

HEART TO HEART

Using Back-Story to Round Out Your Characters

With Yvonne Lindsay



PART ONE

Now, when I say rounding out your characters, I'm not talking waistlines, here—unless what's happened somewhere in the dim, dark and probably not-so-distant past has made your heroine pregnant—but I am talking about using what's happened in your character's past, to show your readers why they are that person they are today.

According to Webster's New World College Dictionary, the definition of back-story is: "background information provided, often in narrative form, to give

help in understanding something, as the behaviour of a character in a film."

That all sounds very dry, doesn't it? But **back-story is what gives your characters heart and soul.** I will never forget Emma Darcy standing before us at one of RWNZ early conferences, giving us the back-story of her characters for the book she'd just turned in. By the time she was finished there wasn't a dry eye in the room. The back-story made those characters so real we literally ached for them.

Back-story, used properly, lends depth and a sense of reality to a story. The careful revelations of your characters' secrets are an extremely useful technique for keeping your readers hooked from start to finish. What you don't want to do is dump information on your reader so fast or so completely that there are no surprises left. And, often, you may not give your reader all the back-story that you know and have so lovingly discovered about your character yourself.

So, how do you discover or create your characters' back-story?

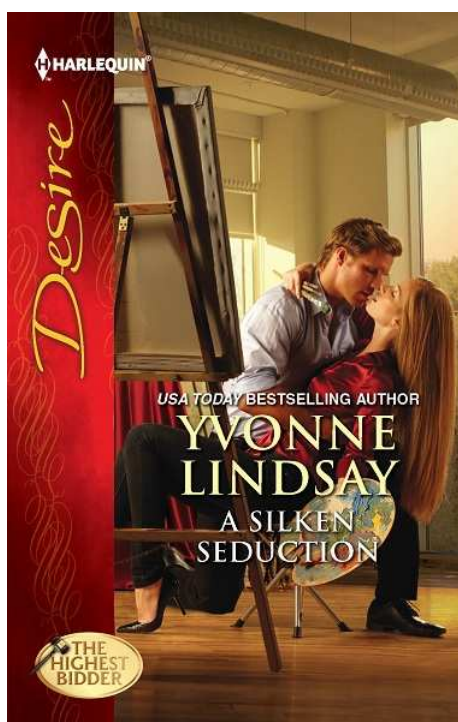
Everyone has back-story. As far as I was concerned I was the non-sporty nose-constantly in a book overseas idol and boy-mad teenager. Everything had angst in it. When I read the Twilight books a couple of years ago (under duress and mostly because I was curious to see what it was that had my youngest daughter so avidly reading when I usually couldn't get her to pick up a book for any reason) I was instantly transported back to feeling those larger than life teenage emotions all over again. My own yearning teenage

heart identified instantly with Bella. Had my teenage years been less angst, then maybe I wouldn't have identified so strongly with the stories.

It's that identification with characters that is vital for a reader. It's the emotional smack upside the head that makes a reader want to see that character achieve their goals or, in the case of a villain, not achieve them. Your character needs to have some trait or characteristic or happening in their past which makes their actions in the present make sense. It's all very well saying your hero hates thunderstorms, but unless you want to make him a total wimp, you need to find out why he hates thunderstorms. What's his valid reason, his not anyone else's for feeling that way? When you begin to delve into their reasons, you create back-story.

Who has ever had a "lacks emotional punch rejection?" I did. And a lot of why I did get that was, I'm sure, because I didn't understand my character's back-story sufficiently. I didn't understand them. **A lot of emotional punch comes from recognition with the characters of a story.** Think, for a moment, of the Haiti earthquake in 2010. Its effect was catastrophic. I was saddened by the news, by the deaths, by the damage. Let's fast forward to the Christchurch earthquake of February 22, 2011. My reaction was completely different. I was horrified by the news unfolding before my eyes that day, terrified by the news of deaths and

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WELCOME

TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS:

Liz Roughan- Auckland.

A word is not the same with
one writer as with another.
One tears it from his guts.
The other pulls it out of his
overcoat pocket.
~Charles Peguy

Editor's Desk

Welcome to the August issue of H2H. Bless you.

Lemon lozenge? Help yourselves to tissues, and snuggle up by the fire.

Relax. If the winter blues have given your muse the flu, we have the perfect tonic. This month's lineup of gold medal worthy articles will rejuvenate your enthusiasm for the craft and business of writing.

Leading off, our own Yvonne Lindsay shows us how to use back-story to deepen characters and enthrall readers. Caro Clarke and Maggie Toussaint dare us to write into our discomfort zones to discover higher levels of expertise. Randy Ingermanson throws some white magic at the page. And Julie Rowe shares tips on effective and efficient tweeting...and re-tweeting.

We've not forgotten in a few weeks some of you will deliver pitches to agents and editors at RWNZ's 2012 Conference. For you, we ask "May The Odds Be Ever In Your Favour" (The Hunger Games, by Suzanne Collins), and to support your success we offer Laurie Schnebly Campbell's 'Ten Minutes to Glory'. We look forward to celebrating your wins in future H2Hs. See you in Auckland soon.

Cheers from, Viv, Ellie, and, Chris.



RWNZ CONTEST SCHEDULE 2012

STRICTLY SINGLE CONTEST

Opens Tuesday, 21 August 2012

Closes Friday, 21 September 2012

Final Editor Judge: Meredith Giordan, Berkley Publishing

Final Agent Judge: Helen Bretwieser, Cornerstone Literary Agency
(Entry information is available on the website)

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

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

PRESS RELEASE – SPRING COMPETITION

Are you tired of the wet & cold winter?
Then the Nelson Romance Writers have just the thing for you.

A Spring Romance Short Story Competition 2012.

Theme: NEW BEGINNINGS.

Open to: Unpublished writers, 18 years and over only, within New Zealand.

Launch: Monday 13 August, 2012.

Deadline: Monday 1 October, 2012.

Judge: Sue MacKay, a successful Nelson romance writer, published by Harlequin-Mills & Boon.

The three top stories will win a basket of romantic goodies.

Prizes generously sponsored by local authors & Nelson businesses: Te Mania Wines, The Body Shop, Carol Priest Natural Body Products, Creative Occasions and The Swedish Bakery.

PLUS: First prize includes one year's membership of Romance Writers New Zealand (RWNZ).

Entry form available from 13 August, contact Annika Ohlson-Smith,
email: allan-annika@xtra.co.nz, tel: 03 – 548 5561.

Also at www.cherieclare.com/blog/ or www.laverneclark.blogspot.co.nz

Please note the deadline for content for Heart to Heart is always the 15th of each month.
Material arriving after the 16th may have to appear in the next issue.

From The Pres.

What's happening in RWNZ?

President Iona Jones brings us up to date with the news.



Hi everyone

August is finally here and that means our nineteenth annual conference is just around the corner. RWNZ's "Love is in the Air" Conference will be taking place at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Auckland, from Friday 24th to Sunday 26th of this month. I'm sure most of you got your registrations in before the early bird cut off date, but if you didn't, don't despair, there's still plenty of time to register so you don't miss out on our fabulous line-up.

Friday's Workshop with Randy Ingermanson, the Snowflake Guy, promises to be chock full of great writing tips, and New York Times and USA Today Best Selling author Eloisa James will be sharing the benefit of her experience with us as our Weekend Keynote Speaker. We also have a great line up of workshops from both local and international guests, and a wonderful array of editors and agents for you to pitch to.

But it's not all hard work and no play – let's face it, no one ever accused romance writers of not being able to let their hair down a little. On Friday night we have our Edge of Darkness Cocktail Party, and on Saturday night we have our very special Ice and Snow Awards Dinner.

I am looking forward to a great weekend and I look forward to seeing you all there.

There are still a few details being finalised and with that in mind can I just remind you that we are looking for donations for raffle prizes and items for the goody bags. If you have donations for the raffles, then please drop me an email. If you have goody bag items, then please email Sophia James at sophiajames6@gmail.com. Even better, if there's anyone out there who has the connections to find us some top notch raffle prizes, I would love to hear from you.

I promised you last time that I would let you know all the great people who have stepped up and taken on a role within your organisation. Look at the number of positions we've managed to fill already:

President – Giovanna Lee	2013 Short Story Contest Manager – Kristina O'Grady
Vice-President – Leeann Morgan	2013 Strictly Single Contest Manager – Viv Constable
Secretary – Elise Penning	Online Course Coordinator – Jean Drew
Treasurer – Deborah Shattock	Website Coordinator – Jo Fereday
Membership Secretary – Kris Pearson	H2H Editorial Team – Angelique Jurd
Publicity Officer – Sue Brebner	H2H Editorial Team – Marjan van Waardenburg
Executive Committee – Jo Fereday	2012 Conference MC – Gracie Stanners
Executive Committee – Kate Kyle	2012 Conference Pitch Coordinator – Jo Fereday
Executive Committee – Liz Heywood	2012 Conference Notes Coordinator – Nicole Bishop
Principal Contests Coordinator – Kamy Chetty	2012 Conference Goody Bags Coordinator – Sophia James
2012 Conference Programme and Name Badges – Michelle Hotham	2013 Conference Committee – Giovanna Lee, Leeann Morgan, Diana Holmes, Ellie Huse, Kris Pearson, Barbara DeLeo
2013 Great Beginnings Contest Manager – Sharon Kelly	

What a fantastic line-up of people. Thank you all so much. Thank you also to all those who have put their hand up for a job at conference this year – many hands definitely make light work.

Don't forget that if you can't make it to conference this year but you have some thoughts on where your organization should be heading in the future, then please feel free to email them through to me, or have someone from your local region who is attending share them at the Open Forum Discussion.

Have a great month everyone and I look forward to catching up with many of you in Auckland.

Iona

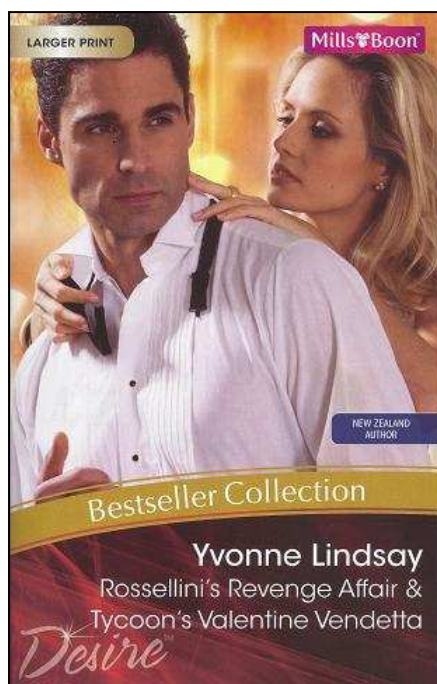
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injury and worrying about whether people we knew were affected and how badly, and I was struck dumb by the extent of the damage. Everything I knew and trusted that made me feel safe suddenly felt threatened. My emotional reactions were similar to those of the previous year, but how I identified with those disasters was wildly different because the Christchurch quake affected our people, leading lives like ours, in our country.

On Twitter, recently, I saw this quote:

NAVY SEAL PT TEST. You are not defined by your past. You are defined by how you respond to the future in light of your past.

Back-story is your character's motivation, or the "why." Your heroine wants a quiet life, in suburbia, with a loving husband, two kids, a white picket fence and a dog. Why? Did she grow up in an abusive home and end up being bounced from foster parents to foster parents? Or did she grow up in a perfect home with perfect parents who never showed any emotion unless she did perfectly well? Or did she grow up in the kind of home she wants for herself, one filled with love and happiness and a strong sense of family and that's exactly what she wants to provide for her family too? **Why, why, why? Motivation can never be too strong, back-story can never be too detailed. Why? Because it is what is driving your character. It's what they want or don't want, it's what they believe or don't believe because it's who they are.**



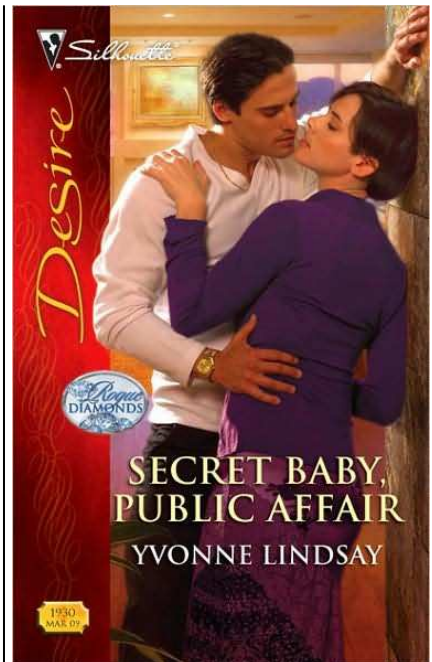
This, in a nutshell, is what I knew about my heroine's back-story for my upcoming October release, A FATHER'S SECRET:

Heroine, raised by a mother who always told her she wished she'd never been born, **Erin Connell**, 30, will do anything to keep her four month old infant son, Riley. For a girl who ran away from home at 16 and for four years got into trouble with the police, initially for petty crime but culminating in being included among those under suspicion after a child died from abuse in poor living conditions in the squat house she shared with several others, she's come a long way toward getting her life together. She and her late husband had won an IVF lottery that allowed them to continue with fertility treatments so she could have the child she'd always so desperately wanted. Her pregnancy was difficult and complications during her delivery have made it impossible for her to bear another child. Riley is her everything. Discovering her husband had been unfaithful to her during their marriage was a cruel blow but Erin hoped their child would help bring their marriage back together, but it was not to be as she was widowed shortly after Riley's birth. Since then, she's poured herself into raising him and into trying to hold onto the lakeside bed and breakfast and charter fishing business that was her husband's pride and joy and his legacy for his only son. But she's struggling to keep everything together on her own.

For my hero, it was simpler:

Hero, millionaire software developer, **Sam Thornton**, 34, was a loving, but absentee, workaholic husband. He took pride in providing his wife with everything she'd ever wanted. But there was one thing he couldn't buy or give her without a whole lot of help—a child. Delayed at work on the day of their IVF implantation procedure he was late picking his wife up. They argued and, distracted, he made a fatally wrong decision while driving. While his own injuries were severe, he hasn't forgiven himself for being responsible for his wife's death. Finding out that his sperm was accidentally used to fertilise another woman's egg, an egg that developed into a beautiful healthy baby boy, has given him a new purpose and Sam will do whatever it takes to gain custody of the son he never thought he'd have.

When you're developing your characters' back-stories you may not necessarily always know everything right away, and that's okay. All will be revealed to you, and your readers, during the writing of your book. But, of course, it's important to start somewhere. Even if all you do is think about it, rather than write it down, you're making progress



in rounding out your character. **From WHAT WOULD YOUR CHARACTER DO? by Eric Maisel, Ph.D. and Ann Maisel, here are some things you might want to consider when thinking about your characters:**

1. Basic history—family; schooling; social, cultural and/or religious roots; family myths and/or secrets (abuse, alcoholism, addictions, depression etc.); family rules or customs; pivotal events while growing up.

2. Moral valence—How do other people see them? Do they come across to others as essentially a good person or a bad person, a trustworthy or untrustworthy one, sober and careful or crazy and impulsive, principled or unprincipled, confident or shy, kind or cruel?

3. Dreams and ambitions—Approaching Christmas, a 90 year old recluse will have a very different ambition than, for example, a five year old. Dreams and ambitions show your characters' human side (hopefully.)

4. Inner life—What does your heroine think of while she's doing the dishes? What does your hero dream about? Is their inner talk negative and pessimistic or positive and optimistic?

5. Shadow sides and difficulties in living—everyone has a shadow side and everyone has difficulties in living. Even your sweetest character has claws, what brings them out?

6. Consequences of upbringing—While no one can say for certain that a given behaviour, attitude or personality problem is caused directly by upbringing, you, as the author, can

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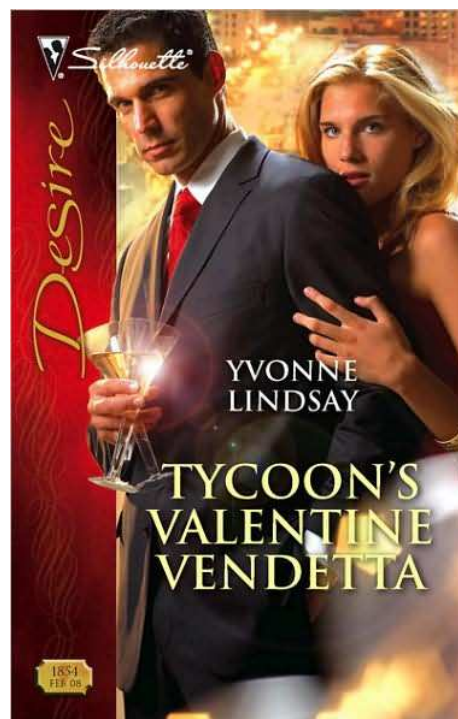
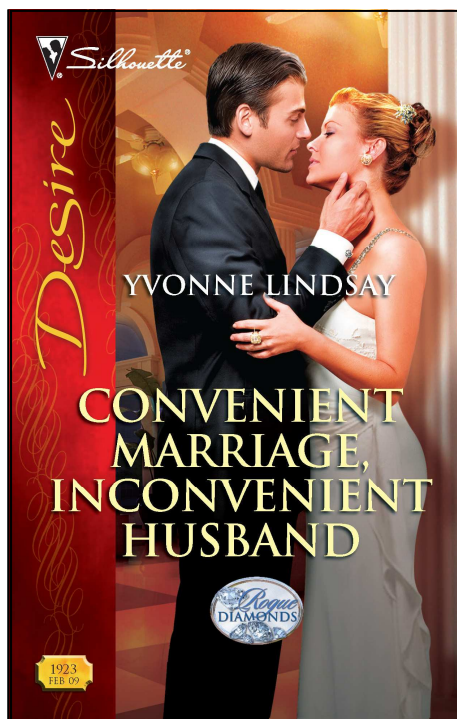
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decide to make that connection. You can decide if your characters' reactions come as a direct result of, for example, their mother belittling them in front of friends, whether that reaction be anger or acceptance, or quiet determination to always do better despite her.

7. Power, sexual potency and alphaness—as with the moral valence, people tend to see others with power, or not. Power is strongly aligned with whether a person can be perceived as sexy, or not. Think about the power quotient, and the sexiness quotient, of some of the characters you already know, then apply that to your own characters. How do they measure up? More importantly, why?

8. Cultural component—this isn't necessarily whether you're black, white, brown or yellow. Think about the differences between a child brought up on a military base versus a child brought up on a commune, or a farming kid versus an inner-city apartment dwelling kid. What kinds of belief systems drive your character and why?

Look forward to reading Part Two of Yvonne's article in September's H2H.



To peek inside these intriguing covers, visit Yvonne's 'Book' page at: <http://www.yvonnelindsay.com/books.htm>

Catch up with Yvonne at Love is in the Air, where along with fellow RWNZ members Nalini Singh, Maree Anderson, and Louise Groarke, she will co-present the Saturday morning breakout workshop: Following the Yellow Brick Road: The Journey to Publication.

Note: This 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.

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.

**I love writing. I love the swirl
and swing of words
as they tangle with
human emotions. ~
James Michener**

**A reminder to people who have registered
for conference and who have now
decided they would like to pitch, please
send your pitch requests to
Jo Fereday: jo@jofereday.com.**

**See pages 9 and 10 of this issue for
information on the fantastic team of
editors/agents who will be hearing pitches.**



Ten Twitter Tips for Writers (and other creative types) With No Time to Spare

With Julie Rowe

Twitter is a great social media tool. Its 140 character limit for tweets (messages) means it's quick and since others can retweet (repost) your tweets, the possible audience for those tweets can be huge.

Sounds like a win-win right?

Twitter can also suck you in and suck all the time out of your day. Here are some tips to help you use Twitter efficiently and effectively.

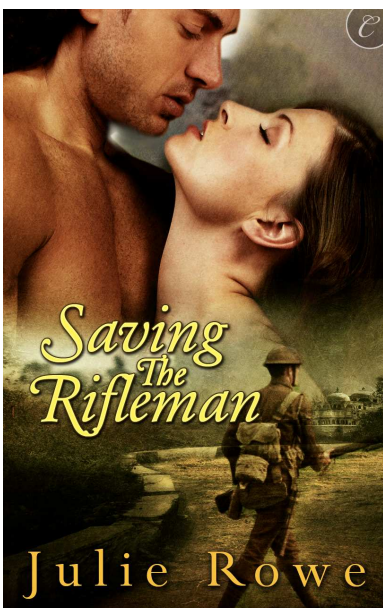
1. Pick a Twitter handle (screen name) so people can find you. Use your pen name, if it's taken add an underscore between your first and last name, or add the word 'author' or 'writer' after your name. Don't make people work to find you.

2. Put something in your description that makes it clear you're you.

Mine reads: Wife, mother, author, teacher, med lab tech - Icebound - available now from Carina Press. North of Heartbreak coming April 16, 2012

3. Follow the people you want to follow you, including:

- a. Publishing professionals (put 'editor' or 'agent' in the search engine).
- b. Reviewers.
- c. Readers (lots of avid readers put



Julie's next release, called Saving the Rifleman, is due out from Carina Press on Oct 8, 2012.

the word 'reader' in their description).

d. Interesting folks (I follow National Geographic, The Economist and NASA's official tweet streams and often retweet their tweets).

4. Retweet other people's tweets. I make a note of who retweets me and retweet their tweets.

5. Thank people who retweet and mention you with a thank you tweet.

6. If you start a tweet with someone's Twitter handle, put a period in front of it. If you don't Twitter will assume this is a direct tweet to them and it will only show up in the tweet stream of everyone who follows BOTH of you.

7. Use hash tags whenever you can.

What's a hash tag? It's a topic label that you can use to follow a conversation on twitter.

Put the hash tag into the search engine and all tweets with that hash tag pop up in order. Popular writing hash tags and their definitions:

a. #FF = Follow Friday – suggest people to follow to your followers.

b. #WW = Writer Wednesday – suggest writers to follow to your followers.

c. #TT = Thankful Thursday – thank your writing followers publicly.

d. #writing, #amwriting = Tweeting about your current work in progress.

e. #editing, #amediting = Tweeting about your editing journey.

f. #pubtip = Tips about the publishing industry.

g. #editreport = Editors share instructional bits from edit reports.

8. To resist the temptation to check Twitter constantly, schedule your tweets with an outside service like TweetDeck or HootSuite. These websites allow you to schedule tweets days, weeks and even months in advance. You can also use them to follow multiple tweet streams (specific lists of people and their tweets).

9. Use bit.ly or another link shortening site to make your active links to websites shorter.

10. Tweet about your book(s), but don't just post a plea for people to buy with a link, make your tweets interesting and relevant. Post tweets that are unique to your book and that catch people's attention. For example, my debut romance ICEBOUND set in Antarctica came out on Nov 14, 2011. For a month prior to the release date I posted 3

tweets a day with either interesting trivia about Antarctica or Antarctic slang with my book title and a pre-order link. Now that the book is out I continue to post trivia and slang 3 times a day with an active buy link.

Here are some examples from my ICEBOUND tweets and tweets for my next book, NORTH OF HEARTBREAK, due out on April 16th:

a. Due to low humidity, high winds & lack of water fire is the biggest danger in Antarctica ICEBOUND 11/14/11

@carinapress <http://bit.ly/pqBFs4>

b. Antarctic Slang: Boomerang - flight to Antarctica that turns back before it arrives, bad weather ICEBOUND

@carinapress bit.ly/pqBFs4

c. Alaska was purchased from Russia in 1867 for \$7.2 million NORTH OF HEARTBREAK coming soon!

@carinapress <http://bit.ly/xjCiv>

d. "There's no way I'm going to saddle some unsuspecting woman with me and my bad habits." #heroquote ICEBOUND <http://amzn.to/vIFph7>

Medical Romance & Adventure
A double Golden Heart finalist in 2006, Julie Rowe has been writing medically inclined romances for over ten years.

She's also a published freelancer with articles appearing in The Romance Writer's Report, Canadian Living, Today's Parent, Reader's Digest (Canada) and other magazines.

Julie is an active member of RWA and its subchapters, Heartbeat RWA, Calgary RWA, The Golden Network, Hearts Through History and RWA Online. She coordinates Book In A Week, and online workshops for Heartbeat and Calgary RWA.

Julie is now teaching for Keyano College in her home city of Fort McMurray, AB, Canada. She teaches a variety of workshops for the Workforce Development department at Keyano College.

Julie enjoys teaching and volunteering, and is a passionate promoter of life-long learning. She's the owner/moderator of the **Announce Online Classes email loop**, which promotes online classes for writers, and which is hosted by a large number of writing organisations on a wide variety of topics and at various skill levels. The classes are taught by some of publishing's best writers and writing instructors.

To subscribe to the Announce Online Classes email loop, send an email to:
Announceonlinewritingclasses-subscribe@yahoo.com See her list of classes on the Classes I Teach page.

Ten Minutes to Glory: Your Editor/Agent Pitch



© Laurie Schnebly Campbell

Let's say you've written the world's greatest romance novel. There are two ways you can get an editor to read it. One is to mail it into the publisher (or have your agent mail it) and let the manuscript speak for itself. The other is to have an agent or editor ask to see your manuscript...which could happen during your appointment at the conference.

So here you are, face to face with the editor or agent—who, as you've probably already heard, is NOT a monster. **She's there because she wants to buy books!** All you need to do is make her want to send for yours so she can read it and fall in love with it and get you a publishing contract. How do you do that?

You start with the obvious "how-to-make-a-good-impression" techniques. You're businesslike, professional, friendly, etc....let's assume you already know how to make a good impression.

Let's also assume you have a book to sell. Let's assume you've run it by your critique group and your mentor and they all say, "Yeah, it's great, it's ready to submit." (If you don't have a critique group or a mentor, get one! That's what RWA is for, is to give you all the tools that can help you sell, and those are both wonderful tools.)

So you introduce yourself, shake hands, sit down, and now **it's time for the pitch.**

You need to tell her **three basic hit points** right from the start: **1) what type of book** are you pitching? Long contemporary, historical saga, main-

stream women's fiction, romantic suspense...

2) How long is it? 3) And is it finished, or is it still in the working stages? It's important for her to know that you have the staying power to complete a book—if the one you're pitching ISN'T finished but you've completed two others, tell her that. Maybe she'll want to see them, and at least she'll know you can stay at the keyboard long enough to finish a book.

If what you're pitching is an idea for a book that still has to be written, you'd better be pretty sure you can finish that book within the next six months...because if it takes longer than that, you can assume she will have forgotten all about you by the time your manuscript shows up in the mail. If your book won't be completed for another eight or nine months, then wait and pitch it at next year's conference instead.

It takes some of the pressure off to know that you can't make anyone want to buy your book during a conference pitch. All you can do is **make her want to see it.** And you do that by **describing what's going to interest readers...what your book is about.** You need the equivalent of a great synopsis—something that outlines **your main premise, your characters, what they do and what's their conflict and how they grow and how they solve that conflict.**

What you need for starters is a **"topic sentence."** This is something you can use over and over, by the way...when you tell people "I sold a book!" and they say "Congratulations, what's it about?" you're probably not going to have ten minutes to give them the storyline. You'll be lucky if you get ten seconds. So **this topic sentence is your ten-second synopsis of what the book is about:** "It's about a Southern belle who thinks she's in love with a man she can't have, and only by going through the trials of the Civil War realizes that the man she truly loves is the one she's been battling with all along." "It's about a teenage boy and girl whose families have been feuding for generations but who fall in love at first sight, and how they struggle to be together but finally choose death rather than separation." Boom. You've told the story.

Try telling it with **Debra Dixon's** method of **three 3x5 cards**—one each for **characters, conflict and summary.** On the **first**, write down **WHO, WANTS, WHY and WHY NOT.** (Love those "W" words...) Start by describing **WHO the heroine is in three words**—say

Jane Doe is a teacher, she's empathetic and she's gutsy. **Then say what she WANTS more than anything in the world**, like "to help student Johnny Jones overcome his learning disability." We **need something specific**, not something nebulous like "Jane wants to find true love."

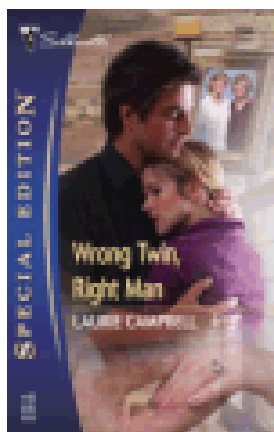
WHY does she want this? There might be a dozen different reasons, depending on her character. Maybe she sees in Johnny the lovable son she gave up for adoption. Maybe she's determined to prove that she can make a difference in some child's life because she couldn't save her daughter from a car wreck and she's been carrying around this guilt ever since. **The motivation you choose depends on her character**, and it's **where we get a glimpse of her internal conflict.** If Jane's carrying around a lot of leftover guilt about her daughter's death, for instance, maybe she feels like she doesn't deserve to fall in love again.

WHY NOT? What's going to stand in the way of our heroine getting what she wants? Say Jane wants to help Johnny overcome his learning disability, but Johnny's father refuses to believe his son has dyslexia and the school won't allow students in their program without parental consent. **This is the external conflict between your hero and heroine**, and it's **completely separate from the internal conflict...which is what they're each going through on their own.**

Now we do the **same** thing on the **other side of the card for the hero.** **WHO?** Bob Jones is a rancher who's a stubborn loner. He **WANTS** to believe his son is normal. **WHY?** He can't face the idea that he might have failed as a parent because he's already failed as a husband. **WHY NOT/What stands in his way?** Jane refuses to back down about getting Johnny into the dyslexia program. And there we are; that's the first card.

Onto the **second**, which will cover the **emotional aspects** of the book—the hero's and heroine's **internal conflict.** On the **front**, write down something

(Continued on page 8)



like "Jane feels so guilty about her daughter's death that she can't let herself fall in love; Bob can't accept Johnny's disability because he feels like that would mean he's failed at every close personal relationship he's ever had." And on the **back**...write down **how they resolve the problem**.

Well, how could Jane and Bob resolve their problem? Maybe when he sees her grieving over her daughter he realises that his son's still alive and deserves the best treatment Bob can give him, including the dyslexia program. Maybe when she sees Bob willing to acknowledge Johnny's disability, Jane realises she can show that same courage by being willing to love again. Whatever your resolution is, write it down on the back of card #2.

Finally, **card #3**. Here's where you write your **topic sentence**, and it's nice if you can make it a kind of "hook" that will make people want to know more. For example, "A teacher advocates to help a child with dyslexia and falls in love with the opposition—the boy's father." You want to know more, right? Like, what happens?

Next comes your **heroine sentence** where you **combine the WHO, WHAT and WHY**: "Gutsy, empathetic Jane Doe sees helping Johnny Jones as a chance to compensate for her daughter's fatal car accident, a loss which has left her afraid to love again." **Now** your **hero sentence**. "Rancher Bob Jones, a stubborn loner, refuses to acknowledge his son's disability, feeling it would mean he has failed as a father after having already failed as a husband." And **finally**, your **resolution**. "Only after Bob sees how much Jane misses her daughter does he realize that his son deserves all the caring acceptance he can give, and his courage in acknowledging Johnny's disability gives Jane the courage to risk loving again."

This is pretty quick and dirty, but it gives you the idea. **Sentence #1** is

your **topic or hook**. **#2** is your **heroine's who, what and why**. **#3** is your **hero's who, what and why**. **#4** is **how they resolve their conflict**. And now you've got the **guts of your book down on this 3x5 card**.

This may be as far as you want to take it. You can memorise these four sentences or read them out loud at your appointment...and if you're the kind of person who can't face putting on a show in public, that's all you need to do. But you can give yourself an edge if you're willing to spark it up a little more. A good performance might improve your chance of selling. And obviously the more chance you get to practice, the better your performance will be. So you need to fine-tune your speech. When you're talking with the editor or agent, you want to **sound natural**, like you're chatting about the great movie you just saw last week. "I just came from the best movie. It's about a Southern belle who thinks she's in love with a man she can't have...."

And you're off on your story. Here's a hint: write your speech so it opens with the phrase **"It's about."** That's a smoother, easier way to start in with your topic sentence than any other opening you could rehearse...and if you practice your speech by opening with that phrase "It's about," it'll come naturally when you're making the pitch. You say that line, and the **rest of the story just flows** from there.

If you're going to make your pitch during a group appointment, keep your speech down to one minute or less. You don't want to go on and on about your book while eight other people are sitting around the table. If the editor/agent is fascinated and asks for more, you can always have a little more prepared—the way an orchestra has their encore sheet music already sitting on the music stand.

If you're going to make your pitch during an individual appointment, try to tell the story in four to six minutes. You can really pique her interest in that much time, and it'll still give you another few minutes to answer questions. When writing your speech, keep in mind that you can speak about 160 words during one minute.

If you're a natural performer, just go in there and perform your speech. Ideally, you'll have it memorized so you don't need to refer to your notes—when you're telling your

neighbour about a good movie, you don't refer to any notes! It helps you memorise if you recite your narrative over and over again, and that'll also give you a chance to embellish your performance—right down to the dramatic pauses.

And if you're not a natural performer, you do exactly the same thing. You write down your speech, and you rehearse it. Over and over and over. Every time you tell the story, you're going to find a different way of delivering a line. You'll remember the changes that sound really good—go back in and put them in your script. After ten or twelve rehearsals, you're going to have this thing down pat. And it can only help your chances of selling.

So give your performance the same kind of work you gave writing your book. Recite that speech to your husband, your kids, your neighbours. Recite it in line at the grocery store, on the way home from work, and all the way to the conference hotel. Get so you can say it in your sleep. Tell it to anyone who will listen, and get so you know that story and love telling it. You'll make the editor love hearing it.

Okay, summing up: Know your book category, length and completion date. Write down your Whos, Wants, Whys and Why Nots and use them to put the four important sentences (your topic, your heroine, your hero, and the conflict resolution) on a 3x5 card. Then, if you really want to impress the editor, dress up that summary as a one-minute (for group appointments) or five-minute (for individual appointments) speech. Write it so it sounds like a real person talking, and practice the heck out of it.

Finally, remember your topic sentence so that when your book sells, you'll have an easy answer for people who say, "Oh, I can't wait to read your book; what's it about?" I hope there will be millions of those people, and you'll have a wonderful answer for them all!

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Laurie Schnebly Campbell loves giving workshops for writer groups about "Psychology for Creating Characters," "Making Rejection WORK For You," "Building A Happy Relationship For Your Characters (And Yourself)" and other issues that draw on her background as a counselling therapist and romance writer. In fact, she chose her web-site (www.BookLaurie.com) so people would find it easy to Book Laurie for programs. But giving workshops -- for students from London and Los Angeles to New Zealand and New York -- is just one of her interests. During weekdays, she writes and produces videos, brochures and commercials (some of which feature her voice) for a Phoenix advertising agency.

For several years she would turn off her computer every day at five o'clock, wait thirty seconds, turn it on again and start writing romance. It finally paid off. Her first novel was nominated by Romantic Times as the year's "Best First Series Romance," and her second beat out Nora Roberts for "Best Special Edition of the Year."

But between those two successes came a three-year dry spell, during which Laurie discovered that selling a first book doesn't guarantee ongoing success. "What got me through that period," she says, "was realizing that the real fun of writing a romance is the actual writing."

Selling is wonderful, sure, but nothing compares to the absolute, primal joy of sitting at the computer and making a scene unfold and thinking "Wow! Yes! This is great!"

After six books for Special Edition, she turned her attention to writing non-fiction -- using her research into the nine personality types to help writers create plausible, likable people with realistic flaws. Her other favourite activities include playing with her husband and son, recording for the blind, counselling at a mental health centre, travelling to Sedona (the Arizona red-rock town named for her great-grandmother, Sedona Schnebly) and working with other writers. "People ask how I find time to do all that," Laurie says, "and I tell them it's easy. I never clean my house!" For a complete list of Laurie's upcoming sessions, delivered once a month, email LaurieClass-subscribe@yahoogroups.co. And visit WriterUniv.com for more info.



RWNZ 2012 Conference Pitching Opportunities

The following editors and agents are attending the RWNZ Conference, Love is in the Air, and will be taking pitches on Friday 24 August and Saturday 25 August at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Auckland.

If you have registered for the Weekend Conference and would like to book a pitch with one or more of the editors and agents listed below, then send an email to this year's Pitch Coordinator, Jo Fereday, at jo@jofereday.com listing your choices in order of preference. Please note that we cannot guarantee you will obtain a pitch appointment with all of your choices, but we will do our best.

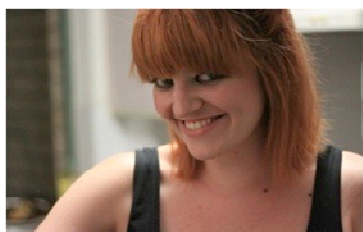


Joanne Grant, Senior Editor, Harlequin Presents

Joanne Grant is Senior Editor of Harlequin Presents and joined Harlequin in 2003 - as an avid reader and a romantic at heart where else would she work?! Reading romance novels in the bath is her guilty pleasure and she never tires of watching Colin Firth as Mr Darcy, or Patrick Swayze utter that line in Dirty Dancing.

Joanne is basically interested in anything that Harlequin acquires. Manuscript length is dependent on series targeted. She is particularly interested in original voices and stories that take a classic romance theme and give it a contemporary twist!

Remember to refer to the Harlequin writing guidelines for category lines.



Haylee Kerans, Publishing Manager, Harlequin Enterprises (Aus)

Haylee Kerans has long enjoyed reading romance and put her research to good use in her Honours thesis, *Constant Craving: a Polemics of Reading and Desire in Mills and Boon*. Now, after more than ten years of reading and raving about romance, Haylee is Publishing Manager at Harlequin Enterprises – a fact she still can't quite believe.

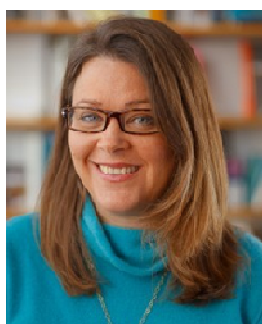
Haylee is looking for commercial fiction, women's fiction and romance for the Mira imprint and young adult for the Harlequin Teen imprint. Please note Haylee is only taking pitches for single title manuscripts and not category manuscripts.



Nephele Tempest, Agent, The Knight Agency.

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.



Erin Niumata, Agent, Folio Literary Management

Erin Niumata has been in publishing for over 21 years. She started as an editorial assistant at Simon and Schuster in the Touchstone/Fireside division for several years. She then moved over to Harper Collins as an editor before joining Avalon Books as the Editorial Director, working on romance, mysteries and Westerns. Erin has edited many authors including Leon Uris, Stuart Woods, Phyllis Richman, Senator Fred Harris, Michael Lee West, Debbie Fields, Erica Jong, Brenda Maddox, Lawrence Otis Graham, Joan Rivers, Carolyn Brown, Sandy Robins. She has also worked on Discovery's *River Monsters*, *Cash Cab*, *Extreme Couponing*, *Josh Shipp*, *TLC's – The Cake Boss*, and many more. She's worked on 28 NY Times Bestsellers.

Erin is looking for all romances other than erotica, fantasy, futuristic and steam punk.

RWNZ 2012 Conference Pitching Opportunities



Harriet Allan, Fiction Publisher, Random House NZ

Born and educated in the United Kingdom, Harriet Allan graduated with an MA (Hons) in English literature and language from the University of Edinburgh in 1985 and emigrated to New Zealand the following year. After working for a medical publisher and with Oxford University Press, she moved to Century Hutchinson and remained with the company through its various mergers and transformations, working as an editor and subsequently managing editor, also commissioning a wide range of titles: fiction and nonfiction, adult and children's. For the last two decades, she has been the fiction publisher, publishing many award-winning books for the Random House New Zealand imprints of Vintage, Black Swan and Arrow.

Harriet is particularly on the lookout for high-country women's fiction and very funny chick lit, but she is interested in most novels.

Katie Haworth, Commissioning Editor for Children's Books and Fiction, Penguin NZ

Katie Haworth has worked in the publishing industry for six years. She began her career as editor at independent children's publisher Mallinson Rendel and has been at Penguin New Zealand since 2010. She now works as Penguin's commissioning editor for children's books and fiction. Katie is a graduate of the Whitireia Diploma of Publishing.

Katie would like to hear pitches for contemporary sexy romance or erotica. She'd be especially interested in hearing anything that is NZ rural-based, and also young adult.

RWNZ "LOVE IS IN THE AIR" CONFERENCE

7-8.15am Saturday and Sunday

Cold Reads

On both Saturday and Sunday mornings, those early risers among you will have two great opportunities to participate in a cold read session. On Saturday you have the choice of Erin Niumata, Agent with Folio Literary Management, or Joanne Grant, Senior Editor, Harlequin Presents, and on Sunday we have Nephele Tempest, Agent with The Knight Agency, or Haylee Kerans, Publishing Manager, Harlequin Australia. No need to register for these sessions, but if you would like your work to be included be sure to bring along two copies (one for our reader and one for the agent or editor) of the first two pages of your manuscript for each session you intend to attend (and you might like to have a copy for yourself as well). Previous attendees of our cold read sessions swear the feedback you hear in these sessions is invaluable - so don't miss out!



With our conference only a few weeks away we're seeking donations of razzle-dazzle raffle prizes and WoW Factor items for the goody bags. (Here's a hush, hush heads up...the H2H raffle includes a one-off full-colour issue of Heart to Heart. I know! This rare beauty will become a collector's edition! And it comes with fancy chocolates, bubbles, and marshmallows. I'm only telling you now so I won't dare spill coffee on the newsletter, or sample the yummy stuff, Viv A:)) If you have something special to donate, please email Sophia James at sophiajames6@gmail.com, or Iona at iona.jones@xtra.co.nz.

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



Have you read the HUNGER GAMES yet?

A reminder to do so if you are coming to Randy's workshop as from 3.30 to 4.50 on Friday August 24 he will be analysing the HUNGER GAMES...

THE HUNGER GAMES is one of the hottest selling novels in recent years. There's a reason it's sold so well. The book is brilliant on a number of levels. We'll analyse it using all the tools we've discussed throughout the day. The characters. The story structure. A Snowflake analysis of the story. We'll analyse selected scenes to see why they're "perfect". This talk will contain plot spoilers so, if you haven't read THE HUNGER GAMES yet, please read it before the conference. Even if you don't read "that kind of book", read it anyway. It'll be good for you, and you'll learn vastly more when we analyse the book.

RWNZ "LOVE IS IN THE AIR" CONFERENCE

24-26 AUGUST 2012

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY PLENARY SESSIONS

Joanne Grant, Senior Editor Harlequin Romance, 9.50–10.30 a.m. Saturday

An overview of Harlequin, this session will discuss Harlequin globally - new innovations, news, successes from around the globe; an update on Harlequin's imprints (Mira, HQN Books, Harlequin Teen and Mills & Boon); and the So You Think You Can Write competition to sign new authors.

RWNZ - Open Forum Discussion 1.20–2.05 p.m. Saturday

Where would you like to see your organisation heading in the future? Are there things you would like your organisation to do for you? What initiatives would you like to see put in place? Should RWNZ have a conference every year? This session will be run as an open forum for discussion. It will be your chance to have your views heard. Any and all ideas, suggestions, comments, questions will be welcome.

Nephele Tempest, Agent, The Knight Agency, "Getting an Agent: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly" 3.40-4.30 p.m. Saturday

This session discusses the process of submitting to agents, considers the dos and don'ts, and also talks about what happens once you actually have representation.

Eloisa James, "Ten Things I Wish I Knew", 9.00-9.20 a.m. Sunday followed by Q&A with Eloisa from 9.20-9.35 a.m.

A New York Times best-selling author of popular romance explains how to break into print and how to break out onto the best-seller lists: a frank discussion of the business of writing no matter the genre -- and what it takes to hit the NYT Top Ten.

Erin Niumata, "The Fiction Women Read," 9.35-10.20 a.m. Sunday.

Women's fiction used to refer to romance novels with risqué covers and some naughty bits, but it has evolved. No longer are women interested in being 'rescued' in a book. They are interested in everything from strong female characters and interesting plots to giddy romances and hot erotic plots. The publishing world is scrambling to meet these demands and trying to find what is 'hot' in the market. Does chick lit still sell, does mom lit really work, is 50 Shades of Grey the way to go? Erin has spoken with 16 agents: 8 US and 8 UK to ask: What IS women's fiction, and what are they looking for? This session discusses how they responded.

Haylee Kerans, Publishing Manager, Harlequin Australia, 10.20-10.30 a.m. Sunday.

An update on how the Australian romance market is doing, including editorial trends, with a spotlight on Harlequin Australia's single title imprints - Mira, Harlequin Teen and Non-Fiction.

Don't Get It Right The First Time

With Caro Clarke

How much of your novel have you written? Do you keep starting it and never finishing it? Do you have half a dozen projects in your filing cabinet or on your hard drive, all abandoned? Wonder if you'll ever join the sea of published writers? Well, quit hesitating on the edge of the diving board and dive in!

Beginners tend to want, in fact they expect, to get it right the first time. They think a real writer is supposed to produce perfect prose from the word 'go'. They read their own pathetic first pages and either abandon them or frantically begin rewriting. The first, abandonment, is like throwing away the clay model because it doesn't look like Michelangelo's David; the second is like painting the walls of the house while they're still going up.

You have to write the thing first before you're allowed to be discouraged or to panic. You have to write the whole thing first. So do it. Plunge in, write hell for leather, gallop from page one to 'The End' without a revision, pause, or reconsideration. Get gripped by your story. If you write with pen and paper, buy stitched notebooks so you can't tear out a page. If you write on screen, tape a note above it that says 'Looking back causes gangrene'. And write.

Write hard, write fast. Take your idea, roughed out into a plotline (don't even dream of beginning a novel without some sort of storyline or plot

map; you're not supposed to be that reckless!) and get as excited about the story as you want your readers to be. Don't feel pressured to pad it out. Don't worry about length. Just write all the absolutely necessary scenes. Don't fret about bridging them with connecting passages. Just put 'The following day...' or 'A year later...' or even 'Meanwhile, back at the ranch...' Sure they're clichés. That's what rewriting is for. **Your first draft is to tell the story. Let your characters form themselves, let the story unfold itself.** So what if your country boy starts out talking like a college graduate and you only find his true voice 30,000 words in? That's what rewriting is for! So what if you realise that you should have planted a massive foreshadowing about word 50,000? Guess what! That's what rewriting is for. Scribble a note to yourself in the margin and keep writing.

What about all those writing manuals that tell you to read and amend what you wrote yesterday before beginning new words today? Well, that didn't work for you, did it? There are many ways to write a novel, and if one method doesn't get you to 'The End' you have to try another.

The only thing you can't do is plunge in without some idea of where you're going. But don't allow yourself to be stalled because you don't have a detailed story-plan or plot outline. I know a wannabe writer who spent so long crafting and revising his plot outline that he never actually wrote the novel. If you burn to write because you have a brilliant opening scene, ask yourself 'What happens after this scene?' and then 'Where do these characters all end up?' Jot down the logical actions that will take you from your first

to your second question and you'll have enough of a plot outline to begin writing to. Pin it up where you can see it and start writing.

When you write through from beginning to end without pause, you'll discover several things. First, you'll find you have the pace and discipline that always arrives when you apply the seat of the trousers to the chair over weeks and months. **It's in the long haul that real writers are formed, and you aren't a real writer until you've gone through that baptism of sustained work.**

Second, your brain will start making amazing connections. You'll see where to fit in sub-plots, you'll find imagery and motifs rising into the structure as if by magic, and your characters will begin to take on real, surprising, personalities.

Third, you'll find yourself growing more sure of how to say what you want to say, and the right words will come to you more fluently.

Lastly, you'll find (if you're the real thing) that you love it. You really love writing. All that fussing and procrastination and worry that you were not producing perfect prose first time will fade away. You'll know at last what you always suspected: that writing is what you were born for.

Copyright Caro Clarke



I am a Canadian, born in Ontario, but by upbringing and choice a Westerner. I spent my childhood in various oil towns from Alaska to Newfoundland, but eventually stopped moving when my family settled down in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

I studied medieval history at various universities, ending up at Somerville College, Oxford University, where I graduated with a D. Phil. from Oxford University.

I moved to London to work in feminist publishing, then worked for various small publishers, in a bookshop, as a carpenter, a minder (bodyguard), a freelance editor, finally moving into website design and development, and I now work as a digital manager for a global financial services company in the City.

I live in a flat in Little Venice, in west London, England with my spouse Fiona (legal spouse, that is, thanks to Canada's commitment to equal rights for all).

I write poetry as "J. P. Hollerith"; it appears in the anthologies *Beautiful Barbarians* and *Not for the Academy*, both published by Onlywomen Press. Science fiction fans might remember my short story "The Rational Ship" in *Memories and Visions* (Crossing Press). November 2004 saw the publication of *The Milk of Human Kindness: Lesbian Authors Write About Mothers and Daughters*, edited by Lori L. Lake (Regal Crest). I have a story in it (obviously), but I am a humble member in a glittering line-up of lesbian authors. I was also invited to contribute a short story to *Romance for Life*, edited by Lori L. Lake and Tara Young, published by Intaglio Publications, 2006. I have also written articles for NoveAdvice.com, an online magazine for writers that is now no more. All these articles can be found on my main website: www.caroclarke.com. **Contact me I would be happy to hear from you.** I can be contacted at: cc@caroclarke.com.

Banishing Your Wolf Of Self Doubt

with MAGGIE TOUSSAINT



My wolf of self-doubt is back. I can feel him prowling around the edges of my mind. Every now and again he darts out and gnaws on my confidence. His sharp teeth make quick work of the thin skin covering my vulnerabilities.

He howls gleefully when those SASEs in my handwriting come in the return mail. Like a silvery shadow, he ebbs in and out of my consciousness, striking when I am weak.

My wolf of self-doubt is at his most bold when I am between projects. His snickering voice tells me that there couldn't possibly be a marketable story in this disorganised chaos I call a brain. He sniffs disdainfully at the lists I make, the things I want to write about.

He bounds across the snowy white computer screen, the one that is barren except for the mocking slash of the blinking cursor. In my midnight hour, I take a stand against my self-doubt. I reach deep inside and believe that the next story will come.

Just as characters have arcs, so do writers. It isn't easy to change and grow; it takes a giant leap of faith to abandon the safe world of your last story and people another universe with new characters. Here's how I face this challenge.

I cast out my wolf of self-doubt with determination. I scan headlines and watch movies and listen to conversations everywhere I go, absorbing, assimilating, what-iffing. With each new idea, creativity sparkles and story possibilities glimmer. I boost my imagination by exploring other artistic pursuits: music, arts and crafts, sewing, gardening. I recharge until I reach a critical juncture, one in which ideas saturate my thoughts.

This primordial stew is flavoured with my past experiences, my unconscious themes, and my level of expertise at crafting stories. In the steamy mist of prewriting, I envision a spunky heroine, a capable but flawed alpha hero, and an emotional conflict that puts this man and this woman on a collision course. From this simmering broth comes a series of character-driven events that propel these people towards a problem they can't overcome without character growth.

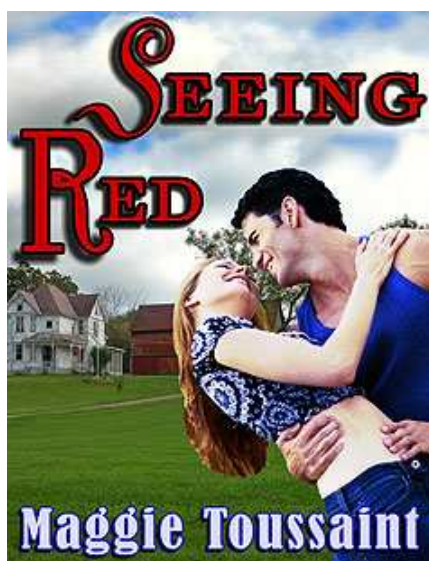
The words come in dribbles, then in torrents. Paragraphs become pages, pages become scenes, scenes connect to form chapters. Turning points, obstacles, choices, crises, commitments, black moments, and triumphant happy endings – these necessary ingredients lend form and substance to this new world.

When the story flows, I don't sense my wolf at all. He can't tolerate the bright campfire of a fresh plot and three dimensional characters. There is no room in my head for failure when words blaze across my computer screen.

Why can't I banish my wolf of self-doubt forever? Because doubting is as much a part of my writing process as the flash and burn. Without extending myself past my comfort zone, I wouldn't continue to grow as a writer.

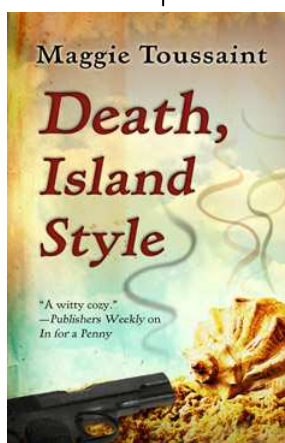
Maybe your wolf goes by another name, but he's there, lurking in the shadows, waiting for your personal dark moment. You want to beat your wolf of self-doubt? Stare him dead in the eye and banish him with the most powerful affirmation in your vocabulary: I am a writer. Now, get to work!

This article first appeared in the March 2004 Update, newsletter of the Washington Romance Writers.



Seeing Red wins Best Book of the Week from LASR

<http://www.maggietoussaint.com/seeingred.html>



Death, Island Style, a romantic mystery, is out now in large print as well as hardcover.

Formerly an aquatic toxicologist contracted to the U.S. Army and currently a freelance reporter, Southern author Maggie Toussaint is published in mystery and romance. Her romantic suspense titles include *House of Lies*, *No Second Chance*, *Muddy Waters*, and *Seeing Red*. Her debut release, *House of Lies*, won Best Romantic Suspense in the 2007 National Readers Choice Awards. Her mysteries include *In For A Penny* and *On the Nickel*, with *Death, Island Style* and *Murder in the Buff* contracted for release in 2012. Visit her at www.maggietoussaint.com and at <http://mudpiesandmagnolias.blogspot.com/>.

**"Writing is a whole time job:
no professional writer
can afford only to write
when he feels like it."**

**- W. Somerset Maugham
(1874-1965)**



Creating White Space Magic with Randy Ingermanson

One of the most common mistakes I see when I critique manuscripts is that the paragraphs are too long.

When I see a dense page of text that has only three or four paragraphs, I suspect the pace is going to be slow and the writing is going to be boring.

When I see a page with a lot of white space, I suspect the pace is going to be fast and the writing is going to have a lot of conflict.

Part of this is just a **psychological illusion**.

When a reader is reading a scene with a lot of white space, her eye zips rapidly down the page. Before she knows it, she's flipping the page, and then the next, and the next.

White space makes your reader feel like she's flying.

As I said, this is a psychological trick, and by itself it doesn't mean very much. Pace is about more than reading pages rapidly.

Pace is about the amount of conflict coming at the reader on each page.

Fiction thrives on conflict.

Don't confuse conflict with mere physical action.

Conflict is about trading punches, but most often those punches are verbal or psychological, not physical.

Conflict is a lawyer cross-examining a lying witness.

Conflict is a woman trying to get her man to tell her what he's really feeling.

Conflict is a baseball player stepping up to the plate with the tying run on third and facing the league's toughest pitcher in the final inning of the World Series.

Conflict is about back-and-forth.

You get the least conflict per page when you use a lot of description, narrative summary, and exposition. All of these tend to use long paragraphs that focus on a single thing.

You get the most conflict per page when you have a lot of action and dialogue and when you alternate rapidly between characters. Doing that will naturally give you a lot of short, punchy paragraphs.

The more paragraphs you have, the more white space on the page.

This isn't complicated, so I'm not going to belabour it.

White space is magic, not because it CAUSES good

(Continued on page 15)

(Continued from page 14)

writing but because it's an EFFECT of good writing.

If you've got a scene that your critiquers are telling you is slow and boring, take a look at how much white space you've got. You probably need more.

Look for every paragraph longer than five lines. Can you break it up?

It probably has some description or long explanation or something else that you're certain your reader can't live without.

Kill it. Get rid of it. Be a brute.

Here is where you protest that you can't do that -- your reader will hate you forever for cutting out that long horrible explanation about the history of mildew.

Fine, if it's that important, then cut it down to three lines.

But **you know in your lying little heart** that it's not that important.

It may be that the paragraph has no description or explanation at all. In fact, you may believe it's packed with action. The tiger and the vampire are locked in a wrestling match to the death.

But if that paragraph is longer than five lines, you're probably using narrative summary. You're telling your reader about the fight, rather than showing the fight.

If a fight is worth having in your story, it's worth showing, punch by punch, snarl by snarl, bite by bite.

Break up that long paragraph into a sequence of actions and reactions. One paragraph for the vampire, one for the tiger, back and forth, until you have a victor.

When you do that, you'll naturally produce a lot of white space.

Your eyes will tell you when you've done enough.

It's possible to go too far, of course.

You don't want to have an entire novel of one-line paragraphs. White space is wonderful, but there can be too much of a good thing.

I've seen two writers who used too much white space. Oddly enough, both of them are best-selling authors. I've never seen a bad writer use too much white space.

If too much white space is your problem, there's an easy fix for it. Just add in some interior monologue, some sensory description, and even an occasional bit of exposition to fatten up a few paragraphs.

White space is magic. White space is power. You know the drill. Great power, great responsibility.

Use it well.

*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>.*



POTENTIAL MARKETS

with P.D.R. Lindsay-Salmon



Piatkus: imprint Entice

Ebooks.

Competition. Prizes: three Piatkus Entice contracts.

Open to any writer, deadline September 30th.

Seeking entries in Romance sub-genres contemporary, historical and paranormal.

Novels, 80,000 to 100,000 + words

Submit one page synopsis, cover blurb and complete manuscript.

Winners gain a publishing contract.

Details: website: www.piatkusbooks.net

Small Press, Sapphire Star

E and print publishing

Open to all writers

Seeking romance in all genres, particularly paranormal and dark fantasy

Length: 60,000 to 145,000 words

Payment: Royalties and Rights agreed on contract.

Details: website: <http://www.sapphirestarpublishing.com>;

Email subs to: submissions@sapphirestarpublishing.com;

Guidelines at: <http://www.sapphirestarpublishing.com/submissions.html>

Kohl: Small Press

Print.

Open to all writers.

Seeking literary fiction for a contemporary female readership.

Length: 'novel length'.

Payment: Royalties and Rights agreed on contract.

Details: website: <http://.kohlpublishing.com>

Email submissions: submissions@kohlpublishing.com

Guidelines at: <http://kohlpublishing.com/submissions-2/>

Simon and Schuster Pocket Books

Ebooks

Agent only.

A relaunch of the Pocket Star line.

Seeking Thrillers, Women's Fiction and Romance

Details only available through your agent!

Website: <http://www.simonandschuster.com>

Adams Media

Romance e-book line, Crimson Romance.

Open to all writers.

Seeking five 'subgenres: romantic suspense, contemporary, paranormal, historical, and spicy (sexy) romance. Think of original characters, 'smart, savvy heroines,' have a fresh writer's voice, and 'new takes on old favourite themes.'

Length around 50,000 words.

Query with 'a brief description of the novel, no attachments please, put all work in the body of the email.'

Payment and rights are under contract.

Details: website: <http://www.adamsmedia.com>

Query and submissions to: editorcrimson@gmail.com

Guidelines: <http://www.adamsmedia.com/call-for-submissions>

Luna Station Quarterly

Quarterly magazine, both print and online.

Open to all women writers.

Mission is 'to bring the oft-unheard voices of female genre writers to the world.'

Seeking submissions of poetry or short fiction, original, unpublished and written by women. Payment is by contract. Authors get 50% of the NET profits with Royalties paid quarterly via PayPal or Amazon Gift Card for negotiated Rights.

Details: 'Luna Station Quarterly'

Website: <http://www.lunastationpress.com>

Email submissions using the online system at the website;

Submission guidelines at: <http://www.lunastationpress.com/submissions>

'Fiction Brigade'

Digital publisher of flash fiction.

Open to all writers.

Seeking short fiction of 50 to 1,500 words, any genre

Payment is a percentage of the royalties from the story ebook sale. The editors encourage writers to do a little sales PR !

Details: 'Fiction Brigade',

Website: <http://www.fictionbrigade.com>

Submit using the online system:

<http://fictionbrigade.submishmash.com/submit>

Guidelines at:

<http://www.fictionbrigade.com/submission-guidelines>

Contests

Angela Bissell suggests a few international contests



Golden Palm Contest (Florida Romance Writers)

Deadline: August 15, 2012

Eligibility: Unpublished in book-length fiction (40,000 words or more).

Enter: First 25 pages of your manuscript.

Fee: US\$30

More info: www.frwriters.org

Heart-to-Heart Contest (San Francisco Area RWAmerica)

Deadline: August 31, 2012

Eligibility: Unpublished by an RWA-approved publisher.

Enter: The scene(s) in which your hero and heroine first meet in the book, maximum 15 pages.

Fee: US\$20

More info: www.sfarwa.net

Laurel Wreath Award for Published Authors (Volusia County Romance Writers)

Deadline: August 31, 2012

Eligibility: Published RWA members.

Enter: Three printed copies of book with copyright date of 2011.

Fee: US\$20

More info: www.vcrw.net

Show Me the Spark Contest (Heartland Romance Authors)

Deadline: August 31, 2012

Eligibility: Published and unpublished authors (entry must not be contracted).

Enter: First chapter (including prologue); maximum of 3,500 words.

Fee: RWA members US\$20 / non-members US\$25

More info: www.heartlandromanceauthors.com

Unpublished Beacon Contest (First Coast Romance Writers)

Deadline: August 31, 2012

Eligibility: Unpublished in the past three years.

Enter: First 25 pages plus optional five-page synopsis.

Fee: RWA members US\$30 / non-members US\$35

More info: www.firstcoastromancewriters.com

Hot Prospects Contest (Valley of The Sun Romance Writers)

Deadline: September 1, 2012

Eligibility: Open to any work unpublished and uncontracted at time of entry.

Enter: Three to five page synopsis and up to 25 pages of story (total maximum 30 pages).

Fee: US\$30

More info: www.valleyofthesunrw.com



BE THERE



Woos, Hoos, and News

Celebrating our members' achievements.

Email Jean Drew jeandrew@xtra.co.nz

with your successes to be included in this page.

Lisa Matthews w/a Lorna Jean Roberts, signed a contract for another book with Elloras Cave titled Dual Embrace.

Soraya Nichols got a 4 star review in the August issue of Romantic Times for The Navy Seal's Bride.

Louise Groarke w/a Louisa George's second book Waking Up With His Run-away Bride is released this month. She sent us the downunder cover...



Chapter Short Story Contest 2012

This year there were twenty-six entries, covering a wide variety of themes in the Chapter Short Story Contest. Due to the high calibre of the entries we had several tied scores, which resulted in seven finalists' stories being sent to Gaynor Davies, Fiction Editor, English Woman's Weekly.

Gaynor Davies commented on the good standard of writing and the difficulty she had in deciding the top three places. However, she did express a concern that there was a slight tendency for the stories to lack strong, convincing plots.

With only 1500 words to play with, every word of your story must progress the plot and reveal the character. Entrants were challenged to write an opening that drew the reader in, to create memorable characters with natural dialogue, and place them in an arresting plot with great pace. Then bring the story to a satisfying end.

What follows is a summary of the valuable feedback from our first-round judges:

Key points from the highest scoring entries:

- Great opening that hooks the reader into the story.
- Memorable characters.
- Dialogue that brings the characters to life.
- A well thought-out ending
- Good use of humour

Key points from the score sheets:

- Good punctuation, grammar and spelling will increase the enjoyment of the story.
- Never underestimate the power of good dialogue — it helps with the pace of the story and reveals aspects of your characters' emotions.
- Introduce the tension early and hook your reader.
- Show more emotion to help the reader to connect with your character.
- Use actions to convey more of your characters' emotions
- Set your scene in time and place
- Show don't tell to increase the pace
- A strong plot with compelling conflict and intriguing ending is key. Many of the entries had meandering plots.

Congratulations to the three winners —Virginia Suckling, Kris Pearson and Amanda Wilson and to the finalists Tania Bayer, Yvonne Walus, Kathryn Taylor and Pam Swain.

We would like to thank Frances Loo of Chapter for her continued generous sponsorship of the contest, final judge Gaynor Davies, Fiction Editor, English Woman's Weekly and the first-round judges

Viv Constable
Contest Manager

RWNZ News Around the Regions

Keeping in touch with each other.

Auckland

Twenty-one attended our July meeting. Frances Loo of Chapter Book and Tea Shop gave us a fascinating talk on her history in the business world and her shop in Mt Eden. She gave us all a tea sample pack and her July catalogue and a special prize for the raffle. Afterwards we introduced ourselves, along with the genre we write in.

We are looking for raffle prizes to supplement the books Barbara Clendon kindly donated, which are now coming to an end. Conference is also seeking prizes for the raffles in August so please think about what you could donate. Several members are travelling to the USA for the RWA Conference later this month. We wish you uneventful travels and look forward to hearing of your experiences there.

Thank you to our treasurer, Jo Fereday, and tea-lady, Lynette Leong, who make my job as convener so much easier. In fact, thank you to all of you who are so supportive it makes the effort of organising these meetings very worthwhile.

Central North (C2C)

12 attended our July meeting (19 apologies) at Cafe IrresistiBlue - between Cambridge and Te Awamutu (we recommend). Discussion on pre-set goals, (congratulated Khushi Usmani who recently placed second in a comp - winning \$500). Lots of chat on what we're reading including Fifty Shades trilogy.... our conclusion on that; its a relationship story - character driven with HEA. Rather than focus on erotic content we saw the main character's emotional-growth as the real heart of the story. All 'out-of-context-hype' on TV/Radio is just ramping up sales for EL James. Which is, lets face it, awesome for ELJ. No meeting for C2C in August - our next is, 8th September, at Vivienne Jones home in Hamilton; Nalini Singh is our guest speaker. More details in the September H2H. Later...! GA.

Hawkes Bay

We were unable to meet up this month; however we have all been busy working on our various writing goals and are very excited about the upcoming conference. This month we will be discussing what we need to do to prepare ourselves, what we need to bring and most importantly, what to wear! Those of us that are going are looking forward to meeting old and new friends. If you would like to join our Hawke's Bay group, please feel free to contact Kristina at maple-leaf@hotmail.co.nz

Wellington

Our July meeting was smaller than usual, but that meant it was easy to get a word in, and easy to hear...

Bron has recently received the Romcon 2012 Readers' Crown for Best Historical. Meryl is very close to finishing her current novel. We talked business/tax/etc for a while, and Jane read the start of the story she's working on. Kris produced a page of YA and Bron a page of vampires. This was part of the 'jump out of your comfort zone' exercise, and we'll be doing it again at our meeting on Saturday August 4, 1pm at Meryl's, so please bring something you don't usually write. We'll also be practicing pitches for conference.

Nelson

July's meeting was almost all about finalizing the paperwork to do with our Spring Romance Short Story Competition. A press release will go out next week and posters will be out there soon too.

Then Wendy shared with us her great news that she had been accepted to the NZSA's Assessment program 2012 with her new novel *Hieroglyph*. We also congratulated LaVerne to her launch of her second romance novel *Affinity* that can be found under 'New Releases' in the July issue of H2H.

As an extra treat our group will go and see the historical romance film *A Royal Affair* next week, and our critique group will work hard writing a pitch on Monday 16/7, as two of us will go to the Conference in August. Our next meeting will be Saturday 11 August, 2pm at Annika's place.



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When I don't write,
I feel my world
shrinking. I feel I am in
prison. I feel I lose my
fire and my colour.
It should be a
necessity, as sea needs
to heave, and I call it
breathing.
~Anais Nin

the back page

with Raina Singh

Proofread carefully to see if you any words out. ~Author Unknown



Leading thinkers explore the role of storytelling in the world:



Steve Denning talks about the *little voice* in the head: <http://www.creatingthe21stcentury.org/Steve10-Little-voice-in-head.html>



Rob Creekmore on putting story to work: <http://www.creatingthe21stcentury.org/PuttingStoryToWork.html>



Barbara Dawson Smith on Show *don't* tell: <http://www.barbaradTahomaawsonsmith.comshowdon'ttell.htm>



Source: Articulate Cartoon



Contact Details:

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Heart To Heart (H2H) is the official publication of Romance Writers of New Zealand (RWNZ) and is published eleven times a year.

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NZromance-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

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