

HEART TO HEART

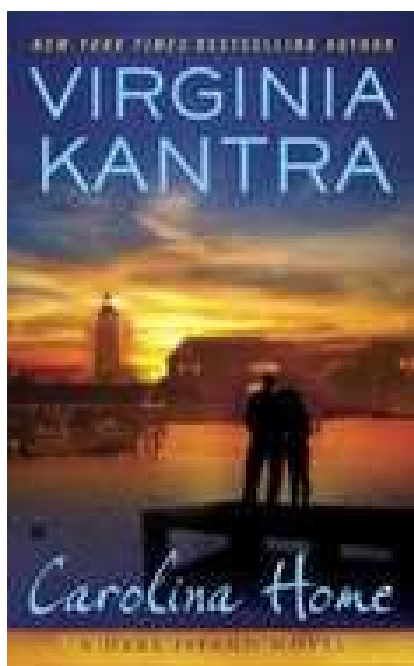
Developing the Romance in Your Romance Novel

Virginia Kantra



Good love stories are universal yet unique. They tap into shared emotions with story-specific details of character, time, and place that transport us to the world created by the writer. A great romance novel makes us believe in love. Not just that love exists, but that this love between these two people is somehow going to last and endure.

How? By telling the truth. By combining those universal truths, emotional truth, with the thrill and struggle of two unique people falling in love and working their way toward commitment and their own happy ending.



Virginia's new series launches in July 2012

There is no formula. But in my own writing, there are seven things I push for to make a convincing case for each couple's developing romance, for the "emotionally satisfying ending" that defines our genre - and that brings readers back for more.

1. Physical awareness or attraction

You don't need to consult scientific journals to know that men and women, regardless of culture, seem hardwired to find certain physical characteristics attractive. Just glance at People magazine's most recent "100 Sexiest" list.

In real life, biology drives desire. We are attracted to partners who smell "right" based on a complex chemistry of pheromones, fertility, and a sufficiently different immune system. We seek visual cues that our potential mates can bear children or protect them: full lips and a small waist-to-hip ratio in women; square jaw and a muscular build in men. Symmetry of face and body in both sexes is a desirable marker of health. There are even studies that define ideal male and female faces based on oestrogen and testosterone levels.

What does this mean for us as writers? Must we use hormonal markers as a blueprint for describing characters? Well, you can, and you can make it great. Think of the heroine's first look at the hero in Jennifer Crusie's *Bet Me*: "Every woman in the room with a working ovary probably looked at him and thought, This one."

You can also cast your characters against type. The scarred hero and plain, passionate heroine have been around since *Beauty and the Beast* and *Jane Eyre*. Still, most romantic leads exhibit the markers of

genetic health: shiny hair, good skin, bright eyes . . . a full set of teeth. Even pleasingly rounded heroines are rarely described as being shaped like beach balls. And I haven't yet read a romance in which the heroine says to the hero, "Oh, honey, I love your tiny package."

Universal hooks make it possible for your reader to find your hero and heroine attractive. But to make your stories and characters compelling, your hero and heroine need to find each other uniquely desirable. For that, you need more than symmetrical faces and a great waist-to-hip body ratio. Even if your characters feel love or lust at first sight (and that whole "I must make you my mate" imperative is a powerful fantasy), you can make their attraction more powerful and believable by motivating it with specific triggers. Use observation and characterization to move beyond cliché. Use significant details to capture the vision of the beloved in the eyes of the lover: *Jane Eyre*'s "light fingers," Elizabeth Bennett's "fine eyes."

Your characters' level of physical awareness must be appropriate to:

- The subgenre (Are you writing sweet traditionals or out-there erotica?)
- The characters themselves
- The stage of the relationship
- The level of action/ external conflict.

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WELCOME

TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS:

Kaye Chaloner - Broome, W. Aus
Cass Green - Rockhampton, Aus.
Kristin Meagher - Sydney, Aus
Trish Robertson - Auckland
Julie Taylor - Tauranga

"Magic is believing in yourself, if you can do that, you can make anything happen."

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Editor's Desk



It's official, Love is in the Air. This month we start our countdown to RWNZ's 2012 Conference at the Crown Plaza in Auckland from 24 to 26th of August. Check out pages 9 to 12 for presenter intros, the programme for the breakout sessions, and a rundown of Randy Ingermanson's full day Friday workshop Writing Fiction.

Our RWNZ conference is always a class act offering rare face to face opportunities to meet top international and national writing talent. And as all of these amazing people are generous and expert teachers of writing WOW into your WIP, I'm looking forward to meeting up with you there in four Heart to Heart beats.

In the meantime, H2H continues to chase the best of the best for our own line-up of contributors. In this issue, NYT Bestsellers and award winning authors guide us through discuss romancing up your romance novel, revising like a professional writer, writing a powerful setting that will amp up emotional punch, writing from your heart, and discovering your characters' light bulb moments.

So with Tom Jones (below) setting the mood, pour that cuppa, and prepare to enjoy an entire newsletter's worth of aha moments. Until next time. Cheers from, Viv, Ellie, and, Chris.

[Tom Jones Love is in the air With lyrics - YouTube](#) Jul 21, 2009 ... Tom Jones **Love is in the air** With lyrics. No Copyright Infringement. The Audio belongs to Enterprises, the picture is mine. rate, subscribe And/or ...<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=061cgLtuYeQ>

Sandra Hyde Romance Writers Trust

Through the Sandra Hyde Romance Writers Trust, set up to celebrate the life of Sandra Hyde/Sandra Hyatt, agent Roberta Brown has donated two registration fees to the RWA conference in Anaheim. Open to RWNZ members, her initial offer was for one registration fee but applications were so close she decided to extend that to two - one published author and one unpublished writer.

Toni Kenyon and Louisa George are the lucky recipients.

RWNZ CONTEST SCHEDULE 2012

CHAPTER SHORT STORY CONTEST

Judging in progress

HMB GREAT BEGINNINGS CONTEST

Opens Tuesday, 20 March 2012

Closes Friday, 20 April 2012

Final Editor Judge: Lucy Gilmour, HM&B

Final Agent judge: Jessica Alvarez, BookEnds Literary Agency
(Entry information is available on the website)

STRICTLY SINGLE CONTEST

Opens Tuesday, 21 August 2012

Closes Friday, 21 September 2012

Final Judge: (To be confirmed)

(Entry information will be available on the website soon)

If you have any questions,
contact Viv Constable, Contests Coordinator at
vconstable@xtra.co.nz

Click here to enter: www.romancewriters.co.nz

From The Pres.



What's happening in RWNZ?

Hi everyone

I hope you've all had a great month and that those of you working hard on your Clendon entries managed to get them completed on time. Good luck with our eager crew of reader judges. Our short story contest also closed in March, so best of luck to everyone who entered that contest too. Of course, there's still time to enter the Great Beginnings contest, so check the website for details and be sure to get your entry in before Friday 20 April.

On the subject of contests, I would like to say a big thank you to Viv Constable, our Principal Contests Coordinator, and Kamy Chetty, our Judges Coordinator, as well as all the judges who volunteer to judge our various contests. Also this year, big thanks to Tyree Connor for taking on coordinating the Clendon – definitely no small feat! Without all of you so generously giving your time and effort, we wouldn't be able to bring members such great opportunities to get their work in front of editors and agents – so THANK YOU!

Also on the subject of thanking people, I would like to extend a huge thank you to Miriam Paxie, our outgoing RWNZ Treasurer, for all the wonderful work she has put in over the last couple of years. The Treasurer's job is often one of the busiest in an organization and RWNZ is no exception. While you may not have seen much of Miriam, rest assured she has been hard at work behind the scenes making sure your organization runs smoothly and all our financial obligations are met. With our financial year having ended on 31 March, Miriam is stepping down from the position to focus on her new direction. I would like to wish her all the best with her studies.

I am pleased to announce that Deborah Shattock, another of our Blenheim-based members, has offered to take on the Treasurer's role. A big thank you to Deborah and a warm welcome to the team.

Since I'm on a roll saying thank you, I'll continue by offering a huge thank you to Susan Meier, Harlequin Romance author and workshop presenter extraordinaire! Anyone who spent March doing her wonderful online workshop "Can this manuscript be saved?" will know exactly what I mean when I say she is an awesome lady. Her course was amazing and I think I can safely say that everyone who participated enjoyed it immensely and learned heaps.

Conference news

Things are moving along nicely with this year's "Love is in the Air" Conference. In this issue of H2H, you'll find a full description of our fabulous Friday Workshop "Writing Fiction" with Randy Ingermanson, the Snowflake Guy. You'll also find a full list of all the Breakout Workshop choices you will have at our Weekend Conference, and a short bio for each of our speakers.

Online registrations open on our website in April, so keep your eye on our website and your inbox—I'll send you a MadMimi email to let you know when registrations go live! Be sure to get in quick and secure your spot for what promises to be a fantastic weekend!

Once again, I think that's it from me for now. Have a wonderful month and may the words flow.

In the following example from *Sea Witch*, notice how even at the moment of first attraction, the seeds of conflict--the tension between land and sea, between the mundane and the magic worlds--are present.

"A woman shone at the water's edge, wrapped in twilight and a towel. The sea foamed around her bare, pale feet. Her long, dark hair lifted in the breeze. Her face was pale and perfect as the moon.

For one second, the sight caught him like a wave smack in the chest, robbing him of speech. Of breath. Yearning rushed through his soul like the wind over the water, stirring him to the depths. His hands curled into fists at his sides.

Not okay. He throttled back his roaring imagination. She was just a kid. A girl. An underage girl in an oversize sweat-shirt with--his gaze dipped again, briefly--a really nice rack."

2. Emotional conflict

There are recognizable, universal barriers to love, staples of the romance genre: issues of fear, trust, conflicting loyalties and/or control. Frankly, I'm not a big fan of the one-woman-wronged-me-therefore-I'll-hate-all-women school of conflict. But psychologist Judith Viorst got it right when she wrote: even in the best of all worlds, a lasting love relationship encroaches on our personal control, demanding that we give in, give up, give over to another powers we might prefer to keep for ourselves. Even in the best of love relationships, we will struggle to balance power and surrender.

What habits, principles, or beliefs must your characters surrender before they

can be together? How must they change or grow before they can commit to each other?

This is where your unique vision, your truth, and your characters' unique motivations come to life. **There have to be clear and compelling reasons why the hero and heroine cannot just give up what they want to satisfy the other person. Why? Because to abandon their goals would threaten their very sense of self:**

- I am a man of honour; loving you would make me less honourable.
- I am a responsible daughter; loving you would make me less responsible.
- I am struggling for independence; loving you would make me dependent.

How relationship-centred the conflict must be and how much time you can spend on the various elements of the plot will depend on your story, your word count, and your subgenre. Whatever the length and focus of your story, however, you can pull the romance back to the forefront by concentrating on

3. Scenes that foster emotional intimacy

The heroines of our books may be perfectly capable of kicking ass and putting food on the table. But the hero's ability to protect and provide is still attractive to our readers, another universal element that contributes to the romance.

A partner who is our heroine's equal, who can-if necessary-defend the young in the cave, is a desirable mate. Which no doubt explains the popularity of Navy SEALs, gun slingers, cops, and the Undead. Status and the ability to provide also encompass social power and monetary power, which why we have heroes who are dukes and billionaires. However, you cannot say your hero is the biggest, baddest alpha male in the star belt if every time the aliens show up, our boy winds up bleeding under the bulkhead. It's not enough to describe the hero as rich and powerful. We must see him putting his wealth and power at the service of the heroine: Mr. Darcy rushing off to London to save Lydia from Mr. Wickham.

We need to see the hero in action to believe in him. And our heroine needs to see him in action to love him.

This gender typing can go both ways. Just as our heroes need scenes that showcase their competence or status, our heroines benefit from scenes that show either their ability to nurture or their desire for connection--which explains why the exasperating grandmother, the unexpected child, and the rescued stray are staples of our genre.

Even the kick-ass assassin heroine will generally have a high personal stake in her mission. This is not only good conflict development, but also good character development.

These universal qualities help our reader fall in love with our hero and root for our heroine. But our stories demand that our characters fall in love with each other.

What are the qualities that make us believe that these two people--and no others--must be together? Because if this is all about her long legs and his smouldering eyes and proximity, you may make a nice case for a long weekend but you're not going to sell me on a lifetime love.

Try the following exercise:

It's the relationship, stupid.

My hero admires my heroine's

(List an obvious virtue, and no, "ass" is not an appropriate answer for this exercise.)

He uncovers/appreciates her

(Something less obvious. Her true self.)

He's challenged by her

(What does she have or know that he lacks or must learn? Think Jerry Maguire: "You complete me.")

Now do the same for the heroine. This fill-in-the-blank exercise can help you identify what I like to call "the vision of the beloved in the eyes of the lover" that lies at the heart of romance.

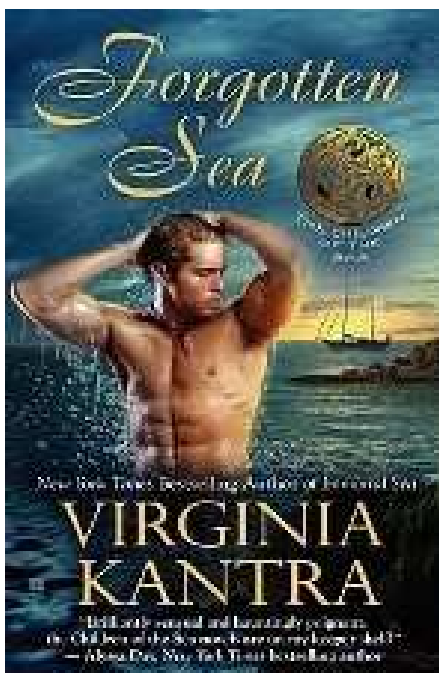
Examine your own story. Where are the scenes that move the romance forward by showing this? Not him thinking, "I love her because she's kind," but scenes where he observes or experiences her kindness in action. The plot should force the hero and heroine to exhibit those qualities that compel them to fall in love.

4. Resting or courtship scenes

People who share moments of high action and intense emotion--lovers on the run, sports teams in the playoffs--frequently bond. Men may equate this closeness--that springs from action with emotional intimacy. But women, and women readers, want more. We want courtship. We crave conversation. We believe in...dating.

The pacing of our novels rarely allows

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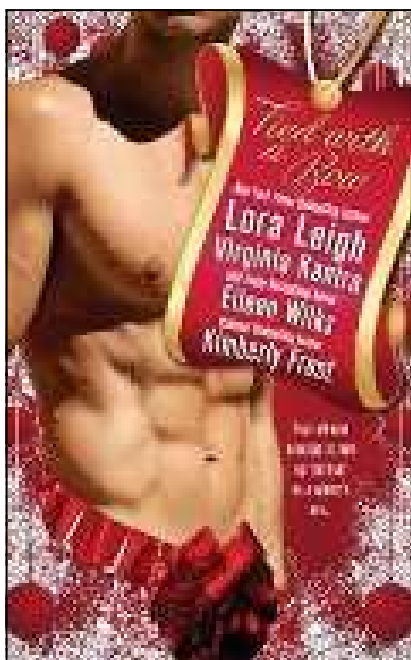
our characters the luxury of leisurely dating. If it did, our books would be pretty boring. However even in the most tautly plotted romantic suspense the characters need to eat and sleep. **More importantly, resting or courtship scenes are necessary for us to believe that there will be a future for the couple outside of the story's time frame.**

A change of setting and a pause in the action can give you scenes that mimic the familiar "date." Such scenes can either appeal to a conventional fantasy (ballroom, tropical garden, five-star restaurant) or mix it up (hayfield, ball game, family picnic) in a way that is:

- true to the situation
- advances plot/shows conflict
- reveals character/fosters intimacy

Even if your setting is unconventional or unique, you can engage your readers' emotions by engaging their senses with the familiar trappings of romance: wine, flowers, candles, firelight . . . food. I'm married to a man who can cook. Sooner or later in my books, the hero always feeds the heroine. Maybe this goes back to that atavistic "provider" thing, but sharing food is a universal courtship ritual.

There is a difference between universal and cliché. If your hero is not a red-roses-and-champagne kind of guy, if your heroine would prefer books or beer or Lakers tickets, if your setting is a castle off the coast of Scotland or a cave in the North Carolina mountains,



then don't force your couple into unlikely get-aways with meaningless props. Choose settings that are sensually evocative but also appropriate to your story and significant to your characters. The important thing is to get your lovers alone, away from the bad guys and the kids, in a setting which is conducive to dialogue.

And to sex.

5. Sex scenes

Sharing food and conversation frequently leads to lovemaking. In our genre, that can mean anything from a first kiss to a no-holds-barred sexual encounter. Not every reader or writer of romance will find the same words or acts appropriate or erotic. So how do we create the universal hooks that make our love scenes both sizzling and believable?

First, recognize that sex scenes are not about body parts. If you make them about body parts, you risk sounding clichéd or offensive or silly. We need to reach beyond much of our genre for fresh, true language, whether it is stark or extravagant. Use words that come naturally to your characters, that spring from your own feelings and experience.

Love scenes need to engage your characters' brains and hearts. All the threads, all the unique components, we've talked about so far come into play:

Specific triggers of physical desire:

- Emotional conflict, with whatever issues of trust or control your characters are dealing with.
- The vision of the beloved in the eyes of the lover: why this man with this woman?
- Something should be at stake with each kiss and encounter. The physical action should reflect or impact, complicate or resolve the emotional conflict.

While there is no formula for love scenes, there should be a progression to the scenes themselves. Each time, your lovers bring something new to their relationship—greater intimacy, higher stakes. The physical action may express the characters' growing emotional involvement, or it may subvert it. While delaying sex can increase tension, having sex, especially having sex too soon, can increase the emotional conflict. (Sea Fever starts with a drunken hook-up at a wedding reception.) Making love should generally make things worse, so that each advance, is followed by a subsequent falling back.

One way to make things worse is to thrust your lovers back into society.

6. Lovers in society

We have all heard the expression, "No man is an island." Well, no couple can live on one forever. Eventually, they must re-enter society like one of Christopher Vogler's heroes returning from a journey with the magic elixir of love.

The society our characters inhabit encompasses both work and family. Sometimes the two are combined, like Susan Elizabeth Phillips' Stars football team or Suzanne Brockmann's Navy SEALs. Now it may be that duty or careers or heavy-handed parents have actually contributed to the couple's conflict. Think of Prince Charming, who must marry for dynastic reasons, or Mr. & Mrs. Smith, assigned to assassinate each other. How your couple resolves their conflict will be a function not only of their characters, but of your values, gender politics, and genre expectations. There is no "universal" solution to reintegrating the lovers into society.

However, to satisfy the reader's expectation of a happily-ever-after, the couple must negotiate a settlement which satisfies each of them. How will they cope with long hours and missed dinners, with the demands of children and friends? It's not enough for the hero to assure the single mother that he will love her son without scenes of him helping with homework or childcare or catch-love in action. You also need scenes that show the couple's integration into the existing family-and-friends structure: the heroine holding her own with her lover's brothers or the hero defending his beloved against her parents' criticism.

All these scenes reinforce the formation of the pair bond. This is part of the payoff, the commitment, in which hero and heroine demonstrate that their primary bond and loyalty is now to each other.

Which brings us, finally, to

7. Payoff scenes

Why do we read romance novels? Why do we write them? Because we want the "emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending" that they promise. We want all those other things, too, the sizzle of sexual attraction, emotional struggle and intimacy, courtship, great sex, and a couple capable of functioning within society. But we really want our happy endings.

Of course, our characters have to earn their happiness. They must defeat or at least contain the threat posed by the antagonist. And the romantic resolution can't spring out of nowhere. In real life, you wouldn't trust in a marriage proposal on the first date, would you? Same thing in fiction. There are stages in developing the romance, and each stage has its own payoff or reward.

The "duh" moment. Acknowledgement of feelings for the beloved.

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Maybe the heroine doesn't identify those feelings as love, maybe the hero doesn't know what he's going to do about them, but the emotions are there and they're real. The "duh" moment can and should result in more conflict and complications.

The "yes" moment. Declaration of surrender. His and hers. By making the declaration of love unequal, by having the hero and heroine admit their love at different times, you can increase emotional tension. But for the payoff, there must be some degree of reciprocity, even if it is unspoken.

The "aww" moment. The first two stages can lead to further conflict and complications. But this third moment should leave your protagonists and your reader with hope and confidence. For that reason, the final emotional payoff usually takes place after the bad guys have been defeated and the lovers have re-entered their ordinary world. Now is the time to pull out all the stops, to affirm the universal lessons learned with those unique, specific details that will give the scene emotional weight and significance.

How much time you need to convince

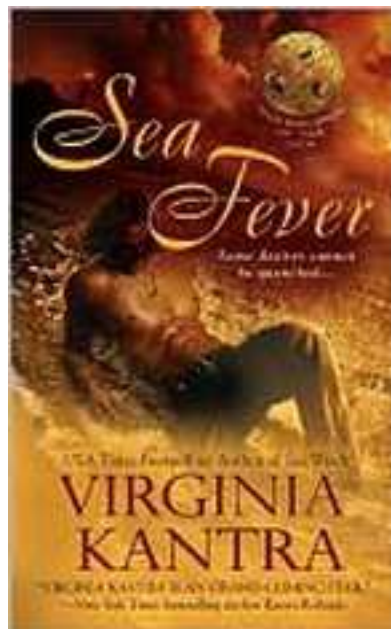
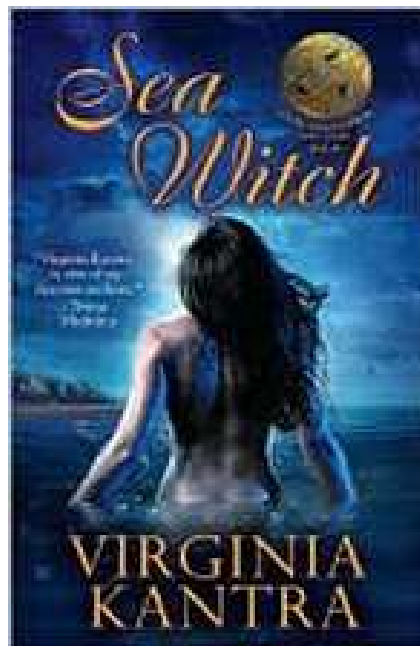
your reader that everything will work out depends, again, on your subgenre and your story. The reason epilogues are so popular in romantic suspense is that it's difficult to jump from an action-packed and bloody climax into a satisfying romantic resolution without either sacrificing the story's pacing or straining the reader's credibility. In *Sea Witch*, because of its huge internal, emotional conflict, I had to write an entire final chapter to get to that "aww" resolution.

Romance begins with "Once upon a time" and ends with "Happily ever after." One way to create that sense of completion, of coming full circle, is to set up a similarity between the language and imagery at the beginning of the book and the language and imagery at the end—a kind of verbal echo which creates an emotional resonance.

RWA National defines a romance novel as "a central love story" with "an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending." Let critics scoff at our books' happy endings. As long as our stories are grounded in our experience, in our emotional truth, and supported by small, honest details, we can write stories that are believable, memorable . . . and satisfying!

New York Times bestselling author Virginia Kantra credits her love for strong heroes and courageous heroines to a childhood spent devouring fairy tales. Virginia is the author of more than twenty books. Her work has earned her numerous awards including Romance Writers of America's RITA Award, eight RITA nominations, and two National Readers' Choice Awards. She is the author of more than twenty books including the popular "MacNeill Brothers" and "Trouble in Eden" series. Her Children of the Sea books continue with *Forgotten Sea* in bookstores now! In July 2012 look for *Carolina Home*, the first book in her new Dare Island novels. Married to her college sweetheart and the mother of three kids, Virginia lives in North Carolina. She is a firm believer in the strength of family, the importance of storytelling, and the power of love.

<http://www.facebook.com/VirginiaKantraBooks>



potential MARKETS with P.D.R. Lindsay-Salmon



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REVISIONS 101



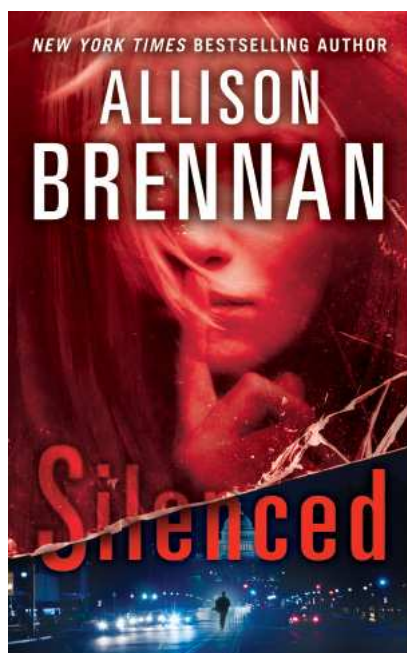
Recently I spoke to the local Sisters In Crime chapter and sat between two unpublished writers. The first has been revising endlessly the same book. Over and over and over. Especially the first few chapters. The second has written seventeen complete manuscripts and has yet to send one out to an agent or editor. Seventeen!

In this article I talk about killing your manuscript, so it's addressed more to the first writer. To illustrate, I'll share my process of revising *KILLING FEAR*, my February 08 release. This is Will Hooper's story (Carina's partner from *SPEAK NO EVIL*.) This is my process from beginning to end:

I write the book. I edit as I go, so my book is pretty well done by the time I type THE END. I've been known to rewrite the beginning two or three times (for me that's the first 100-150 pages), but I do that before I continue with the book.

* IF I have time (which I did with my novella), I'll read the entire manuscript and line edit it, fix any problems, but mostly make every scene clearer and cut fat. I didn't have time to do this with *KILLING FEAR*.

I send my book to my editor—if you're unpublished, I'd suggest finding a critique group or someone you trust to read your manuscript for the following: Character, Story



and Pacing. They are the three most important things and without characters that grab you, a story that is intriguing, and good pacing, it'll be a tough sell. Avoid critique groups who mess with your voice or tell you what will sell or won't sell.

My editor reads the manuscript and makes notes in the margin. Things like, "Abrupt transition," or "Too slow," or "I don't understand the purpose of this scene, is it necessary?" or "Draw this scene out." At the end of chapters she'll write more notes like, "I still don't have a grasp on the back-story." In her revision letter she'll make her general comments.

For *KILLING FEAR* the key problem was that I didn't make it clear early on about the murders seven years ago which are important to the current story. I drew out the story of the past, feeding the reader details about a crime that everyone involved knew about. The other problem was similar—Will and Robin had a past together, and my editor didn't feel like the reader had a clear understand of how they got together in the first place, though their break up was spectacular. I skim through all my editor comments and read the revision letter two or three times so I can internalize the problems. I also talk to my editor and she expands on her feelings about the book, the strengths and weaknesses, and that also helps immensely.

Now, I go through the book starting at the beginning. Here I do my own edits—I tweak virtually every sentence, find better words, tighten where I can, and address my editor's comments which are usually right on the money. I'm a linear writer—I can't jump around. I start at page one and go straight through to page four hundred and something. If I'm hung up on something, I can't push through it until I get that scene the way I want it.

At this point in *KILLING FEAR*, I've only gone through three chapters and the prologue. About 35 pages. What I've done is expand the prologue which is now the longest I've written, but I think my editor was right and it was a great scene that needed more explanation. So we get to meet the main characters through the eyes of the killer during his trial. Then I cut the first six pages of chapter one and expanded on the second scene. Then chapter two is almost unchanged, just my own tweaks. Chapter three is where I got stuck. The scene was good, necessary, but the pacing was off. Ironically, my editor didn't make any comments on it, but I knew the scene could be so much more powerful. Also, I addressed one of her overall concerns

which was that my past timeline (previous murders) was confusing. Here is where I fixed that by having a task force meeting and the detective in charge (my hero) given a technical run down on the murders, the who, what, why, where, when—through photographs of the victim and the crime scene and a general explanation of the investigation. I didn't go into everything because there are some bigger issues, but I did at least hint at one of the key problems in the investigation. That chapter took me longer to edit and fix than everything up to that point.

Once I'm done with my revisions, I'll send them back to my editor. Revisions can take a couple days to a couple weeks. I asked for three weeks for these because I have the time and it's summer, which means there are a lot of family things going on and I didn't want to promise something too fast and then be stressed.

Okay, that's MY process. Every process is different. Sometimes it's trial and error. Before I sold, my process was different. On my first trilogy it was different still. It wasn't until I wrote *SPEAK NO EVIL* that this system clicked and seems to work for me (the novella totally screwed up my system, but that was it.) Before I sold, I would revise the book once on the computer, print it out and line edit it on hard copy, and then as I was making those changes electronically I would inevitably make more changes to the book on the computer. *THE PREY* I had a critique group for and edited as I went, then I re-read the whole manuscript before sending it out to agents. Then I did another round of revisions with my agent before sending it out to publishers. When it sold, I did ANOTHER round of revisions.

The thing to remember here is that no matter how well you write, you don't see everything.

Why? Because you're too close to the manuscript.

Which brings me to killing your book.

I know several people who edit their book to death. It's possible. I think the key problem with over-editing is that you know the story so well that you see what is not on the page. You may

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have had it in the original draft, but now it's gone—and you still see it. You also get bored with the story and tired of the characters and start changing the story because of that boredom. You've already told the story you wanted to tell, so now you're creating new stories and plotlines and what you end up with is a mess.

You stress over individual words. Pour over a thesaurus. Question every sentence you write.

There are three things to look for as you revise your manuscript:

1) Are your characters compelling? Sympathetic? Are you emotionally invested in what happens to them? Do you care?

2) Is your story compelling? Interesting? The conflict real and not contrived? Does the combination of the story and the characters make you want to keep turning pages?

3) Is your pacing tight? Too much exposition? Too much introspection? Too much narrative? Or just enough?

I can't tell you HOW to do this. Some people read their manuscript in stages and will first edit for conflict, then plot

holes, then description, then line edit, then a final read through. I can't do that. I see the story as a cohesive whole, that you can't have story without character, or description without story, or character without conflict. But everyone is unique.

What I CAN tell you is that I've heard too many horror stories of people who spend years editing a book, or worse the first three or four chapters. They edit and edit and edit and constantly question themselves and end up editing the life out of a manuscript. I've seen this in too many contests to count: an entry that is technically perfect—not a punctuation mark out of place or a dangling participle in view, but no spark. I just don't care about the characters or what happens to them.

If you want to sell commercial fiction, you're going to have to find a faster system. I'm not saying DON'T edit, because no one is perfect. But over editing is just as bad as under editing.

You're going to have to learn how to say good-bye and send your baby out to agents or editors.

And you're going to have to start another book.



STALKED Release Date: 10.30.12

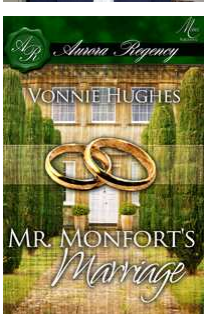
New York Times and USA Today bestseller Allison Brennan is the author of eighteen novels and several short stories. A former consultant in the California State Legislature, she lives in Northern California with her husband Dan and their five children.

Crime fiction, mysteries, and romantic suspense have always been Allison's favorites, so it's no surprise that her romantic thrillers have a dark suspense edge. Reviewers have called her books "terrifying," "mesmerizing," "fast-paced," "pulse-pounding," "wonderfully complex," "layered," and "a master of suspense - tops in the genre." Lee Child called LOVE ME TO DEATH, "A world-class nail-biter" and Lisa Gardner says, "Brennan knows how to deliver."

Writing three books a year is more than a full-time job, and so is raising five kids, but Allison believes life is too short to be bored. When she's not writing, she's reading, playing video games, watching old movies or new television shows, driving to or attending volleyball / basketball / football / soccer games, and on occasion even makes it to the gym where she enjoys people-watching more than exercise.

Allison is currently writing the Lucy Kincaid series about an FBI recruit. The third book, IF I SHOULD DIE, is on sale now. SILENCED will be out on April 24, 2012, followed by STALKED on 10.30.12 and STOLEN in spring 2013. Also look for THRILLER 3: LOVE IS MURDER, an anthology of romantic suspense edited by Sandra Brown, on sale 5.29.12

Allison can be reached through her website: <http://www.allisonbrennan.com/>



Vonnie Hughes says Write the Book of Your Heart

I don't feel qualified to give writers advice, but I would say this – something I have learned is to 'write the book of your heart.' I don't refer to romance when I say that. I mean a book in any genre.

Write it YOUR way and stuff all the technical lectures about 'what editors want' that you have been fed. As you become more experienced at writing you realize that a good deal of the time, editors DON'T know what they want, but they'll know it when they see it, i.e. it has to be a book that grabs them.

If you don't write with your emotions lying naked and pulsing blood with each sentence, the reader (not to mention an agent or editor) will pick that up right away. It's a long apprenticeship that we writers endure, so understand that you must bleed and give,

give, give.

Also, get yourself several critique partners, either online or locally. Be prepared to take the rough with the smooth. If you have several, their varying opinions may help you see your work more clearly. There can be danger in having only one critique partner, because you may be swayed in the wrong direction for YOUR writing. Always assume ownership of your writing. Take their advice pleasantly and quietly ditch it if you know it is inappropriate. And if you strike a derogatory and difficult critique partner, wriggle out of the relationship. Life is too short to waste time on people who might damage your ability to write.

Vonnie Hughes, is a New Zealander now living in Queensland. Her latest novel, a romantic suspense/police procedural set in New Zealand, is available now as a paperback from The Wild Rose Press. You can see her background on her website at www.vonniehughes.com. She writes both Regencies and romantic suspense, and she says, "I've been thinking lately of writing a sort of cross-genre historical investigator. Still thinking about it!"

Love is in the Air

OO-OO-oooh...this is no illusion. This is something you must Believe in! Heart to Heart is thrilled to bring you our first instalment of news in the lead up to RWNZ's 2012 conference at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Auckland, August 24 to 26. This month it is our pleasure to introduce to you our fabulous team of speakers and workshop presenters, offer the schedule for the Saturday and Sunday breakout sessions, and outline Randy Ingermanson's full day Friday workshop, *Writing Fiction*. While we look forward to celebrating Romance writing and reading, we warmly invite fellow storytellers from all genres to take advantage of this rare opportunity to enjoy first-hand this first-class line-up of talented teachers. Come join the fun...



Randy Ingermanson is the author of six novels and the bestselling book *WRITING FICTION FOR DUMMIES*. He is known around the world as "the Snowflake Guy" in honor of his wildly popular Snowflake method of designing a novel. Randy has a Ph.D. in theoretical physics from the University of California at Berkeley and he stills works half-time as a scientist for a biotechnology company in San Diego. He publishes the free monthly Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine, with over 30,000 subscribers and sits on the advisory board of American Christian Fiction Writers. Randy lives in southern Washington State with his wife and daughters and three surly cats. Visit his web site at <http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com>.



New York Times bestselling author Eloisa James's historical regencies have been published to great acclaim. *People Magazine* raved that "romance writing does not get much better than this." Her next book is *The Ugly Duchess*, which will be published in September, 2012. In addition, *Paris in Love*, a memoir of Eloisa's family's year in France, was recently published by Harper Collins Australia.

Currently Eloisa teaches both Shakespeare and creative writing at Fordham University in New York City. She's also the mother of two children and, in a particularly delicious irony for a romance writer, is married to a genuine Italian knight.



Nephele Tempest joined The Knight Agency in January, 2005, opening the Los Angeles office. She comes from a diverse publishing and finance background, having worked in the editorial department at Simon and Schuster, as a financial advisor, in the marketing and communications departments of several major New York investment firms, and as a freelance writer—all skills that come into play helping her clients develop their careers. She continues to actively build her client list, and is seeking works in the following genres: up-market commercial fiction; women's fiction; urban fantasy; single-title romance including paranormal, suspense, historical, and contemporary; historical fiction; and young adult and middle grade fiction.



USA Today Bestselling author, Yvonne Lindsay, took 13 years and multiple rejections before she sold her first story to Harlequin Desire in April of 2005. Her first book rose to #1 on the Borders/Waldenbooks Series Best-seller list and in 2007 was also nominated for the prestigious Romance Writers of Australia Romantic Book of the Year Award. Her books are distributed in more than 27 countries and in almost as many languages. Now, with 23 contracted titles with Harlequin behind her, Yvonne regularly presents workshops at chapter meetings and conferences in both New Zealand and Australia and is thrilled to be living the life she always dreamed of bringing her stories to her readers.

Love is in the Air



Sophia James writes historical romance for the Harlequin Historical imprint in London and has published ten books, all of which have been translated into various languages around the world. A double winner of the R*BY 2010 & 2011 (in the long romance section) she was also a finalist in the 2010 ARRA Awards, the 2008 R*BY Award and won the inaugural Clendon NZ in 1998. Sophia has been a mentor at both of the RWA 5 Day Intensive workshops at the Griffith University in Brisbane (2010 & 2011) and has run a similar mentorship programme in NZ in 2012. She has a degree in History & English from the University of Auckland and a background in teaching. Visit Sophia at sophiajames.net



Bronwen Evans loves story-telling – gobbling up movies, books and theatre. Her head is always filled with characters and stories, particularly lovers in angst. In 2007, encouraged by a close friend battling a debilitating illness, Bronwen finally started down the path to publication by joining RWA, The Beau Monde. RWAustralia and RWNZ. Bronwen's first manuscript, INVITATION TO RUIN, was completed late 2009 and was sold by her agent, Melissa Jeglinski of The Knight Agency, to Kensington Publishing early 2010, in a two book deal. Her debut novel, INVITATION TO RUIN, received a 4.5 star rating from RT Book Reviews and was well received in Publishers Weekly – "Evans's debut Regency is filled with sizzling romance... Strong characterizations, smooth plotting, and plenty of explicit sex will appeal to fans of modern Regencies" (March).



Yvonne Walus is the author of over 20 books, both in print and electronic. As Eve Summers, she's got 14 romances published by Red Rose Publishing, their rating varying from Sweet, through Sensual, all the way to Sizzling.



Gracie O'Neil writes romance, suspense, and YA. She is also part of a solid—and sometimes scary—critique group that she simply couldn't survive without. She credits them for whatever thick skin she now has, and whatever success she might have in the future. She's agented with Nephele Tempest at The Knight Agency.



Steff has been blogging online for the past five years, and currently run four blogs with a combined readership of over 50 000 worldwide. She also ghost blogs for several clients, and through her business – [Grymm & Epic Copywriting](#) – she helps creative entrepreneurs (writers, artists, musicians) create and hone their personality brands online.

She has successfully self-published two ebooks – the [Gothic Wedding Planner](#) and the [Grymm and Epic Guide to Blogging](#) – which she sells exclusively through her websites. Steff knows how to use a blog successfully – how to find an audience and keep it growing, and how to turn readers into book buyers – and she would love to share some of the things she's learned with other RWNZ members.



With a background working in medical laboratories, and a love of the romance genre, it is no surprise that Sue MacKay writes Medical Romance stories for Harlequin Mills & Boon. She sold her first book in February 2010, after many years of submitting and working through revisions letters. She's since sold a further five books and is currently working her way through a four book contract. Sue lives with her husband in the beautiful Marlborough Sounds, where she can indulge her passions for the outdoors, the sea and cycling.

SATURDAY WORKSHOPS			
Workshop One. Saturday Morning	A	B	C
	<p>Part One</p> <p>A - An Overview of Internet Marketing for Novelists</p> <p>B – How to make Google go Ga Ga over you.</p> <p>Randy Ingermanson</p> <p>Whether you sell your novel to a traditional publisher or self-publish it, you're going to need to help market your work. It's never been easier to do good marketing. It's never been easier to do bad marketing. You have many options - a web site, a blog, e-mail,</p> <p>Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and on and on. Learn what works, why it works, and how to make it work for you. We'll talk about active marketing versus passive marketing.</p> <p>(Continued in Part Two)</p>	<p>The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Historical</p> <p>Eloisa James</p> <p>New York Times Bestselling author of Historical romances, Eloisa James takes participants on a whirlwind tour of everything she knows about writing those Historical romances.</p>	<p>PANEL: Following the Yellow Brick Road: The Journey to Publication</p> <p>Nalini Singh, Yvonne Lindsay, Maree Anderson, Louise Groarke</p> <p>A panel of multi-published authors in a range of genres guide you along the frequently confusing journey to publication. Participants will receive a package of resource notes, comprehend the difference between category & single title, discuss issues involving target markets, contests, query letters & submissions, the publishing process, finding an agent, contracts, pitching and be able to plan & research information about agents & editors.</p>
Workshop Two. Saturday Afternoon	<p>Part Two</p> <p>C – Building a Massive Database</p> <p>D – Launching your novel</p> <p>Randy Ingermanson</p> <p>(Continued from Part One)</p> <p>We'll give you some hard questions that you need to ask ANYONE who urges you to try this or that shiny new marketing fad of the week. Marketing does not have to make you queasy and it doesn't have to be horrible. Marketing can be ethical and easy and fun. Or it can be slimy and horrible and boring. Your choice. We'll look at some actual hard numbers for successful book launches and explain exactly why each of them worked.</p>	<p>You don't love me? Say it isn't so!</p> <p>Yvonne Lindsay</p> <p>Rejection for writers is a fact of life. How you deal with it determines how successful you will be in the long term. In this interactive workshop, attendees will learn how to read between the lines of rejection and how to improve their writing to give them a stronger chance at survival in an ever-changing industry.</p>	<p>Critiquing your way to success</p> <p>Gracie O'Neil</p> <p>This interactive workshop is for people who want to offer more to their critique partners/groups, provide more helpful contest feedback and improve their own writing.</p> <p>While suitable for newbies, it is aimed at those who have completed at least one manuscript and are at the editing/submission stage.</p>
SUNDAY WORKSHOPS			
Workshop Three. Sunday Morning	A	B	C
	<p>A Blogging Author: How does a blog help you sell books?</p> <p>Steff Green</p> <p>After reading all the marketing advice, listening to conference speakers and hearing your publisher lament your lack of 'audience', you bit the bullet and set up a blog too. But how exactly do you promote your book and your author brand with a blog?</p> <p>This isn't a 'how to build a blog' workshop, but an in-depth discussion on how to successfully blog your way to best-selling status.</p>	<p>Developing story ideas using history</p> <p>Bronwen Evans</p> <p>This workshop will consider the vibrant history of the Regency era to demonstrate how to use the period to germinate a story and develop strong characters, evil villains and over the top black moments. In particular, the history of slavery, smuggling and the Napoleonic war will be discussed as the basis for plotting a story.</p>	<p>Conflict</p> <p>Sue MacKay</p> <p>This workshop looks at ways to put more conflict into your stories to keep your readers turning the pages. Internal and external conflict are essential to a gripping story. Without conflict the emotional content is hard to achieve and can seem contrived. This workshop will help you dig deeper to find out more about your characters and their conflicts.</p> <p>Participants need to bring a short outline of their hero's and heroine's conflicts to work on throughout the workshop.</p>

SUNDAY WORKSHOPS			
Workshop Four. Sunday Afternoon.	A	B	C
	The Changing Face of Technology Nephele Tempest Nephele Tempest takes participants through the changing face of technology in a writer's world.	Writing Sex Yvonne Eve Walus What is sexy? What is the difference between erotica and pornography? This workshop considers moving the story forward with the bedroom scene, using the five senses, setting the scene, setting the atmosphere, the value of anticipation, are emotions overrated, knowing your audience and getting yourself in the mood to write sex scenes. This workshop is an interactive session with writing exercises.	Layering a Story to Sell Sophia James Build a story by adding in layers across the first five chapters and make your book 'unputdownable' for an acquiring editor. This is an interactive craft session and I will show you exactly how I begin all my books. Bring a highlighter and the first three chapters of your work in progress. Worksheets will be provided.



Friday Workshop *Writing Fiction* With Randy Ingermanson ("the Snowflake Guy")

9.00–10.00: Building Great Characters

Great fiction is built on great characters. But what do we mean by "great characters?" We'll define exactly what a great character is and we'll work through the three layers of character that you absolutely **MUST** know about each of your major characters. Until you have these, you don't have a story, so it's critical that you get them right. We'll also look at some techniques you can use to help you go deeper with each of your characters, and we'll analyze a number of great characters from best-selling novels to see why they're so wonderful. You'll leave this talk energized to go deep with every one of your major characters, even the ones you hate.

10.00-10.20: Morning Tea

10.20-11.20: Story Architecture

Fiction has a deep design that all readers expect, even if they don't know it. Aristotle described this story structure more than 2000 years ago, but there are things he didn't know. We'll talk about those and explain exactly what works and why it works. You'll learn a simple pattern you can use to test your story architecture. This pattern won't make you more creative. Instead, it'll tell you when you're done being creative at the high level and are ready to start being creating at the lower levels of your story. Editors and agents instinctively know when your story structure is right, so if you do this work before you pitch your story, you're very likely to get to second base at least with them.

11.20-12.20: The Snowflake Method

A major milestone in the life cycle of any novel is completing the first draft. Unless you finish your first draft, your story will never get published. Different writers use different "creative paradigms" to create their first draft. We'll talk about the wildly popular "Snowflake method" -- a creative paradigm used by writers around the world. Even if the Snowflake isn't right for you, you can still find it amazingly useful in figuring out whether your story has what it takes to be commercially successful. And if the Snowflake is right for you, you may find yourself suddenly liberated to write faster than you ever have before.



Writing 4 Success

"do what makes your heart sing"

Turning Points

With Marg McAlister



What are "TURNING POINTS" in a novel?

Put simply: a turning point in a story is A POINT AT WHICH THINGS CHANGE.

You should be able to find a turning point in most of your scenes: it's an indication that your story is moving forward. Any story is full of degrees of change, or small changes.

However, you need to clearly understand your story's **MAJOR** turning points. These are the ones you want to play up. If you can heighten the drama in your major turning points, your readers will see that your characters are growing and changing, and will want to live through these changes with them. Well-written scenes featuring major turning points heighten the tension and build the pace.

Often, turning points involve a 'light bulb moment'. The character (let's call him Harry) comes to realise that:

- his old way of looking at things is no longer viable
- he has outgrown his childhood friends, or conversely
- only his friends from childhood appreciate the 'real Harry'
- it's time to let go of the past (e.g. bitter feelings towards his ex-wife; victimisation in high school)
- his own stubbornness has landed him to his present predicament

You can see, too, that the light bulb moments above all involve EMOTIONAL turning points, which are so important in any novel. Emotional turning points often involve letting go, or accepting a loss.

There are other kinds of turning points. What else can make the novel change direction, or set Harry on a new course?

- a reversal of some kind
- new information
- a disaster - involving nature, or man-made objects, or technology gone wrong
- a change in the course of events
- a twist (such as revealing that a certain character is not who Harry thought he was, or that research he has been asked to do is to be used for a completely different purpose)
- a challenge

If you clearly understand the major turning points in your novel, you will also find that writing a synopsis is much easier. The editor or agent reading your synopsis will notice the difference, too: turning points are like road signs; they show that the author knows what he/she is doing.

Marg McAlister started up her original writing business (*Word Dynamics (NSW) Pty Ltd*) over twenty years ago, then also began trading as *Writing4Success* when she set up a website for writers in 2001. She is the author of five correspondence courses now marketed by Cengage in Australia. Those courses are: *The Professional Romance Writer's Course*, *The Professional Children's Writer's Course*, *The Professional Crime and Suspense Writer's Course*, *Writing Non-Fiction That Sells* and *How To Write a Bestseller*. Marg also uses her writing skills and background to create e-books and products in a number of different areas as part of the online business she runs with her husband Rob. She spent 2 years working part-time as an eLearning consultant and technical writer for a large multinational company.

A writer who wears many hats, Marg has written fiction and non-fiction for both adults and children. She was on the Committee of Romance Writers of Australia for four years, and has run workshops at various RWA National Conferences. The author of more than 60 books for children, she has written short stories for school magazines and numerous short non-fiction pieces for educational publications. Her work targets a wide age range and includes picture books, short books for children with reading difficulties and mysteries for older children. For 5 years, she was part of the Charles Sturt University (Mitchell) Enrichment Program, teaching creative writing to talented children. She has also been a regional judge for the Nestlé Write Around Australia competition.

"You don't find time to write. You make time. It's my job."
- Nora Roberts

Following Marg McAlister's Kickstart Programme?
Brilliant! You're well on your way to achieving
WOW this year! Watch this space...sharing just for
us news from Marg in May:)



ACTIVE SETTING

MARY BUCKHAM

Active setting starts with a simple premise. Your reader has never been in your world. I don't care if it's New York City and most of your readers live in Manhattan, the setting and world you'll be painting on the page is more than a travelogue, or a list of street names, or tourist attractions. Think of you the author focusing the reader on what's key about the setting of your POV character and then bringing that info to life through your word choices, the details and how you thread these details together.

The details must matter. IF you're showing the reader a room in a house, that room, and the details in that room, should show characterization, or conflict, or emotion, or foreshadow, or be there for a reason instead of simply to describe placement of objects in space.

Setting, when used well can create subtext in your writing. Instead of simply describing a place, or thing, for the sake of description look closely at how to maximize what you're describing and learn how and where to describe place so the reader is pulled deeper into the story and the intention of your scenes. Look at ways to maximize setting on the page and make sure it adds to your story vs bogs your story down.

Settings in a story involve so much more than stringing a list of adjectives together or dumping a chunk of visual clues to orient the reader. Setting can create the world of your story, show characterization, add conflict, slow or speed up your pacing, add or decrease tension, relate backstory, thread in emotion and more.

Think of setting as the stage which contains your story, and it should be as important as any character. When handled well the setting can also impact the thoughts and actions of your characters

and thus either move the story forward, or make the reader so confused or thwarted they want to throw the story away.

While keeping setting lean and mean don't think that you can simply stuff all the details about story settings into one paragraph. Though there are some authors that can get away with that trick because the pacing in the rest of their story is so strong that all the reader wants is enough to orient themselves and get back to the characters or external story action. Let's look at a few key ways to maximize setting in YOUR story.

SETTING TO SHOW CHARACTERIZATION:

How the Setting is revealed says a lot about a character.

It's important to remember that you don't want to confuse the reader. They are going to come into your Setting with very little context, so they'll be trying to visualize the who, as well as the where and when of the location and how it feeds into your story. **So you might go back and edit to make sure you:**

- Share the right information and send the right signals.
- Are making sure the setting is filtered through one character's experience, emotions, and mindset at a time.
- Are not stopping the story flow to show place unless that place reveals something that's important to know about the story or the characters.
- Are always thinking about how your specific POV character, with their background, likes and dislikes – would they see what's around them. The more you can think in these terms the deeper the POV you'll have plus you'll show your setting in a more active way.

SETTING TO SHOW SENSORY DETAIL:

Sensory detail is one of the most underrated tools in a writer's toolbox and can make a world of difference in creating novels that stand out in a reader's mind. Not every setting needs all five senses described in detail. That approach is overkill and can have a major impact on your story pacing, but when introducing the reader to a character, or changing the location of the story, or focusing a reader in on a place that's going to play a larger role in the story, then by all means dig deeper to create a strong setting image. And a key way to do this is via sensory details.

Look at how T. Jefferson Parker uses sensory details to not only describe the scene of a crime but as an active tool from the investigating detective's POV:

"She noted that the table had been set for two. A pair of seductive high heels stood near the couch, facing her, like a ghost was standing in them, watching. The apartment was still, the slider closed against the cool December night. Good for scent. She closed her eyes. Salt air. Baked fowl. Coffee. Goddamn rubber gloves, of course. A whiff of gunpowder? Maybe a trace of perfume, or the flowers on the table—gardenia, rose, lavender? And of course, the obscenity of spilled blood—intimate, meaty, shameful.

She listened to the waves. To the traffic. To the little kitchen TV turned low; an evangelist bleating for money. To the clunk of someone in the old walkway. To her heart, fast and heavy in her chest. Merci

(Continued on page 15)

felt most alive when working for the dead. She'd always loved an underdog." -- Red Light – T. Jefferson Parker.

The above description doesn't stop the reader but orients them deeply into the where, who and what of the crime and characters in two powerful paragraphs. Parker layers in emotions, sensory details, foreshadowing, and characterization along with very strong sensory details.

Here's another example:

"The come-and-get-it smell of espresso welcomed her. Fall Out Boy was playing on the stereo, "Hum Hallelujah". Lieutenant Amy Tang stood at the counter, fingers double tapping, waiting for her order." –The Memory Collector – Meg Gardiner.

How many sensory details did Gardiner manage to slide into the reader's awareness in three very short sentences? The author could have painted a visual picture alone – She entered the coffee shop, looking and smelling like a million other coffee shops and saw the Lieutenant waiting for her. But Gardiner went deeper with her writing and placed the reader into the scene with very few visual prompts but a smell and two sound prompts.

Change the time and emotional state of the POV character and you should notice a difference in which sensory details are being noticed. Use the sensory details when you first change a location, open a chapter, or to indicate a shift in the emotional state of the POV character.

The bottom line is that sensory detail, can enhance your setting descriptions and thus the reader's experience of your story in so many ways. Make sure though that your detail is specific to the place and specific to the POV character's awareness.

SETTING TO SHOW EMOTION

"Outside, the wind was howling and another line of black clouds was trooping over the city, Big slabs of bruise-coloured clouds." The Coffin Dancer – Jeffrey Deaver

What would have happened if Deaver had not been as meticulous in his word choices?

Outside, the wind blew and another line of

clouds was moving over the city. Big clouds.

In the earlier example Jeffery Deaver uses weather to clue the reader into the tone of the story plus foreshadows that things are not only bad but looking as if they are going to be getting worse. Weather is one of the easiest ways to orient the reader to the mood of a scene.

Too many writers stop by describing the things the character sees instead of taking the small next step to add emotional meaning to those things from the viewpoint character. Setting can do so much to set the mood or theme of a story, which in turn makes it easier for the reader to accept what is unfolding or about to unfold.

Here's a powerful setting description of one sentence as the POV character follows up a lead on the whereabouts of a paranormal threat. Do you get a sense of the emotional state of the character by what she sees and how she thinks of the place?

"Grapevines, bare in their winter guise, lined the wall. In the moonlight they looked like a row of dead men, hanging arms spread wide and crucified on the frames that supported them." Moon Called – Patricia Briggs.

The above setting not only orients the reader to the change from one place to another but deepens the reader's experience of what's just around the corner by setting a tone, foreshadowing with the use of key words –bare, dead men, arms spread wide, crucified. What if Briggs chose to streamline her setting description?

As Mercy Thompson drove from Richland through the farm land she noticed the grapevines which hadn't sprouted yet.

Whole different emotional feel isn't it?

SETTING TO SHOW CONFLICT

Setting can be used to show conflict or complications in a character's world, simply by the word choices made by an author and what they choose to focus a reader on when describing a place.

Here's an example showing the conflict between the POV character – a mother whose daughter has been committed to a psychiatric evaluation home by the daugh-

ter's husband. The mother feels that the husband is actively working against her daughter and, if her daughter remains at the home, she'll be in danger. The mother has arrived at the home hoping to communicate with the resident psychiatrist who is friends with the husband. See how Emilie Richards imparts this conflict through Setting:

"He led her down the hallway to the door he'd come through. His office was much as she expected. Leather furniture, dark panelled walls covered with multiple framed diplomas, a desk as massive as a psychiatrist's ego. She always wondered if professional men measured the size of their desks the way adolescent boys measured their penises." Fox River – Emilie Richards.

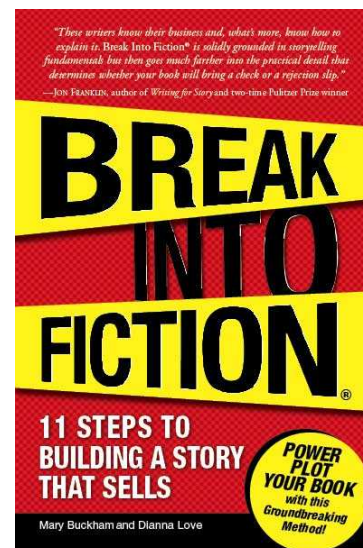
The reader is given a few key words of description but most of the Setting is translated through the mother's POV and thus the reader has no doubt about how she feels about him based on what she sees of his personal space.

SETTING TO SHOW BACKSTORY

Newer, and even some more experienced writers, are always struggling with how to filter in back story for the reader.

The following example comes from a story of a man on a downward spiral after an unexpected divorce. Look

(Continued on page 16)

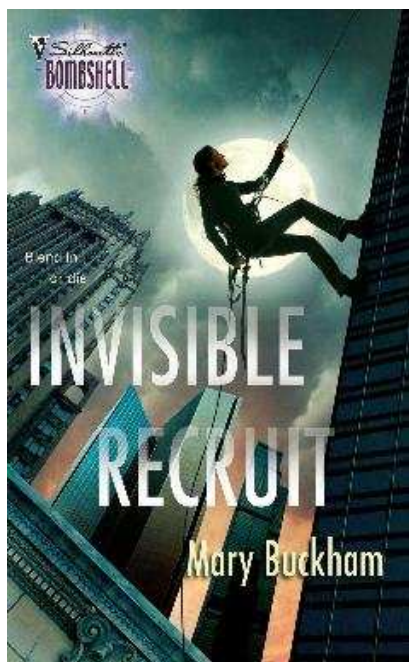


how much back-story you get about this couple, as well as conflict and emotions in one paragraph of setting description.

"Jen looks pointedly at the crappy house in which I now live below street level. It looks like a house drawn by a child: a triangle perched on a square, with sloppily staggered lines for bricks, a lone casement window, and a front door. It's flanked by houses of equal decrepitude on either side, nothing at all like the small, handsome colonial we bought together with my life's savings and where Jen still lives rent-free, sleeping with another man in the bed that used to be mine." This is *Where I Leave You* – Jonathan Tropper.

SETTING TO ORIENT THE READER AS TO THE WHERE AND WHEN OF THE STORY

Setting to orient the reader is a very important story function. Since most of the novels we read are published novels **it's hard to over exaggerate how this small detail can separate the published from the unpublished.** There are **two reasons** for this. The **first**, and the most common one, **is because as we write we can be so deep into the world of our characters that we assume more information is on the page than is really there.** So when we say 'mountain' we assume the reader can see a ten-thousand foot former volcano when, without being clear, your reader may think a thousand foot bump rising out of a flat landscape or a jagged granite edifice that



fronts more mountains.

The second most common mistake is forgetting that the reader may have set the book down at the end of the last chapter or scene, or you have ended a scene in one location and opened the next scene [or chapter] in a new location. Either way the reader needs to get re-oriented quickly so they can slip back into the story world and move forward with the action.

Here's a Setting example a hundred pages into the story and the opening of a new chapter. Note how the author uses Setting to quickly orient the reader as to the passage of time, to explain where the POV character is, to give a hint of back story and uses sensory details. If that's not enough he then ends on a clear contrast between the setting and what the character is facing to remind the reader of the overall story goal.

"I ate a very late lunch at a stand-up fried clam booth on Fisherman's Wharf. It was beautiful there. The smell of the ocean and the fish market reminded me of Galveston when I was a boy. At any other time in my life those few scraps of fried flour over chewy clam flesh would have been soothing. But I didn't want to feel good until I knew that Feather was going to be okay. She and Jesus were all that I had left." *Cinnamon Kiss* – Walter Mosley.

SETTING IN AN ACTION SEQUENCE

Be wary of writing more about the setting than a story can handle. A short scene requires only a few words of description, or if you are in the middle of an action Scene you do not necessarily want to slow the pacing to describe too much detail. There are no set rules for this, but if you work details in around the characters' actions, you should be fine. For example:

"Blasting north on the 101. Pike gave no warning before horsing across four lanes of traffic to the exit ramp. They fell off the freeway like a brick dropped in water."

The Watchman – Robert Crais.

The author is focusing the reader into the fact that the characters are evading a tail. The author could have told the reader – they took evasive actions and lost the tail by exiting the freeway unexpectedly. Sometimes that's what you need on the page. But this story is an action-packed thriller tense with the sense of impending danger so Crais chose to use very specific action verbs and details to paint a stronger image.

Setting includes much more than simple description of place. Always be asking yourself if you are slowing, or worse, stopping the story to look around.

Setting that is active never intrudes on the reader's experience of the story. It should be seen in context to the intention of the Scene. If a piece of furniture acts as a conflict to the Scene goal, then by all means the reader needs to see that piece of furniture. But if that furniture is described simply to let the reader know there's furniture in the room, reconsider your word allocation. A paragraph of Setting description inevitably slows pacing. Sometimes, when you the author want to make a specific point, you need this chunk. But I hope by this time in reading through the information that most great Setting involves so much more than description.

Once we as writers start to see the power of Setting on the page it's hard to ever take for granted, or simply string together descriptive words, without looking really hard at them.

Remember, creating and describing and great setting can be an un-mined asset in capturing the reader's imagination - and that's the primary goal of good fiction.

Have fun using setting in your work and enjoy the amazing results!!

Mary Buckham is an award-winning romantic-suspense author and co-author of **BREAK INTO FICTION™: 11 Steps to Building a Story That Sells.** Mary co-founded www.WriterUniv.com an online educational resource for writers and is a sought-after speaker and writing craft teacher. For more on Mary visit www.MaryBuckham.com or follow her on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/MaryBuckham).

Mary offers a 122-page lecture packet on how to create **ACTIVE SETTING** in **YOUR** work from her website www.MaryBuckham.com. She'll also be teaching an upcoming June online workshop on **BODY LANGUAGE** and **EMOTION** through www.WriterUniv.com.

Contests

Angela Bissell suggests a few international contests



<p>Duel on the Delta Contest (River City RWAmerica)</p> <p>Deadline: April 15, 2012</p> <p>Eligibility: Unpublished in last five years and/or uncontracted within last three years.</p> <p>Enter: First 20 pages plus optional one-page, single-spaced synopsis.</p> <p>Fee: US\$25</p> <p>More info: www.rivercityromancewriters.org</p>	<p>Deadline: May 1, 2012</p> <p>Eligibility: Authors of published eBooks (indie published works welcome and encouraged).</p> <p>Enter: Novel or short work published ONLY in digital format in 2010 or 2011. Enter a non-DRM PDF.</p> <p>Fee: US\$15</p> <p>More info: http://idacontest.wordpress.com/</p>	<p>Eligibility: Submitted manuscripts must be unpublished.</p> <p>Enter: Best break-up or darkest moment scene, 10 pages maximum, plus one to three page set-up (not judged).</p> <p>Fee: US\$30</p> <p>More info: www.akrwa.org</p>
<p>On The Far Side Contest (Fantasy, Futuristic & Paranormal Chapter, RWA)</p> <p>Deadline: April 15, 2012</p> <p>Eligibility: RWA members unpublished in genre entered in last five years.</p> <p>Enter: First 20 pages plus optional two-page synopsis.</p> <p>Fee: US\$25</p> <p>More info: www.romance-ffp.com</p>	<p>TARA Contest (Tampa Area RWA-merica)</p> <p>Deadline: May 1, 2012</p> <p>Eligibility: Unpublished and published writers of novel length fiction.</p> <p>Enter: First chapter up to 4,000 words. Finalists to submit synopsis (1500 words maximum).</p> <p>Fee: US\$25</p> <p>More info: www.tararwa.com</p>	<p>The Valerie Parv Award (Romance Writers of Australia)</p> <p>Opens: April 23, 2012. Entries will be capped at 80. Enter as soon as possible on/after the opening date to avoid missing out.</p> <p>Deadline: May 4, 2012</p> <p>Eligibility: Unpublished writers only.</p> <p>Enter: First 10,000 words maximum plus 1,000 word maximum synopsis of unpublished romance or romantic elements manuscript.</p> <p>Fee: RWAu members A\$22 / RWAu members outside Australia A\$20 / non-members A\$35</p> <p>More info: www.romanceaustralia.com</p>
<p>International Digital Awards (Oklahoma RWAmerica)</p>	<p>Break-up Contest (Alaska RWA-merica)</p> <p>Deadline: May 1, 2012</p>	



*potential **MARKETS** continued from page 9.*



4. Chicklit writers comp

Deadline April 3rd.

Run by www.novelicious.com

Seeking new chick lit novels.

Enter 1st 3,000 words of a chick lit novel.

5. Mithra Publishing

A new venture using targeted advertising to help pay for the publication of each novel.

Open to all but especially new writers.

Print publisher.

Payment: royalties.

Seeking romance and erotica.

www.mithrapublishing.com

Submissions: manuscripts@mithrapublishing.com

Guidelines: http://www.mithrapublishing.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=47&Itemid=53

6. Smut by the Sea: The Anthology

All writers.

Print anthology.

Royalties - share of the anthology proceeds.

Seeking saucy seaside stories

<http://smutbythesea.co.uk>

Submissions: victoria@victoriablisse.co.uk

Guidelines: <http://smutbythesea.co.uk/>

7. Crooked Cat publishers

All writers

ebooks

Royalties

Seeking: romance, historical and contemporary.

www.crookedcatpublishing.com

Submissions: submissions@crookedcatpublishing.com

Guidelines: <http://crookedcatpublishing.com/submissions>



Woos, Hoos, and News

Celebrating our members' achievements.

Email Tyree Connor at rocker.t@extra.co.nz with your successes to be included in this page.

Sold

Jean Drew has received two contracts this month! The first with Secret Cravings for her first erotica, *Love Slave*, due out in June, and the second with Highland Press for a time travel anthology called *Forever One*.

Lisa Lee w/a Lorna Jean Roberts has signed a contract with Ellora's Cave for *Banishing Shadows*.

Competitions

Lisa Chapman has finished in the Washington Romance Writers' Marlene Contest. *Butterfly on the Tide* finished in the Mainstream with Romantic Elements and has gone to Latoya Smith at Grand Central and Deanna Raybourn, author, for final judging and feedback.

North Texas RWA 'Great Expectations' contest - 'Category Romance' section: **Tracey Alvarez** placed second and **Angela Bissell** placed third.

Maree Anderson's Young Adult, *Freaks of Greenfield High*, finished in the YA category of the Gulf Coast RWA's Silken Sands "Self-Published Star" Contest.

Anna Campbell's Midnight's Wild Passion finished in the historical section of the 2012 Birmingham Southern Magic Chapter's Gayle Wilson Award of Excellence.

Abby Gaines Placed 2nd in The Emily for her Young Adult *Invisible*.



New Releases



Kris Pearson has two new releases to check out:

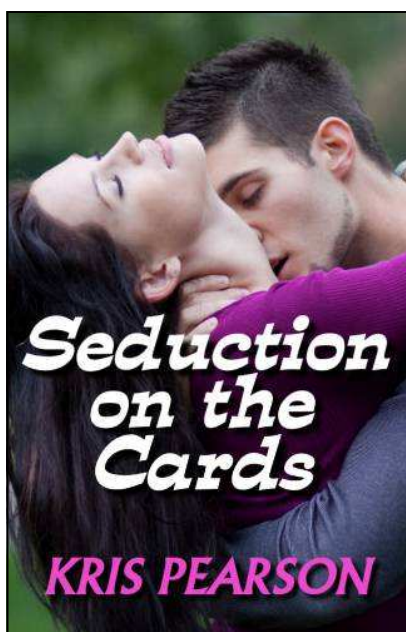
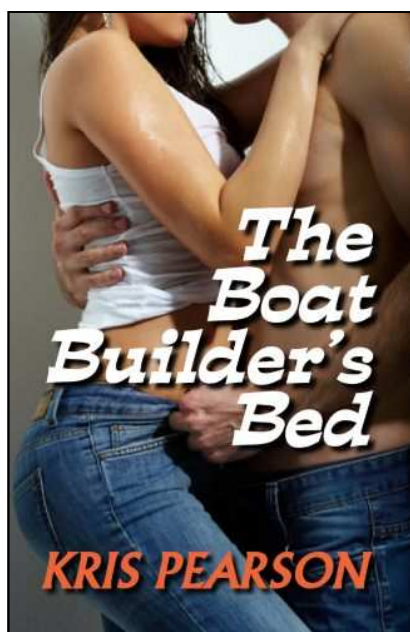
The Boat Builder's Bed - <http://amzn.com/B007D788ZW>

Seduction on the Cards - <http://amzn.com/B006FEABQS>

<http://www.krispearson.com>

Click to read excerpts and more...

"If you've FINISHED writing a novel you are amongst the elite!!! You ARE NOT A FAILURE IF YOU CANNOT LIVE OFF YOUR BOOKS. You only fail by NOT TRYING."
- Nadia Cornier



"Courage is being scared to death and saddling up anyway."

- John Wayne (1907-1979)
Movie Star

Please remember, the deadline for content for Heart to Heart is the 15th of each month.

RWNZ News Around the Regions

Keeping in touch with each other.

Auckland

Jo Fereday, (Treasurer) took the meeting of the small group that braved the weather bomb to March's meeting. This is her report; 'The smaller group allowed us to take a more informal approach than usual and led to a lot more group discussion over the talk topic and other helpful writing ideas. Ann Russell's talk on claiming tax back as a writer was very well received and her own approach set the best practice standard of how one could go about organising and collating expense information. The discussion around claiming back book launch expenses was particularly interesting – almost a mini-presentation on its own on how to put together a successful book launch event. So a big thanks to Ann for her informative presentation and practical suggestions.

Each writer's targets for the year were also discussed, and a big thank you to Lynette for taking over the tea lady position from Marion.'

Our next meeting will be on Saturday 7 April, 12.30 to 3.00 pm at the Three Kings Tennis Club Rooms as usual. Our speaker will be Lisa Gardiner and her topic is 'Emotional Punch'. Please bring a plate to share, a gold coin donation, and change for the raffle.

Central North (C2C)

Our March meeting was held at Waihi on the 10th, thank you Liz for hosting. Shirley took her workshop on emotional punch. A goodie with notes (to be emailed out). And we gave a big C2C welcome to first-timer Julie Taylor - hope to see you again soon Julie? The April meeting is to be held in Rotorua on Saturday the 14th @ 12-00 mid-day. Lyn Rasmussen is hosting this meeting at her home in the Paradise Valley. Full address details and directions will be emailed out closer to the date. Please bring a plate for the shared lunch. There will be two speakers from the Rotorua Public Library talking about trends in reading and digital as opposed to conventional reading matter. Any queries please email ada.farms@xtra.co.nz or lynrasmussen@xtra.co.nz. Looking forward to seeing you there. Gaylene & Lyn.

Hawkes Bay

The Hawke's Bay group had their first meeting at a cafe at Port Ahuriri. Four out of the five attended and we met for lunch. It was great to meet Kristina from Kotemaori and Kendra who has recently moved from Australia to Napier. We discussed where we were in our writing careers and generally got to know one another. It was also decided that I would step down as convenor as I'll be away in Australia again this year. It will give the others a chance to organise meetings which have really been non-existent in the last couple of years. Kristina O'Grady will take over from me. If anyone wants to contact Kristina about the group or future meetings please email her at maple-leaf@hotmail.co.nz.

Wellington

Despite the 'weather bomb', twelve of us met at Meryl's for a noisy and enjoyable March meeting. We welcomed two guests, including editor Caroline. Tracey and Angela have now placed second and third in the Great Expectations contest, so there's a couple of great reasons to celebrate next time. PLEASE NOTE THIS CHANGE: To avoid Easter Saturday we're bringing our April meeting forward to March 31st at Meryl's at the usual time of 1pm. Compulsory writing exercise: bring the opening sentence of a novel – your current WIP or a possible future project, and some paper. We're going to have some fun, but with someone else's words.

Nelson

Our March meeting eventuated so quickly that our convener didn't realize what day it was until just a few hours before the eager (and less forgetful) members turned up. Nevertheless, we had a great afternoon (as usual) looking at the 'Skills Checklist' in this month's H2H, discussing how the advice would apply to each one of us. Another topic was to brainstorm some new suitable sponsors for our short story competition later on this year. We also talked about our newly created critique group and what good it has already done for those who attended the first meeting. Next critique group meeting is Friday 23/3 at 7.30pm at Sally's place. Our next monthly meeting will be Saturday 14 April at 2pm at Annika's place. Any budding or full bloom romance writer is welcome! Ph: (03) 548 5561.

Otago

Rhubarb café, the corner of a refurbished butchery, was home to our first meeting of the year. Four members attended. Viv, Brian, Rosalie and I. Undeterred by increasingly loud smatterings of conversations, dishes falling to the floor, and traffic noise, we ploughed through Brian's three chapters, anyone listening in would have caught some pretty hot topics. Between the four of us we had a lively debate about Brian's main character. Fingers, legs, eyes and toes crossed we managed to help further develop his female leads. We ended with bellies full of coffee, brains swirling and fingers itching to get home and write. Well I know I was pumped! Change of venue for next time. Somewhere quiet but with good coffee, and me thinks a squishy bit of cake wouldn't go astray...will do recon and find the perfect spot. Hoping to see more of the Otago members next time. Sarah.



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Otago: Sarah Addison Rowe

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"You must keep sending work out; you must never let a manuscript do nothing but eat its head off in a drawer. You send that work out again and again, while you're working on another one. If you have talent, you will receive some measure of success - but only if you persist."
- Isaac Asimov

the back page

Click Onto This...

with Raina Singh

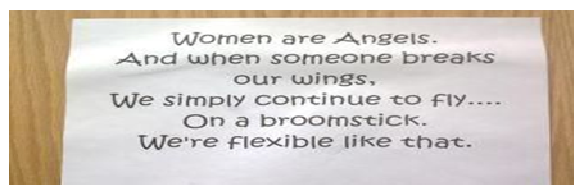
“The soul that can speak with its eyes can also kiss with its gaze” Author Unknown



Sometimes real life romances have the power to take our breath away, but if not they have us reaching for the tissues anyway... <http://www.healinglovenotes.com/beautiful-love-stories-true-love.html>

Read about the eight male archetypes, from RWA member and hugely successful writer Tami Cowden herself <http://www.likesbooks.com/eight.html>

Also from the desk of Tami Cowden again, read about the female archetypes on; <http://www.likesbooks.com/78.html>



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NZromance-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

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