacing... OK, let’s just say I found a few issues.

And that got me wondering. Why is it so easy to critique someone else’s work but be blind to the flaws in one’s own? Am I really such a brilliant writer that I don’t have any flaws?

Of course not.

So why, after I’ve proofread a manuscript several times, do my agent/editor submissions come back with “doesn’t meet our current needs”, and contest entries come back as “shows promise but...”, with almost as many virtual post-it tabs as I gave my friend?

I think the main problem is just that...*I’ve read the manuscript several times*. I miss typos because I’ve started to read what I *expect* to read. I miss jarring leaps of logic because I know the whole backstory *in my head*. I miss point-of-view because I’m always in my current character’s head and have this magical ability to see behind me and know what other people are thinking and feeling (yes, I write fantasy, but even my most powerful character can’t read minds and would look really strange with eyes in the back of her head — even if she is a mother).

So before I send anything off to a contest or, especially, to an agent or editor, I always try to find a beta reader. My husband works well for this, because he has absolutely no interest in romance (novels J) or fantasy, so he doesn’t get sucked into the story. He can see the flaws and, bless him, is not afraid to point them out.

But he doesn't see everything. After all, he's not a writer, and *POV* and *HEA* and *story arc* and *character growth* are foreign terms to him, so how can he be expected to notice when they don't work or, worse, don't exist?

That's when I should get a fellow writer to also do a critique. Notice I said *should*.

A great venue is the Toronto Romance Writers (TRW) annual critique sessions held every March. Unfortunately I live in Winnipeg (over a thousand miles away), so getting to that meeting is a bit of a challenge for me.

Another option is to ask a fellow TRW member to beta read a chapter or two, and some have provided their services in the past. But I can't ask them to read the same revised chapter more than a couple of times, because, no matter how good they are, they'll start missing the same things I am, and for the same reasons.

My last option, one I try to take advantage of as often as I can, is THE CATHERINE. I enter the annual TRW writing contest, not with the expectation of winning (although that would certainly validate my opinion of my "brilliant" writing), but to get the best feedback I have ever received from any contest. The judges can *see* what I've missed, and point out where things have gone wrong, and, even better, can suggest articles or books to help me do better. They don't preach; they don't change my voice; they don't "judge" me as a writer, only my work. I can't say enough about the quality of the judging in this contest, and the feedback has helped me improve my writing considerably since I first placed my fingers on a keyboard many years ago.



So what happened at that lunch with my friend? To my surprise, he took one look at the tabbed book and *thanked* me. He said it was just the sort of feedback he was looking for. Yes, he'd have to do a bit of rewriting in a few spots and the book wasn't as ready for the publishers as he'd expected, but he felt the changes were worth it, that they would make a stronger book.

And he's offered to critique my next book in the same way. ©♥

Maureen Castell is a member of the Toronto Romance Writers and is working on her fifth (or is it sixth?) novel. This article first appeared in the romANTICS newsletter of the Toronto Romance Writers.