

# HEART TO HEART

## Building Your World

*Whether it's science fiction, fantasy, or contemporary romance, award-winning suspense author **CJ Lyons** shares her secrets for building a world sentence by sentence.*



**P**eople often associate world building with science fiction or fantasy. But I'd like to talk about a different way to world build, one that works for any genre by focusing on specific word choices and details.

In order to draw the reader into your story you need to create a universe where you both control the rules and make a promise to the reader to also follow those rules.

If the world you create is 1950's cold war Berlin, you'd better not have your hero pull out a cell phone. Seems obvious, but world building is much more than mere scenery. Every choice your characters make, from what clothes they wear to the car they drive, helps to create this alternative universe for your readers.

When a reader begins your book an implicit promise is made by you as the author: you will entertain without boring or insulting their intelligence.

This translates to the only two rules I follow when writing: Never Bore and Never Confuse.

You start building your world with the very first sentence--which is why so many books begin with descriptions of setting or weather. But there are other more dramatic ways to pull your reader into your world.

I'm going to share with you my favorite first line of all the books I've read this year. It's from Evan McNamara's *Fair Game*.

*Ever since we shot half of the Mineral County sheriff's department, my deputy and I have been a little shorthanded.*

With that one line, McNamara creates an entire world that he invites the reader to enter. And with a hook like that, what reader would refuse?

How does McNamara do it? He made sure his opening had **three** elements: it is **visceral**, **evocative** and **telling**.

**Visceral:** as in revealing the POV character's emotions.

Here we have a first person POV and we immediately see that he's laconic, that he's a man of action (shot half the department) and there's no remorse here, is there? Makes you wonder if maybe he's gonna get his come-uppance for those past actions during the course of the story.

Read that last sentence again--"Makes you wonder." You, as in the reader.

McNamara creates immediate tension in the reader and involvement by the reader by making you care enough to wonder about something. It's what I like to call emotional Velcro and is a great technique for any hook, whether it's an opening line, a pitch to an agent or editor, back cover copy, or a query letter.

This is the next element in world building: **evocative**. Using your word choices to elicit emotion in your reader.

We already discussed how McNamara created curiosity, but what other

emotions did you experience in reading this one sentence? A feeling of kinship or empathy at a lawman forced to kill half his department? A sense of bravado? How about anticipation of what might happen next?

And lastly, to successfully world build, you need telling details. Every single detail you choose must do the work of creating your universe for the reader.

McNamara uses several telling details: half the department was shot (telling the reader that some survived), they were shot by "we" (telling the reader that it wasn't only the POV character doing the shooting), where are we? Mineral County--telling us the book will take place in a small town, rural setting. And who is the main character? The sheriff who's been overworked and shorthanded but still has at least one loyal deputy to help out.

Wow! Look at everything that one sentence achieved!

Okay, most of us won't be able to pack that much oomph in one sentence. But remember, book buyers make their decision whether or not to read your book in less than 3 pages, so you need to get those telling, evocative and visceral details up front.

Should you stop there with the first page? Heck no. Once you make that promise to your audience, you need to keep delivering, building that world brick by brick. And what are those

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"Magazines  
all too frequently lead to books  
and should be regarded  
by the prudent as  
the heavy petting of literature."

Fran Lebowitz

### WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS:

**Ann Harrison** from Mt Isa  
**Jeanne Drake** from Tauranga  
**Rachel Jones** from Cambridge  
**Jo Bailey** from Rangiora  
**Pamela Swain** from Queensland  
**Kaylie Newell** from Oregon  
**Melissa Smith** from NSW  
**Nina Milne** from Brighton  
**Annette Boyd** from New Plymouth  
**Sue Weston** from Titirangi  
**Jenny Waters** from Eketahuna  
**Katherine Hoby** from Tauranga  
**Nicola Miller-Clendon** from Remuera

## Editors' Desk

*How the world has changed since the March edition. So much devastation. So much pain.*

Our hearts go out to the people of Christchurch, especially those of our members who live there.

Our thoughts and prayers also encompass the people of Japan.

As we watch the news and see the footage of disaster and loss we wonder if life as we know it will ever be the same again. The short answer is, "No. It won't." The long answer is, "It's up to us to make it better. How can we do it?"

Our writing friends from **Savvy Authors** are some of the people who have put their money where their hearts are. They know a writer needs to feed her spirit to survive, but they're concerned that those among us in Christchurch will think twice about spending money on their writing when they need every cent to rebuild their lives.

Here's their answer.

### Fund for the Christchurch Earth Quake Affected RWNZ Members

Savvy Authors ([www.savvyauthors.com](http://www.savvyauthors.com)) has very kindly set up a relief fund for Kiwis affected by the Christchurch Earthquake, to help pay for their membership and/or any workshops they may want to take this year.

Savvy Authors is a website set up by two writers: Liz Pelletier and Sharon Pickrel. They say—

Savvy Authors strives to provide the best tools, classes, and networking opportunities for authors in all stages of their writing careers, from aspiring novelists to multi-published authors.

We at SavvyAuthors are committed to developing a community that embraces:

- Mentoring and sharing of knowledge and expertise among our members.
- Fun and respectful competition in the pursuit of writerly excellence.
- High quality opportunities for publication, promotion, and advancement.
- A strong writer's support network.
- The tools to let each of our members achieve their publication goals.

And that is what Savvy Authors is all about: writers helping writers. It may be learning to critique better and thereby improving your own self-editing skills, or by helping someone in our chat room untangle a plot snarl. Each time we help one another, everyone learns and improves. And for our published authors who tirelessly give back to their fellow writers, when each has a book nearing release, we cheer him or her on, create a buzz through social networking tools, and help promote the book with a blog tour system and site promotions.

It's all here, no matter what your publication status. Savvy Authors: writers helping writers.

This is a very generous offer. The money has been raised by Savvy Author members and we hope those in Christchurch can use it.

If you'd like to take advantage of the fund, please email Bron [Bronwene@slingshot.co.nz](mailto:Bronwene@slingshot.co.nz) and tell her what you'd like—you may have a membership and a course. The courses are listed on their website and occur during the year <http://www.savvyauthors.com/vb/workshoplist.php>

Your editors would like to thank Liz and Sharon personally for organising this very generous fund to help the writers in Christchurch who may be financially impacted by the quake.

A big thank you from all of us at RWNZ!

*Gracie, Rachel, Bron, & Karen*

# From The Pres.



## All the latest buzz happening in RWNZ!

President **Abby Gaines** fills us in on the news from the Exec and the upcoming 2011 Conference “Love & Other Crimes”.

RWNZ's 2011 conference has a name! You're warmly invited to attend **Love & Other Crimes**, August 19-21 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in central Auckland. Our speaker line-up is still growing, but so far, it's amazing.

This year's Friday workshop is now **two** workshops! There's **Bob Mayer's** all-day *Writing a Novel* Workshop, a chance to get down to the nitty-gritty of writing and selling a book. Bob covers pretty much everything you need to know. Also on Friday, we have a half-day *Other Worlds* workshop taught by New York Times-bestselling author of young adult fantasy and dystopian fiction, **Maria V. Snyder**. Check out Maria's bio in this newsletter—she's a very interesting lady. One of her series was released in the USA with different covers for YA and adult audiences, so she'll have plenty to tell us about writing fiction with that cross-audience appeal.

Our weekend keynote speaker is multi-bestselling romantic suspense and thriller author **Tess Gerritsen**. Also, **Bob Mayer** and **Maria Snyder** will be talking during the weekend in the main session and in breakout workshops. They'll be joined by Superromance author **Molly O'Keefe** and a couple of other yet-to-be-named speakers.

And now, the news you've all been waiting for: this year's literary agent will be **Jessica Faust** of BookEnds Literary Agency. Jessica is a very well-known agent in the romance writing world—her blog is regularly quoted by authors as a source of commonsense and wisdom. She has a great track record for picking up unpublished writers as her clients.

Jessica will speak in the conference plenary session during the weekend and will give two workshops—one for published authors, one for unpublished. She'll also be hearing pitches, doing a “cold read” session, and offering herself as a raffle prize (or rather, offering breakfast with herself as a raffle prize)!

Read the interview Jessica did with Tessa Radley in this issue of Heart to Heart, and I'm sure you'll be just as excited as I am.

We're busy teeing up more opportunities than ever before to pitch your manuscript to an editor. You already know we have **Angela James**, executive editor of Carina Press (Harlequin's digital-first imprint) speaking at our conference and taking pitches. We're thrilled to announce that **Lucy Gilmour** of Mills & Boon London will also be on the programme and hearing pitches. We have several local editors signed up, too—check out the details in this issue. And we're hoping to announce another major editorial presence very soon.

See the conference pages in this newsletter for more details of social event themes and other essential conference information.

### Great Beginnings Contest

The Great Beginnings contest is now underway. This contest

has truly proved to be a great beginning for several members who've sold their first book to the London editor judging this contest—it's well worth entering!

I hope you enjoyed the GMC workshop in March, offered exclusively to RWNZ members by author Lori Devoti. There were plenty of great tips and ideas for writers at all levels. Many of you signed up for this—major thanks to Bronwen Evans for acting as workshop registrar and for dealing with the technical glitches that arose.

Keep writing!

### WHAT CAN WE DO?

With Christchurch so desperately in need of every possible kind of support, from prayers to housing, everyone would like to help in some way.

Which leads to the question—“What can RWNZ do?”

Rather than simply make an executive decision, RWNZ would like to hear your thoughts and suggestions. So put your thinking cap on and come up with some ideas and then send them to me to collate.

Suggestions can cover anything—from specific support for our members to general support for Christchurch itself.

From there we can make a decision on what to do.

Send your ideas and thoughts to [angelique@kiwiwriter.co.nz](mailto:angelique@kiwiwriter.co.nz)

Alternatively if you see me on skype on angelique\_jurd, yell out and we can have a chat.

### RWNZ CONTEST SCHEDULE 2011

#### CHAPTER SHORT STORY CONTEST

Closed Friday, 25 March 2011

*Good luck everyone!*

#### HMB GREAT BEGINNINGS CONTEST

Closes Friday, 15 April 2011

♥ **Final Judge:** Megan Bassett, HMB editor ♥  
(Entry information is available on RWNZ's website.)

#### STRICTLY SINGLE CONTEST

Closes Friday, 23 September 2011

**Final Judge:** Alex Logan, Grand Central Publishing  
**Agent Judge:** Elaine Spencer, The Knight Agency  
(Entry information is available on RWNZ's website.)

If you have any questions, contact  
Viv Constable, Contests Coordinator:

[vconstable@xtra.co.nz](mailto:vconstable@xtra.co.nz)



**STOP PRESS!!**  
**Woot, Whee and**  
**Wahoo for our own**  
**Sandra Hyatt**  
**who is a finalist in**  
**RWA's 2011**  
**RITA awards!!**  
**Way to GO, Sandra!**

# Woos, Hoos, and News

*Celebrating our members' achievements.*

*Tyree Connor keeps us up-to-date with our successes here and overseas. Let her know yours at [rocker.t@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rocker.t@xtra.co.nz)*

Vonnie Hughes has **sold** her police procedural/romantic suspense *Lethal Refuge* to The Wild Rose Press.

Annie West has **won** the CataRomance Reviewers Choice Award for 2010 with *Passion, Purity and the Prince*.

Erin Mills has made **the short list** in the Outrageous Fortune script competition.

Diana Holmes **won** the Contemporary Series Category of the NTRWA's Great Expectations contest. Joanna Rix took **third** place in the same category. Abby Gaines took **third** place in the Women's Fiction category.

Kathryn Taylor has **signed a contract** with Embrace Books, a UK publisher—the ePub arm of Salt Publishing.

## GRAB ME (in 250 Words) Contest Results

Trish Morey was the final judge for this competition. She said 'It was very hard picking a winner from the five finalists'.

The winner is **Angela Bissell** from Wellington. Here are her first 250 words and Trish's comments:-

The room smelled of lavender. And of death. Not the swift, merciful kind. The other kind. The kind that sucks the life from a man's body, breath by agonising breath, until in the end nothing remains but an empty, broken shell.

Terrenzo stared at the sleeping man, sorrow crushing his chest. He closed his eyes, his fingers tightening around the envelope in his hands. Walk away, a voice inside his head urged. He need never know.

'How is Rome, my son?'

Terrenzo's eyes flew open. He laid a hand against the man's sunken cheek. 'Hot. And crowded. You'd hate it, Father.'

A smile ghosted across the old man's face. 'Indeed.' His tired eyes strayed to the envelope, his next words little

more than a trembled whisper. 'You found her?'

The desperate hope in his stepfather's voice plunged a cruel blade through Terrenzo's heart.

'Yes.' He couldn't lie. Their veins mightn't pulse with the same blood, but this man had raised him as his own. Terrenzo owed him his life.

Sliding the photograph from the envelope, he placed it in his stepfather's hands.

'Dio. She is an angel.' Carlo Mancini raised pleading eyes. 'I must meet her.'

'No, Father—'

'Please!' He placed a frail hand on Terrenzo's arm. 'I beg you. Bring my daughter to me.'

Terrenzo clenched his jaw till it hurt. His eyes sliced to the photograph, to the hauntingly beautiful face of the stranger who threatened to destroy his family. He felt hatred tear through his gut.

**Trish says:**

I love this! Drop the lavender because "The room smelled of death." is a killer opening whereas the lavender is a distraction. Go for the jugular!

But there is so much to love in this


opening—the situation is dire, the tone is wonderfully heavy and filled with emotion and the dialogue gives us lovely insights into characters in just a few short words—"Hot. And crowded. You'd hate it, Father." And his father gives a ghost of a smile. You do the same with the explanation of their relationship with a lovely economy of words that hints of backstory we don't need to know yet and that can be explained later.

So many questions raised for the reader, clearly a lot at stake, and I for one would definitely be reading on! Tiny point, just for flow, I'd be tempted to join those last two sentences with an and. But that could just be me. Excellent job!

Thanks everyone who entered our little contest. The five finalists were:—

Kris Pearson, Margie Stewart, Angela Bissell, Amanda Wilson, and Valda Anderson.

I'd like to thank Trish for her fabulous comments given to the five finalists. A copy of *Invitation to Ruin* is going to our winner, Angela.

Look out for another marvellous contest in the May edition of H2H. 


Bron

(Building Your World...continued from page 1)

bricks made of? Details. The decisions your characters make.

In essence, that means you're not building your world alone. By choosing the right visceral, evocative, and telling details to color your plot and character, you are inviting the reader to join you.

Once your reader is invested in your story, you've got them hooked!

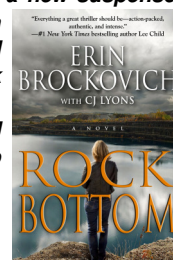
So, give these VET details a try with your own world building. And don't forget, have fun with it! 

As a pediatric ER doctor, CJ Lyons has lived the life she writes about in her cutting edge suspense novels. She has assisted police and prosecutors with cases involving child abuse, rape, homicide and Munchausen by Proxy and has worked in numerous trauma centers, as a crisis counselor, victim advocate, as well as a flight physician for Life Flight. CJ credits her patients and their families for teaching her the art of medicine and giving her the courage to pursue her dream of becoming a novelist.

Her first novel, *Lifelines* (Berkley, March 2008), received praise as a "breathtakingly fast-paced medical thriller" from Publishers Weekly, was reviewed favorably by the Baltimore Sun and Newsday, named a Top

Pick by Romantic Times Book Review Magazine, and became a National Bestseller. *Lifelines* also won a Readers' Choice Award for Best First Novel.

Her award-winning, critically acclaimed *Angels of Mercy* series (*Lifelines*, *Warning Signs*, *Urgent Care*, and *Critical Condition*) is available now. Her newest project as co-author of a new suspense series with Erin Brockovich, started with the release of *Rock Bottom* in March, 2011. To learn more about CJ and her work, go to [www.cjlyons.net](http://www.cjlyons.net)



# Speaker Speed Date



**Ten minutes with one of our conference speakers.**

**Tessa Radley puts agent Jessica Faust, President of BookEnds LLC, in the Speed Date hot-seat.**

**O**kay, I've shamelessly plagiarized Jessica Faust's post on **Author Speed Dating**—because I can't think of a better way to get to know her than by following her blog on

<http://bookendslitagency.blogspot.com>

To paraphrase Jessica: The idea of speed dating is that you get ten minutes to sit down with a prospective date and get to know them. In that spirit, we present **Speaker Speed Date**: a quick ten minutes for you to get to know some of our speakers.

**Name:** Jessica Faust

**Speed date Bio:** I'm President and Literary Agent of/with BookEnds. I'm lucky to be doing a job that's my passion.

**Web Link:** [www.bookends-inc.com](http://www.bookends-inc.com)

**All about Jessica:** Jessica Faust represents an incredible list of authors in a variety of genres, including romance in all sub-genres, mystery, young adult, women's fiction, and nonfiction. Jessica began her career what now feels like a lifetime ago as an editor at Penguin: Berkley, Macmillan and Wiley. In addition to writing Jessica maintains daily blog posts on the highly informative BookEnds blog at: [www.bookendslitagency.blogspot.com](http://www.bookendslitagency.blogspot.com)

**Currently Reading?** *The Iron Duke* by Meljean Brook; *Man Down* by Dan Abrams; and *On the Banks of Plum Creek* by Laura Ingalls Wilder

**Next on your Reading List?** Probably the next in the Laura Ingalls Wilder series and honestly, I have no idea. It will depend on my mood when it's time to pick that next book.

**What book (or author!) shaped your childhood? And what left such a lasting impression?** There are so many aren't there? I think it was *Little Women*. It is still one of my favorite books and I always admired Jo for being a woman who took the path less traveled and fought to be her own person. Jo had dreams and she did

whatever it took to achieve those dreams. I'd like to think Jo was a real inspiration for me.

**Three authors living or dead you would want to have dinner with?** Edith Wharton, Julia Childs, and... honestly I have no idea. I spent a lot of time thinking about a third person and then realized I needed to stop thinking. Maybe a surprise guest.

**Favourite movie character ever?** Hannibal Lector, I think (I'm not much of a movie person, but he's the first person to come to mind)

**Two characters (movie or book) you wouldn't mind being stranded on a desert island with?** Well it certainly wouldn't be Scarlett O'Hara. Can you imagine what a mess that would be? I'd want someone resourceful and entertaining and someone with an upbeat attitude. Katniss from *Hunger Games* would probably be good. At least I wouldn't starve and maybe, well I keep coming back to Tim Riggins from the TV show *Friday Night Lights*, because he's just that good looking.

**Early bird or night owl?** Early Bird.

**Tea or Coffee?** Coffee, and lots of it.

**Facebook or Twitter?** Both, actually, but I prefer twitter: @BookEndsJessica; Facebook: Jessica Faust BookEnds

**Jet-setter or armchair traveller?** A jet-setter (at least I pretend to be).

**And why do you want to visit New Zealand?** Oh [getting starry eyed] it's always been a dream of mine. In my head it's a magical, mystical place and really, you can't get much further away.

**What's your workday like? What do you do in the morning? In the afternoon?** First thing in the morning, at a ridiculously early hour if I can, I check email, answer some queries and finish any to-do list items I wasn't able to finish the day before. My afternoons are usually spent making phone calls, responding to emails, negotiating contracts, and generally handling the business duties of my job.

**Do you ever listen to music when you work?** Sometimes, but often I find it distracting.

**What kinds of characters do you love to read about?** Strong feisty women and stronger, bad boy Alpha males.

**What's hot?** YA and anything YA—especially paranormal or dystopian YA.

**What's not?** Suspense or romantic suspense is a tough sell right now.

**What are you currently looking for?** YA, but typically only Steampunk, Dystopian or a very different contemporary. Romance in all areas including those listed above as well as paranormal and historical (I always love historical). Women's Fiction with a sense of community or mystical elements. Mysteries. Business or reference/pop reference nonfiction.

**What else does your agency represent?** Kim [Lionetti] represents the bulk of the YA and is most actively looking for it. We also represent some pop science titles. I think that's it though there's a lot of crossover.

**If a fairy godmother granted you three wishes what would you ask for?** The ability to live without sleep so I can be busy all the time.

Money, of course. Who wouldn't say that? But I don't want fancy things. I just want to live like I do without thinking about money. More importantly, though, I want to be able to help those in tough situations. Not necessarily major disaster situations, but the everyday person who works and fights hard, but life seems to be throwing everything it can at them. I'd like to help families of autistic children pay the very expensive bills for necessary treatments and assist animal rescue organizations. I'd like to help those who are helping themselves, but it's just not enough.

One amazing vacation every year and the ability to enjoy it without guilt.

*(Continued on page 6)*



# Contests and Markets

*P.D.R. Lindsay-Salmon shares some potential markets and Rachel Collins suggests a few contests.*

## Overseas Contests

### Tampa Area RWA 2011 TARA Contest

**Deadline:** Entries must be received by May 1, 2011

**Eligibility:** Not published in past 3 years

**Enter:** The first chapter, 4,000 words max (actual word count), inc prologue.

**Fee:** \$25.00 U.S.

<http://www.tararwa.com/contest/contest.php>

### Ohio Valley RWA Summer Sizzle Contest

**Deadline:** May 1, 2011

**Eligibility:** Not contracted/published in book-length romantic fiction in last 3 years.

**Enter:** Sexual tension scene (12 pp max),

**Fee:** \$20.00 US

[summersizzle@ovrwa.com](mailto:summersizzle@ovrwa.com) or [www.ovrwa.com](http://www.ovrwa.com)

### Heart of Denver Romance Writers 2011 Molly Contest

**Deadline:** May 15, 2011

**Eligibility:** Unpublished, or not published in last 3 years

**Enter:** Synopsis (5 page max), first 30 pages

**Fee:** \$25–35.00 US

[Mollycoordinator@hodrw.com](mailto:Mollycoordinator@hodrw.com) or [www.HODRW.com](http://www.HODRW.com)

### Central Ohio Fictional Writers (COFW) Ignite the Flame

**Deadline:** May 16, 2011

**Eligibility:** Unpublished

**Enter:** Hero and heroine's first meeting (15 pgs. max)

**Fee:** \$25–30.00 US

[ITFcontest2011@gmail.com](mailto:ITFcontest2011@gmail.com) or [www.cofw.org](http://www.cofw.org)

### Greater Seattle RWA Emerald City Opener

**Deadline:** May 31, 2011

**Eligibility:** Unpublished

**Enter:** Opening 7 pages of your manuscript

**Fee:** \$12 –\$20

[www.gsrwa.org](http://www.gsrwa.org)

### The Bridport Prize FIRST PRIZE £5,000!

**Deadline:** June 30, 2011

**Eligibility:** Previously unpublished work

**Enter:** Max 5000 words short story, max 42 lines poem, max 250 words flash fiction

**Fee:** £5—7

<http://www.bridportprize.org.uk/rules.htm>

## Potential Markets

### Ellora's Cave

POD and epubliher.

Blush imprint seeking unsolicited non-erotic romance. Seeks all types of romance.

Also Cotillion seeks traditional sweet Regency romance.

**Details:** [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com)

**Email:** [submissions@ellorascave.com](mailto:submissions@ellorascave.com)

### eChook

eChook digital chapbook publishers seeks short stories between 700 and 2,000 words as apps for i-pods, smart phones etc.

**Details:** [www.echook.com](http://www.echook.com)

### The Next Big Thing

UK publishers Random House, Bloomsbury, Orion, Little Brown and Hodder and Stoughton are going to read submissions of 5,000 to 7,000 words of a completed unpublished work uploaded to the writers' site Youwriteon.

**Details:** [www.youwriteon.com](http://www.youwriteon.com)

### Jane Austen Short Story Award

**Deadline:** 31 March, 2011

**Enter:** 2,000 to 2,500 words.

**Details:** [www.chawtonhouse.org](http://www.chawtonhouse.org)


**Email for info:** [info@chawtonhouse.org](mailto:info@chawtonhouse.org)

A writer is someone who  
can make a riddle out of an answer  
Karl Kraus

(Speaker Speed Date...continued from page 5)

**What's your perfect submission?**

The one that makes my heart go pitter-pat. That I get so excited over I contact the author on a Sunday.

Jessica, thanks so much for giving us the opportunity to get to know you. We can't wait to meet you in August in Auckland! I'm very much looking forward to meeting you all. 

A veteran of publishing, Jessica Faust began her career as an acquisitions editor at Berkley Publishing, Macmillan, and Wiley. Jessica has been a regular columnist with Romantic Times magazine, taught at New York University's Continuing Education Program, been recognized as Agent of the Year by the NYC Romance Writers of

America chapter, and is asked regularly to speak at writers' conferences throughout the world.

As owner and literary agent at BookEnds, Jessica Faust prides herself on working closely with her authors to make their goals come to fruition. Currently she's seeking submissions in the areas of historical, contemporary, fantasy, paranormal, and erotic romance; fantasy, steampunk, women's fiction, and mysteries; and YA, especially steampunk, dystopian\*, and fantasy YA. While open to anything, Jessica is most actively seeking unique fiction with a strong hook, and nonfiction with creative ideas and large author platforms.

#### \*According to Wikipedia:

The utopia and its offshoot, the dystopia, are genres of literature that explore social and political structures.

#### Utopian fiction

is the creation of an ideal world, or utopia, as the setting for a novel.

#### Dystopian fiction

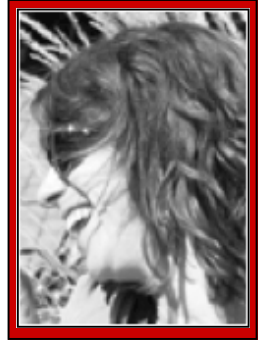
is the opposite: creation of a nightmare world, or dystopia.



# The Dreaded Synopsis

***How do you get the essence of your 90,000 word masterpiece into a few pages?***

***Agent Jessica Faust from BookEnds Literary Agency gives us her take on the problem.***



**T**he synopsis; probably one of the most dreaded and yet important pieces of the proposal package. It's the rare author who likes the synopsis, and given how much the synopsis is hated, the even rarer author who will admit to liking it.

Personally I'm not much of a fan of the synopsis. For me it ruins the reading experience. If I know what happens before I start reading it's that much harder for me to get swept up in the book. When reviewing submissions I rarely read the synopsis and I never read it first. That being said, I find that missing out on the synopsis when I request material can be a killer for the author. In other words, if I request that you include a synopsis you better include that synopsis. There's a reason for it.

There are times when I'm reading a submission and concerned that the book is heading off in the wrong direction, in a way that doesn't make sense, and checking the synopsis can clarify that for me; it can also clarify whether or not I should continue reading. By reading the synopsis I can get a sense of whether the book will just need some editing or if it's a lost cause.

There are also times when I find that a synopsis can give me better understanding of the book, so if I am rejecting maybe I'll be able to give feedback that relates more to the entire book instead of just the chapters I read.

Whether you want to hear this or not, the synopsis is used well beyond the submission process and is not something you'll be able to quit writing once you get published. Sorry to have to break that news to you. The fact is, the longer your career in publishing the more important the synopsis is going to become.

Once you're a published author the synopsis is going to be used over and over again. Since you will only have to

submit on proposal the synopsis will be used by your editor to pitch your next book to her boss and get you a new contract; it will be used by the copy department to write the cover copy for your book; it will be used by the sales, marketing and publicity departments to pitch your book; and finally, it will be used by the cover artist to create your cover.

And believe it or not, the synopsis can be incredibly useful to you. Yep, I think authors need a synopsis as well. Whether you're a plotter or a pantsier the synopsis can really help you formulate the story and check for holes or problems.

**"If you're struggling with your synopsis don't just blame the synopsis. Don't just decide that the synopsis is an impossible thing to write. Take a close look at your book."**

Are you having difficulty making the synopsis sound exciting? Then maybe your book isn't exciting. Do you find that you have to go to chapter ten before you find anything worthwhile to write in your synopsis? Then maybe you need to beef up the first nine chapters. After reading the synopsis you might realize that your characters have no conflict or that there aren't enough red herrings in your book. If you're struggling with your synopsis don't just blame the synopsis. Don't just decide that the synopsis is an impossible thing to write. Take a close look at your book. Maybe, just maybe, the synopsis is so difficult to write because the book itself needs work.


So what is the synopsis? Before going into what it is, let me tell you what it isn't. The synopsis is not any part of your query letter. The description of your book in your query letter is the pitch. The synopsis belongs nowhere near a query.

A synopsis is part of the requested material you send to an agent, it's also

part of the package you will need for your editor. Unlike a pitch, a synopsis is a detailed account of your book. It describes your characters and highlights all the important pieces of your plot. In a mystery it shows where clues are hidden and discovered, in a romance it highlights moments of conflict and forgiveness between your characters, and for every genre it tells how the book will end.

I personally don't care how long your synopsis is and I suspect most other agents and editors don't either. If someone says they want a three-page synopsis send them three pages or as close to three pages as you have. No one is going to reject your book if you're within two pages of what they ask. What I tell my clients when they are working up a synopsis is to write until you have all the important details in place, all the key moments in the story. If you end up with five or ten pages that's fine.

My only real suggestion is stick to the important details. While secondary storylines are important for rounding out the story, they typically don't matter too much in the synopsis.

So write the synopsis, you're going to need it. If it's not for me, you'll need it for your editor, your copywriters, your cover artists, or yourself. 

**Adapted from a February 2, 2011 post on the BookEnds Literary Agency Blog and used with permission.**

Writing fantasy  
lets me imagine a great deal more  
than, say, writing about alligators,  
and lets me write about  
places more distant than Florida,  
but I can tell you things  
about Florida and alligators,  
let you make the connection  
all on your own.

**Terry Brooks**



# The Rules of World Building

## What does it take to write a credible world?

**Kate Douglas**, author of the *Wolf Tales* series, shares how to write a believable world.

**F**irst rule for world building—there are no rules.

When you hear the term “world building” what do you think of?

For me, it was always Ann McCaffrey’s *Dragonriders of Pern* series—the society she created was so completely and realistically drawn that it was easy to visualize her stories. Pern and flying dragons and thread existed. It had to—it was too real not to.

Once I began writing, though, I realized world building didn’t merely refer to an impossible world on another planet—it was any fictitious setting an author created as the framework for her story. Whether it’s for a Regency, a contemporary romance, science fiction, paranormal or steampunk alternate reality, the world as the author sees it is the same world the reader enters. Whether it’s a real world or not doesn’t matter—in order for the story to work, it has to feel real.

So, what’s it take to write a world the reader accepts and believes? My first thought is, a set of brass balls. If you don’t write it with authority, who’s going to believe you? Yasmine Galenorn does this with her *Otherworld* series. The stories are set in Seattle, but not a Seattle any of us will visit, other than through the pages of her books. Yasmine knows magic and she knows the world of the fae, and that knowledge comes through loud and clear. She writes her stories as if she believes the world is real, and her sense of what is and what isn’t comes through with an almost visceral impact. JR Ward does it with her *Black Dagger Brotherhood*—I will never be able to associate the scent of baby powder with babies again—nope, I think of Lessers. What of Alyssa Day and her *Warriors of Poseidon*? Yes, there are definitely vampires in America’s Congress. No doubt about it.

Alternate realities, a historical time we’ve never really experienced—whatever the world your story inhabits should be powerful enough and filled

with enough unique detail that your reader is drawn in and feels that world enveloping them when they read your story. So, what’s the secret?

Well, there really isn’t one beyond writing it with authority, and sometimes that can happen merely by accident. Case in point...

I didn’t set out to build a world with *Wolf Tales*, mainly because I didn’t have a clue how to do it. I just knew that there were certain rules my Chanku had to follow in order to make the characters believable. Little did I know those same rules were building a world that was just a step outside of the one we actually inhabit. In retrospect, the rules I set for my characters to follow also set the boundaries for their world. Somehow, they work, though I have to admit I had no idea what I was doing was “world building” until I read a review that told me what a great job I was doing. And yes, it was the proverbial “duh?” moment.

I write by instinct more than by any set of rules. I don’t plot—I sit down and imagine my characters and ask them what’s going on. Thank goodness they tell me, or I’d be in deep trouble. When I decided to write *Wolf Tales*, though, there was a semblance of a plan—a friend of mine was starting a new publishing house in 2004, and asked me to write a short, hot story to help her launch the new business. We talked about what was popular and decided shapeshifters were big. I had a short story I’d written as a freebie for a readers’ list about a woman who wrecks her car in a blizzard, and is rescued by a man who makes love to her throughout the night. She awakens on the side of the road the next morning with no idea who he was.

Not one to waste a thousand-word story, I used it as the opening to my first *Wolf Tales*, which I knew was going to be an ongoing serial. I had no idea where it was going, but once I decided to turn my man into a shapeshifter who’d gotten caught in the

midst of shifting, I was on my way. I decided to make my shapeshifters turn into wolves and did a bit of research on the critters. When I discovered a subspecies of wolf native to the Tibetan steppe called, locally, Chanku, my series suddenly found its focus. I already knew my shapeshifters were going to be a lost species, though at that point, I had no idea where they were lost from. Still, I thought being lost sounded pretty cool. Now I had it—they’d originated in Tibet. But why were they lost?

I had no idea. Didn’t figure that out until I wrote *Wolf Tales VII* and then learned more details in *Wolf Tales 9*. I finally got all the answers in *Wolf Tales 12*, which is the final book in the series. There are lots of answers in that one, thank goodness, or I imagine my readers would never forgive me.

It so happens I have the world’s worst memory—seriously bad. I’ve had multiple sclerosis for over twenty-five years, and it can really mess with cognitive abilities, so whether it’s from that or just the fact that I’m getting REAL old, I have to write everything down and hope I don’t lose the notes. So, from the beginning of my series, I kept notes as I wrote. When something happened that impacted my characters, I added it to my list. I don’t know about you, but when I write, things will come out of my characters’ mouths that I had no idea were going to be part of the story. Early on, I discovered that my Chanku needed certain grasses native to Tibet to allow them to shift, and they were a matriarchal society. The more I thought about that, I decided that the one thing that can truly give a woman power is control over her fertility, ergo, in my world, once she has the grasses and becomes Chanku, she can only become pregnant in her wolvern form when mating with another Chanku who is also wolf, and only if she consciously releases an egg.

That led to another question—what

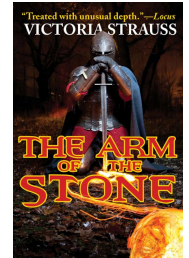
*(Continued on page 9)*



# The Impatient Writer's Approach to World Building

**Beliefs, laws, core premises, and principles.**

Multi-published author of YA fantasies **Victoria Strauss** talks about building a world in bits and pieces.



**I**'m an impatient writer. I don't enjoy prep work, especially the kind of detailed preparation needed to create a believable imaginary world. When I first began writing, my solution was to wing it. I'd take an idea and plunge right in, letting the story take me where it would and allowing the world to develop spontaneously.

The problem was that I constantly wrote myself into corners. I'd get to a point where I'd realize that what I wanted to happen couldn't happen, because of some social custom or rule of magic I'd set up earlier. Or where something had to happen that I didn't want to happen, for the same reason. This gave me the choice of going back

and changing what I'd originally written—which of course had a ripple effect, necessitating many other changes for consistency's sake—or switching the direction of the narrative. If you make enough of these kinds of shifts over the course of a novel, it begins to show. It's also an incredibly frustrating way of proceeding.

I realized that I needed to find some discipline (in all aspects of my writing, not just worldbuilding, but that's a different story). Over the years I've worked out an approach that's a compromise between my natural hastiness and the need for consistency in the development of an imaginary reality. Before I do anything else, I make sure that I have a firm grasp of

my world's core principles. But the details—the shape and nature of the actual places my plot takes me—aren't developed until I get to them in the course of writing.

Here are the core principles for my novel *The Arm of the Stone*: a parallel world where technology is regarded as deadly to magic; a medieval lifestyle artificially maintained by draconian limitations on technological practice; a repressive ruling group driven by a fanatical anti-tech ideology, hoarding all magical power for itself, and bolstering its authority by its possession of a mysterious, godlike talisman.

The initial idea came to me via a friend's dream. (This is how I usually  
(Continued on page 17)

*(The Rules...continued from page 8)*

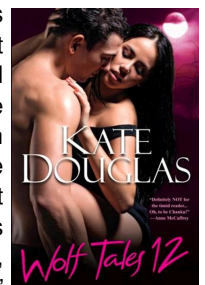
makes Chanku shift? Something in the grasses, obviously, but how? A little more research led to the decision that it would have to be something to do with an actual change in the brain—I decided to add a small gland near the hypothalamus that would develop after the proper nutrients were added to the diet, but there needed to be symptoms of change consistent to all the Chanku, so I gave them an increasingly more powerful libido (since this was erotic romance) and added a few uncomfortable things like itchy, twitchy skin. Do you see where I'm going with this?

One thing leads to another and then to another, all concepts that are somehow connected, and they combine to create a unique setting. My early notes have phrases like "inborn sense of integrity and honor," and "Alpha male will always defer to the alpha bitch." Things that occurred within the context of a story and would then remain consistent in my world—a world in which shapeshifters can and do exist.

In my *DemonSlayers* series, I played off existing legends surrounding the Mount Shasta area in northern

California, which is believed to be a huge energy vortex as well as home to an ancient alien race called Lemurians. Another area known for energy vortexes is in Sedona, Arizona, so I used the existing information about vortexes and Lemurians in both sites and then twisted everything to fit the needs of my story. By writing about things that a lot of my readers were already familiar with and then altering the information just enough to fit the world I wanted, I ended up with a world that almost exists, already, and definitely exists within the pages of the stories. *StarFire*, the newest release in the series, makes use of real facts, factoids and pure fantasy, but it's all written as if it's real, as if the Lemurians really did enslave their warrior women in the caves deep inside the dormant volcano known as Mount Shasta, as if stepping through an energy vortex can quickly transport a person from northern California to Arizona in a matter of seconds. It's all about writing it as if you believe it, and backing it up with enough facts—make-believe or real—to give it the authority to convince a reader you're telling them the God's honest truth.

My personal feeling is that there really aren't rules for world building, beyond the ones you set down yourself. You are the creator, and that phrase so many of us love to fall back on, "My world, my rules" truly fits. Your characters will inhabit their world—your world—and if it's written with authority, if it's a world you can truly believe in, you're going to bring your readers right along with you. That's really what counts, and believe me, when you get it right it makes for one hell of a ride. 🐺



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[KateDouglas-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:KateDouglas-subscribe@yahoo.com)

Easy reading  
is damn hard writing.

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Crimes of Passion...  
Craving. Lust.  
Sins that Torment...  
Parry. Thrust.  
Striking deadly  
With love's dart.  
Blood and Rapture  
Heart To Heart.

# LOVE & OTHER CRIMES

August 19-21, 2011  
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Auckland

## Pitching at Conference

Delegates who register for conference can book pitch appointments (up to 10 minutes, depending whom you're pitching to) with an editor and / or agent. Only book a pitch if you have a completed manuscript (if the editor asks to see your manuscript, you need to be ready to send it!) that fits with what the editor or agent is looking to acquire. To figure that out, see our notes here and in future issues of H2H, and check out the publishers' and agent's submission guidelines.

Pitch places are always in great demand, and they're generally allocated on a first in, first served basis. You can apply for more than one pitch, but depending on demand you may not get more than one slot. The registration form will ask you to rank your pitch requests in order of preference.

### Who's hearing pitches?

**Jessica Faust**, Agent, BookEnds Literary Agency.

**Lucy Gilmour**, Editor, Harlequin Mills & Boon (category and single title manuscripts)

**Angela James**, Editor, Carina Press  
[www.carinapress.com](http://www.carinapress.com)

**Katie Haworth**, Editor, Penguin NZ

**Harriet Allan**, Publisher, Random House NZ

**Jenny Hellen**, Editor, Random House NZ

**USA Editor**, TBA

## Ten Things You Need to Know About Love & Other Crimes

1. Friday Night Cocktail Party Theme: Royally Romantic—think Wills and Kate's royal wedding, or Mills & Boon sheikhs and European principalities. Wear the crown jewels, a tiara, royal colours—you choose!
2. Saturday Night Awards Dinner Theme—Romance World Cup—wear black and white to support the All Blacks in the Rugby World Cup (non-Kiwis may choose to vary the colour scheme!)
3. Crowne Plaza Hotel's delegate accommodation rate for our conference is \$128 per night, including GST. Book online at <http://bit.ly/hJn2oj> (that'll take you directly to our group booking rate), or call Crowne Plaza on 0800 801 111 and quote the group name ROMANCE WRITERS, or email [res1@crowneplazaaukland.co.nz](mailto:res1@crowneplazaaukland.co.nz), again quoting the group name.
4. This year you won't need to pre-select your breakout workshops on Saturday and Sunday—yay! You'll have plenty of time to consider your options and change your mind several times over...
5. We hope to have online conference booking available by the time you receive this newsletter—save a stamp and book online at [www.romancewriters.co.nz/conference](http://www.romancewriters.co.nz/conference)
6. We will once again be running our popular early morning bonus "cold read" sessions—four of them! Turn up at 7am on Friday and Saturday with the first two pages of your manuscript for critiquing by an editor or agent. More details to come.
7. Look out for details of our Meet the Agent contest—**Jessica Faust** of BookEnds has agreed to judge a contest ahead of conference and to meet the five finalists to talk about their entries.
8. Ditto re our Meet the Editor contest—**Angela James** of Carina Press will also judge a contest for us. Details next month!
9. To book a pitch with Jessica Faust or one of our international editors, you must be registered for the weekend conference. Some pitches with NZ-based editors will be allocated to Friday-only delegates.
10. Love & Other Crimes offers three full days of workshops and talks, along with a number of social events. Check out the registration form for more details, plus visit [www.romancewriters.co.nz](http://www.romancewriters.co.nz) for regular updates.

## Kiwi Editors @ Love & Other Crimes


This year, as well as our overseas editors and publishing professionals, we'll have a local publishing presence at the RWNZ conference. The following editors will be available for pitch appointments:

**Harriet Allan**, publisher at Random House NZ, is interested in chick lit, women's fiction, historical fiction (mainly NZ set, but not necessarily).

"From fairly popular in style up to literary," she says. Crime and mystery are a harder sell, she warns, "but if it's fantastic, that doesn't really matter." She's looking for stories that "speak to New Zealand women directly", so even if they're not set locally, there'll likely be some kind of connection that resonates with New Zealand readers.

**Jenny Hellen**, editor at Random House NZ, acquires young adult fiction of all kinds—contemporary, historical, dystopia/fantasy ("more dystopia rather

than classic fantasy"). Manuscripts should be over 40,000 words, and do not need to be set in NZ. "I suggest people check out our website and our NZ YA books," Jenny says.  
[www.randomhouse.co.nz](http://www.randomhouse.co.nz)

**Katie Haworth**, Commissioning Editor Fiction and Children's at Penguin Group NZ, will be talking on local trends and what Penguin is looking for during Maria V. Snyder's Friday workshop. She will also be hearing pitches for YA and other fiction. 

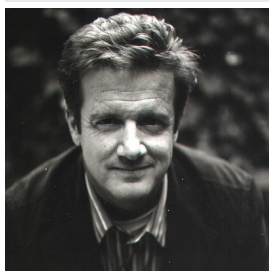
**Be obscure clearly**  
E. B. White

# THE LINE-UP

## Tess Gerritsen—New York Times-bestselling author

Internationally bestselling author Tess Gerritsen took an unusual route to a writing career. A graduate of Stanford University, Tess went on to medical school at the University of California, San Francisco, where she was awarded her M.D.

While on maternity leave from her work as a physician she began to write fiction. In 1987, her first novel was published. *Call After Midnight*, a romantic thriller, was followed by eight more romantic suspense novels. Tess's first medical thriller, *Harvest*, was released in hardcover in 1996, and it marked her debut on the New York Times bestseller list. Her books have been translated into 37 languages, and more than 20 million copies have been sold around the world.



## Bob Mayer—NYT-bestselling author, writing coach & digital publishing expert

Bob Mayer is the best-selling author of more than 40 books. His fiction books—thrillers, suspense and romantic suspense novels—have hit the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Publishers Weekly, USA Today and other best-seller lists. His book *Warrior Writer: From Writer to Successful Author* helps writers use the Who Dares Wins concepts, and his Warrior Writer workshop, which helps writers set objectives for their writing and manage their careers, has been attended in electronic or face-to-face format by thousands of writers.

More recently, Bob Mayer has responded to the challenges writers face in a world where digital publishing is playing an ever greater role. He established Who Dares Wins Publishing initially as a vehicle to republish his older, backlist titles in electronic format. Since then, the venture has expanded to advise writers about directions in digital publishing, and to provide a publication platform for authors. Bob Mayer is a leading commentator on the digital publishing debate via his Write It Forward blog—<http://writeitforward.wordpress.com/>

## Molly O'Keefe—RITA-Award winning author

Molly O'Keefe is a RITA-Award winning author with 18 Harlequin novels in publication. She's won the Romantic Times Reviewers Choice award for Best Flipside in 2005 and Best Superromance in 2008. She won the RITA for Best Novella in 2010. Her first Bantam Contemporary Romance, *Can't Buy Me* will be released in 2011. She lives in Toronto, Canada with her family and the largest heap of dirty laundry in North America.



## Maria V. Snyder—NYTimes-bestselling author of YA fantasy & dystopian fiction

Born and raised in Philadelphia, PA, Maria V. Snyder studied meteorology at Penn State University. After writing many science fiction short stories, Maria started *Poison Study*, her first young adult fantasy novel about a food taster. Published in October 2005, *Poison Study* won three awards, was nominated for four others, and received a starred review from Publisher's Weekly.

Maria's second book, *Magic Study*, was published in October 2006 and was a 2006 Booksense pick. *Magic Study* also finaled for the RITA Award. Maria's third book, *Fire Study*, was published in March 2008 and spent two weeks on the New York Times Bestsellers List. Maria's next book, *Storm Glass*, was released in April 2009. Most recently, Maria's young adult dystopian thriller titled *Inside Out* was released in 2010. Her second book in the series is due out in March 2011.

Maria has a Master of Arts degree in Writing Popular Fiction from Seton Hill University. She teaches fiction writing classes at her local college, encouraging novice writers.

## Other Worlds

Friday Seminar Programme \* 1:00pm-5:45pm Friday 19 August

Writing Fantasy and Paranormal with New York Times-bestselling YA author Maria V. Snyder

### Blurring the Lines of Fantasy—Maria V. Snyder

Elements of the fantasy genre can be found lurking in various popular novels, from mainstream to romance. And a few new sub-genre categories have become hot. So what is the difference between urban fantasy and paranormal romance? Is vampire fiction becoming its own genre? Is there a difference between the supernatural and the magical? This workshop will focus on

the range of magical systems and supernatural powers, and how, in the end, everything must follow certain rules and genre conventions. The class will also involve a writing exercise.

### Trends in Fantasy / Paranormal—Maria V. Snyder

#### Afternoon Tea

### Fantastical Action Scenes—Maria V. Snyder

Let's face it, action scenes are difficult to write. Writers must find the perfect balance between description, dialogue, inner dialogue and character emotions. And we all know action scenes in movies and on TV shows are unrealistic at best, and often impossible without the aid of special effects. This module will cover all aspects of the action/fight scene for fantasy writers. From fighting with swords,

(Continued on page 13)

\* subject to change





# The Short Synopsis Outline

## Which synopsis type is best for your book?

#1 NYT Best selling author **Lisa Gardner** walks us through both the Character focused and the Plot focused synopsis outlines from Lecture Seven in her ten-part "[Conquering the Dreaded Synopsis](#)" series.

**N**ow that you have written a compelling opening and have identified the key information to include in the main body of your synopsis, you need a good organization system for your thoughts. In all honesty, there is no wrong way to structure a synopsis. You can introduce characters by Zodiac sign if you want, as long as your writing is strong and your logic clear.

For most writers, however, having a generic outline is very helpful. This way you know that you have included all the relevant information in a logical manner. I've played around with many outlines in my time. Following are the two I like best.

The first is a character-focused outline, which is great for targeting editors who care more about the character or romance angle of your story. (See Lecture One on the market.) The second outline is for plot-focused works and is great for snapshotting your brilliant suspense novel.

In each outline, I've used details from my first suspense novel, *The Perfect Husband*, to help flesh out the examples. If you're still unclear about what constitutes a plot point, please refer back to Lecture Six. Hope you enjoy.

### Short Synopsis Outlines

#### The Character-Focused Synopsis

This is a great approach for Harlequin/Silhouette or any other romance-oriented publisher.

This outline is courtesy of Dee Holmes who has written for Silhouette IM, Silhouette Special Edition, Avon, and Berkley. Dee is a self-proclaimed "out-of-the-mist" writer, meaning she hates to know the story before she writes it. If you are also an "out-of-the-mist" writer, this method works well as it focuses on character conflicts instead of specific plot points. Thus you can provide a preview of your novel, without learning so much about the story that you lose

interest in writing it. This outline is also a nice exercise for character development.

**Hook:** Either a unique opening line from a character's perspective, or a snappy/humorous/dramatic opening line previewing the book's premise. From *The Perfect Husband*,

*Tess Williams knows about fear. She knows how the floorboards in an old house can creak at night, each stair giving way as a shadowy man comes closer, closer, closer. For Tess Williams, that man was her own husband, coming to get her after she turned him over to the police for allegedly killing eight women. That night began with her husband attacking her with a baseball bat while their four-year old daughter slept down the hall. That night ended with Tess firing the shot that finally wounded Jim enough to halt the attack. Jim went to jail. Tess and her daughter tried to get on with their lives. But now Jim Beckett has broken out of prison. He has killed two prison guards. He has promised to come after his ex-wife. Tess Williams knows about fear...*

**Internal Conflict:** Two paragraphs, one for the heroine and one for the hero, describing their relevant backstory and the key internal conflicts they must overcome to find love. You want to focus on the layers here—the past marriages, relationships with parents, or pivotal trauma that has molded your character and made her who she is. This internal conflict will be overcome during the black moment, when your character realizes her weakness/fear and leaves it behind in the name of love.

**External Conflict:** One paragraph, usually the set-up that brings the hero and heroine together and establishes the external conflict blocking their way. Could be the hit man trying to kill them, the brother's name to clear, the serial killer ex-husband, etc.

#### Hero and Heroine Work Together:

First plot point that makes the hero and heroine temporarily overlook their differences to work together. In *The Perfect Husband (TPH)*, it would be when the hero, J.T., decides against his better judgment to take on the heroine, Tess, as a client. So the external conflict makes the hero and heroine join forces despite their reservations.

**Intimacy:** The forced contact of working together and of course, raging attraction, make the hero and heroine (h/h) succumb to physical intimacy—whether first kiss, make love, whatever. For *TPH*, I'd skip to their first sex scene, since in three pages I don't have space to go over each "almost" moment.

**Morning After:** H/H promptly remember all their fears, fall back on their internal conflicts and reject each other. In *TPH*, J.T. falls back on his fear of commitment, not wanting to get involved, etc., etc.

**H/h Work Together Again:** Next big plot complication brings h/h back together. For example, Jim Beckett kidnaps Tess's daughter and J.T. promptly vows to help Tess do whatever is necessary to get her daughter back.

**Showdown / Black Moment:** In *TPH*, the big showdown is Tess's decision to serve as bait for her ex-husband. Jim Beckett then storms the safe house and kills everyone in his path. This leads to Tess's black moment, when she must face down her fear and find the internal reserves to take on Beckett. She shoots him, thereby saving J.T.'s life, but also more importantly, proving to herself that she is no longer a victim.

**Resolution:** The bad guys are revealed/caught. H/H live happily ever after.

#### Plot-Focused Synopsis

The Plot-Focused Synopsis outlines key plot points and would be good for

(Continued on page 13)

(The Short Synopsis...continued from page 12)  
mainstream submissions where character issues are of secondary importance.

**Hook:** Same as above

**Heroine Intro:** Who the heroine is, her primary goal and motivation. For Tess Williams in *TPH*, it would be that after spending two years running in fear from her ex-husband, she's determined to take a stand for herself and her daughter. All she wants is someone to train her in the business of death.

**Hero Intro:** Who the hero is, his primary goal and motivation. J.T. is a drunken ex-mercenary who wants to be left alone. He believes he has failed all the people who were important to him, and the only emotions he allows himself now are self-loathing and rage. He carries a great deal of rage.

**Villain Intro:** Who the antagonist is, his primary goal and motivation. Jim Beckett, former police officer and husband, is a psychopath. He killed ten women before his wife and local authorities put him away. Now escaped from prison, he has declared revenge upon everyone who put him there, especially his traitorous ex-wife, Tess.

**Setup / Plot Point One:** Tess shows up at J.T.'s ranch asking for help. He refuses but, when she passes out, ends up having to give her a room for the night. Facing a fresh round of persistent arguments in the morning, he half-heartedly agrees to train her.

**Plot Point Two:** Beckett infiltrates the police task force to learn the status of his investigation. He then leaves the cops a pointed message (dead body) that he's still interested in finding his wife and capable of using the police to do it.

**Plot Point Three:** J.T.'s sister, an FBI agent, pays an unexpected visit. She is concerned by Tess's presence and tracks down Tess's real identity by sending her fingerprints to the local police. Marion is aghast to learn that Tess is in legitimate danger from her psychopathic ex-husband and, worse, Marion has just compromised her safety by involving the local police. Everyone knows Jim Beckett is very good at getting information from the cops. Now, everyone fears Jim Beckett will head to Arizona, and Tess isn't ready to face down her ex-husband.

**Turning Point 1:** Jim Beckett does not head to Arizona. He heads to central Massachusetts where he kills a police officer and kidnaps his own daughter. The police mobilize in an even bigger way... but Jim Beckett is nowhere to be found.

**Plot Point Four:** Tess returns to Massachusetts against all advice, determined to face down her husband. Jim Beckett promptly attacks Tess and J.T. at the crime scene. Only J.T.'s combat skills get them out alive. They are both injured... but now so is Jim Beckett.

**Turning Point 2:** Tess decides to lay a trap for her husband with herself as bait. She will wait out in their old house, knowing that Beckett cannot resist the challenge of coming after her. Once and for all, it will be done.

**Resolution:** Jim Beckett comes after Tess. By killing an FBI agent downtown, then taking out one of the rooftop snipers, he splits the protective task force, and descends upon his terrified wife. He is no match, however, for the combined force of J.T. and Tess. Beckett is killed. Tess's little girl is recovered alive. Family reunited.

## Conclusion

While there is no right or wrong way to organize a short synopsis, utilizing any given outline can be very helpful. Something like a character-focused outline can help you highlight the romance element of your novel for the discerning romance editor. Likewise, the plot-focused structure can help distill a complicated thriller into a tight reading experience for the suspense-savvy editor. Knowing the preferences of your target publisher will help you choose the right approach for your synopsis.

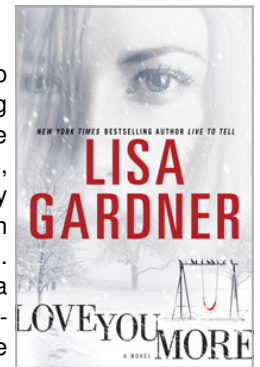
Then, have fun with the outline. Work on a commanding opening and a clear summary of key scenes. Short synopses are never as enjoyable as novels, but they can be tolerable. 🧠

©2000 Lisa Gardner. Used with permission.

Lisa's latest book *Love You More* is now available.

"Detective D.D. Warren and former police sniper Bobby Dodge team up to investigate a Massachusetts State Trooper, Tessa Leoni, who has shot and killed her husband in their Boston home. On the surface, this is the case of a battered wife pushed to the brink, but Tessa's 6-year-old daughter is missing and Tessa isn't talking. D.D. Warren needs to find out how far a mother will go to protect someone she loves in *Love You More* by Lisa Gardner."

You can find out about Lisa and her books at [www.lisagardner.com](http://www.lisagardner.com)



(Other Worlds...continued from page 11)  
knives, and other unconventional weapons to using magic, we'll also look at self-defense techniques. Wear comfortable shoes as this is an interactive module!

### Fiction for the New Zealand Market—Katie Haworth

Katie Haworth, editor at Penguin New Zealand, will talk about fiction trends and what Penguin is looking for in Young Adult and other genres.

### Live by the Sword—Nic Harrison

Back by huge demand after last year's conference, swords expert Nic Harrison and his team will share their

comprehensive knowledge of sword technology and sword-fighting styles. The weapons Nic has been known to wield in workshops like this include: sabre, rapier, side-sword and dagger, sword and buckler, long sword, two-handed sword, dual swords. Indispensable for writers of paranormal, fantasy, and historical fiction.

(\*programme is subject to alteration)

A synonym is a word you use  
when  
you can't spell the other one.

Baltasar Gracian

## When Good Links Go Bad

"... there is a nifty little free website called TinyURL: <http://tinyurl.com/> which you might find useful to get around broken hyperlinks in emails. It's a very well-known website, so people are confident about clicking a TinyURL link. And I use it so much that I've bookmarked the website and added a link to my browser." Maree Anderson

"I use tinyurl all the time... the preview function is... a double-check that the link is to the page you intended... and for those of you who are a bit more tech-savvy and who have your own websites, there's <http://bit.ly/> that does the same as tinyurl but you can also use it for gathering info on the traffic on your site." Margaret Carr



# The Synopsis Template

***Love them or hate them you still gotta write them.***

***Katie Ganshert shares a twelve-paragraph template she uses to structure the synopses for her contemporary romances.***

**T**ake my 100,000-word novel and condense it into a few pages? No thank you. It feels like I'm taking a brand new outfit and dicing it up until only the buttons and a string of fabric remains.

Despite my lack of love for the synopsis, every novelist who writes for publication needs to know how to write one, and how to write one well.

Over the past few weeks, I've been spinning two potential story ideas through my brain. In order to flesh them out, I decided I would write the premise, back cover blurb, and a synopsis for each of the two ideas. I was floundering with my first synopsis. Until last week.

Stories have structure. At least they should. So I took a hodgepodge of structure points from Jim Bell's book, *Plot and Structure*, Susan May Warren and Rachel Hauck's blog, *My Book Therapy*, and Dwight Swain's book, *Techniques for the Selling Writer*, and used these points to create a synopsis template.

After I created the template, writing the synopsis got a whole lot easier.

Here it is, for you to use if you'd like. Keep in mind I write romance. Also keep in mind, that while every story has a structure, it is not this rigid thing. You're allowed to move around the paragraphs to best fit your story. I find that paragraphs nine through eleven are particularly fluid.

## Synopsis Template for Romance:

### First paragraph:

Introduce the heroine (include the lie she believes, her greatest fear, and/or her greatest dream) and her disturbance. What event interrupts the status quo of her normal life?

### Second paragraph:

Introduce the hero (include the lie he believes, his greatest fear, and/or his greatest dream) and his disturbance. What event interrupts the status quo of his normal life?

### Third paragraph:

The first doorway. What hurls hero and heroine into the story to the point where they can't turn back?

### Fourth paragraph:

Heroine's statement of story goal and her motivation for the goal.

### Fifth paragraph:

Hero's statement of story goal and his motivation for the goal.

### Sixth paragraph:

Turning point. How do things get worse and how does the goal matter even more for hero or heroine?

### Seventh paragraph:

Another turning point. How do things get even worse and how does the goal matter even more for the hero or heroine?

### Eighth paragraph:

Second doorway. What is the catalyst that hurls hero and heroine into their black moments?

### Ninth paragraph:

Heroine's black moment and epiphany. The point where the lie she believes is overwhelming, her biggest fear comes true, which leads to her discovery of the truth (freedom from the lie).

### Tenth paragraph:


Hero's black moment and epiphany. The point where the lie he believes is overwhelming, his biggest fear comes true, which leads to his discovery of the truth (freedom from the lie).

### Eleventh paragraph:

The climax. What situation will force hero or heroine to choose between two concrete, alternative, irrevocable courses of action? One way leads to hero or heroine accomplishing his/her goal. The other leads to hero or heroine sacrificing goal for the sake of love and/or principle.

### Twelfth paragraph:

The Resolution. What results because of the hero or heroine's choice? Since I write romance, this typically involves a kiss and a profession of love.

And there you have it. Twelve paragraphs to sum up an entire novel. I hope you find it useful! 

**Katie Ganshert writes faith-based contemporary romance, which means her novels have one thing in common: a guy and a girl fall in love (after lots of tension-filled roadblocks) and wrestle with the Christian faith.**

Her agent is Rachelle Gardner

<http://katieganshert.blogspot.com/>

## LOVE & OTHER CRIMES

BOB MAYER'S ONE-DAY NOVEL WRITING SEMINAR—FRIDAY AUGUST 19

9:00-9:50	The Original Idea—The Heart of Your Story and Key to Selling Your Book
10:00-10:50	Plot and Outline: The Events of Your Story
11:00-11:50	Point of View: The Voice of Your Story
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-1:50	Characters: The People of Your Story
2:00-2:50	Setting, Dialogue, Writer's Block and Re-Writing:
3:00-3:50	Selling and Marketing Your Book
4:00-4:50	The Current State and Future of the Publishing Business for the Writer

## YOUR OPINION

How do you feel about writing synopses?

Do you write them before you write the novel or after?

What's the best tip you've ever received when it comes to writing one?

Email your thoughts and tips to your editors at [gracieoneil@xtra.co.nz](mailto:gracieoneil@xtra.co.nz)



# Showing versus Telling

## Which is better and what's the difference?

**Rachel Hauck** from "My Book Therapy" shines some light in the darkness with this quick tutorial.



**P**rimarily, showing versus telling applies to emotion. It's the author's job to show the reader what the characters are doing and feeling, to show emotions, feelings, reactions—even what a character is thinking—through action.

Telling means the author is describing emotion and reaction in prose.

Struggling to show versus tell might mean the writer doesn't know what the characters want in a scene or know the scene goal. Mostly likely, the author is trying to savor some great reveal or plot point, or the character evolution, for some slam-bam moment in the middle of the book and until she gets there, she creates a lot of prose for the reader to weed through.

Showing "pictures" the emotion, "pictures" the action—which often is related to emotion. For example, anger is shown when the character slams a door, speaks in terse, short sentences or maybe says nothing at all. But that's easy, right? Most writers know to show an emotion.

Where writers get confused and lost is showing the emotion of the scene!

Let's say our writer's book is about a woman losing her job and discovering she's not a corporate executive with a Suit for a boyfriend, but a cowboy-loving rancher.

There are a couple of ways for our writer to "mess-up" showing versus telling.

**First option.** The author has heroine driving down the highway thinking her way through her problem. She's telling us all the details and consequences.

*Rick fired her. Dirty rotten scoundrel. Marlena fumed as she drove her brand new 2011 Mercedes along I-95 toward home. She'd emptied her savings account to buy this car, as well as her downtown loft. What about her cases? Was Rick prepared to just add thirty clients to his docket? He'd regret his actions tomorrow. She was the best tax accountant in the city. Oh no, she*

*promised to help Dad and Mom put a new roof on their house. They worked so hard to put her through college. And what about the League of Women Against Tossed-out Christian Louboutins? They counted on her monthly contributions.*

Okay, as the reader we get a feel for Marlena. She's chick, smart and kind, but we feel nothing for her. In one opening paragraph we know her fears, her dilemma, her causes, but there's no emotion, no conflict, no tension, no "let's turn the page to find out what's going on." Our author gave us an info dump.

**The illusion:** The author thinks she's given us conflict and tension because Marlena is upset. But it's not so.

**Second option.** The author has the heroine showing up at a gathering of girlfriends. She keeps the disaster in her head while the dialog is about trite inconsequential events that mean nothing to the story or reveal the heart of our protagonist.

*Marlena slapped her hand on the coffee bar. "Give me a tall latte, LuAnn."*

*"Hey Marlena, how are you?" The barista reached for a tall clear cup.*

*"I'm needing a latte." She'd just lost her job, that's how she was doing. Rick Conway would regret his decision tomorrow. The moment he took her thirty clients and added them to his own case load. Then he'd remember she was the best tax accountant in the city.*

*Marlena paid for her latte and joined her girls at their table, the far one in the corner under the track lights. She sat, reaching for the Splenda. "Your hair looks good tonight, Tina."*

*"Thanks Marlena. It's the work of my new stylist." Tina glanced around the table, sipping her coffee. "So, what are our plans for the weekend, gals?"*

*Fixing my resume, thought Marlena. "Movies? Pizza. I'm in the mood for something cheap this weekend."*

*"Cheap?" Tina gawked. "This from the girl who runs an orphanage for discarded Louboutins?"*

We get a feel for Marlena. She's upset. She got fired. But we're in the same boat as the first example. No emotion. No sense of her heart, her fears. She "thinks" it all. There's no reaction from her friends to ease or heighten her fears because they don't know. Instead, she talks about hair.

**The illusion:** This scene looks like showing because the author used dialog and action, but it's still telling. As the reader, we never see or "feel" Marlena's emotions. We never see her reaction, emotionally or physically, to losing her job. What's going on inside her head? Her heart? What "lie" does she believe about herself that surfaces when she's fired? What wound or fear is mined to the surface of her heart? What dream or desires have been crushed?

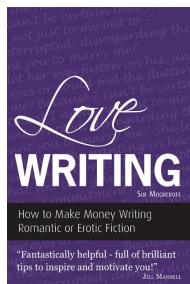
Here's an example of how our author might "show" Marlena losing her job. (Depends on the set up and goal of the scene.)

*In the parking lot of Taxes R Us, Marlena slipped her keys into the ignition of her car as the evening sun spilled through the windshield and turned the key. The engine clicked but did not fire.*

*Marlena hit the wheel with her hand. "No you don't, you expensive piece of German engineering. Not today. Not. To. Day." The beast was brand new but she'd taken it to the shop four times in two months. If she had to take it again, she was leaving it. They could afford it more than she could.*

*She turned the key again and the engine fired up, rumbling low, matching the sobs of her heart. Checking her review, Marlena shifted into reverse with cold, weak fingers. She paused at the image of her blood shot eyes. She didn't want to cry when she left Rick's office, but two steps down the hall she had to*

*(Continued on page 18)*



# Writing Erotic Romance

*Passion, emotion, balance, and “Yessssssss!”*

**Toni Kenyon** reviews “*Love Writing*”, Sue Moorcroft’s book about writing in the romantic and erotic genre.

**T**he call went out on the loop. “We need someone who writes erotica to review a book.” Sweet. I put my hand up. “I write women’s fiction with an erotic vein, does that count?” Before I could say ‘Love and sex sell’ the book was in my letterbox courtesy of the incredibly efficient people at New Zealand Post.

The endorsement on the front cover from the London School of Journalism filled me with hope. “Well-written and detailed—this is an excellent introduction to the art of writing in the romantic and erotic genre.”

I sat down with an expectation that I was to be led on a journey of discovery that would give me the much-needed vital clues I was missing. As an unpublished writer I am always anxious to improve my craft and knowledge so that I can (a) snare the elusive agent and (b) get “The Call”.

With the above in mind, I don’t think I took enough notice of the word “introduction” in the Journalism School’s endorsement. I am not dissing the book, which is well written, well researched and full of fascinating little side trips (read web addresses) which encouraged me to spend far too many precious hours meandering around the internet. I am just saying after the number of years I have spent with RWNZ, my expectation this book would be an advanced course in ‘how to’ turned out to be quite wrong. It’s the old, old cliché: don’t judge a book by its cover.

## So really, what is this book about?

Sue Moorcroft is a long serving member of the Romantic Novelists’ Association and she has amassed an army of experts to comment throughout. Hence my dainty little side-trips through the world wide web.

*Love Writing* is broken down into chapters covering the basics of heroes and heroines, viewpoint, emotion and

mood, sensuality (from sizzle to erotica), plot, genre, markets for your work, networking and what to do when you do (or don’t) get the call.

Inside of each of these chapters, *Love Writing* gives the aspiring romance writer a look at specific points. If you have ever worried (as so many of us have) about what that elusive ‘emotional punch’ is that everyone talks about, then **Tessa Shapcott**, executive editor from Harlequin Mills & Boon answers that question. Of course, then there is another one of those pesky world wide web addresses to follow!

Terrified to write those really erotic and highly charged sexy scenes? You will find some great tips from **Penny Jordan** on how to loosen your writing inhibitions. Need to know how to keep the passion alive throughout the book? **Elizabeth Bailey** can help you with that problem.

If you are contemplating dipping your toe in the erotica pool, then there are some useful definitions and suggestions, including five tips from **Maxim Jakubowski**, editor and writer, along with what’s hot and what’s not, and an interesting explanation on balance and pacing in explicit sex scenes from erotic fiction writer **Madeleine Oh**.

Struggling with ‘Show, don’t tell’? Then the chapter on “Act, React and Interact” is for you. Explanations and examples are supplemented with exercises to help embed the information for the aspiring romance writer.

There are also some great exercises contained in this chapter for honing your written dialogue skills.

“Plot v Ideas” is found in the last chapter of what I would describe as the ‘instruction on writing’ portion of the book. The balance of *Love Writing* (just under half of the book) covers what I would describe as the business side of writing. It covers genre, where to send your work, self-publishing, agents, networking and useful resources.

There is also a ‘how to’ on synopsis

writing and query letters, both of which are helpful tools for the aspiring romance writer.

The chapter entitled, “Yessssssssss!” is, of course, dedicated to what to do when you get the call. From contracts through edits and revisions, promotion and money, including the difficult question of whether or not you can make a living out of writing romantic fiction.

## What others have said about it?

*‘Fantastically helpful—full of brilliant tips to inspire and motivate you.’*—Best-selling author Jill Mansell

*‘The modern bible for anyone writing romantic fiction in whatever genre.’* — Writer’s News

## Will it work for me?

I think you have to ask yourself what level you are at in your writing. In my opinion, this ‘how to’ book is excellent for somebody who has relatively little knowledge of the romance writing genre, perhaps a beginner who is finding their way through the romance industry maze. Let’s face it—many of us have been there.

*Love Writing* covers many aspects of the industry, but may not give the seasoned or die hard conference junkie, the specific and deep knowledge she is looking for.

What this book **did** give me (as the seasoned and die hard conference junkie) were some specific ‘aha’ moments and a plethora of experts to Google and websites to visit for further research.

**Gold Stars?** I’ll give it four out of five. *Love Writing* is still a handy addition to anyone’s ‘how to’ collection. 📖

**Toni Kenyon** lives in Auckland with her partner (and their two dogs) her son (and his cat) – the goldfish is just squatting! She’s a Registered Legal Executive by day and sings in a band by night. In her spare (yeah, right) time she continues to pursue the dream of one day getting ‘the call’. Visit her website at [www.tonikenyon.com](http://www.tonikenyon.com) or her band’s website at [www.slyriders.com](http://www.slyriders.com)

Language is the dress of thought.

Samuel Johnson

*(The Impatient Writer...continued from page 9)*  
get book ideas: odd things I read, interesting things people tell me. Sometimes it's the story I think of first, sometimes the alternate reality; with *The Arm of the Stone*, the world came first). In the dream, my friend traveled to a place where magic was possible only because technology was rigorously restricted. I became intrigued by the question of what sort of world that would be. Would the restriction be based on a natural law—i.e. magic and technology are intrinsically incompatible—or an ideology—i.e. people only think they are? What would the lifestyle be? What mechanisms of enforcement would be involved?

I decided to make the incompatibility between magic and technology a belief, rather than a law of nature. Belief systems are a fascination of mine, and the idea of an anti-tech ideology that might or might not be based on truth seemed to offer more plot possibilities than a natural law. Also, I didn't feel I could come up with a reasonable explanation for such a law, and I dislike books where situations exist "just because." So the people of my world believe that technology kills magic, and they believe it as if it were a natural law. Whether it is or isn't is an important theme in both *The Arm of the Stone* and its sequel.

I was then faced with the question of why such a belief should arise. How can you be violently opposed to something unless you've actually seen it in action, or think you have? There had to be some past experience of rampant technology, an evil memory that had become an essential part of the belief system.

I came up with several possibilities: a high-tech society that had destroyed itself and been replaced by a magical one, a high-tech society that repressed magic and then was overthrown by it, and the option I chose, that my imaginary world had splintered off from our own "real" world, when developing technology began to crowd out the old magical and mystical ways. I didn't want fully-developed technology to exist only in the past; I wanted there to be a parallel reality that the people of my world could visit from time to time, in order to feed their anti-tech zeal.

It seemed to me that the lifestyle of my world would be more or less medieval—not just because anti-tech ideology would make it a pre-machine culture, but because the ideologues, in

their fervor, would cripple the practice of technology beyond what was really necessary. I was a bit concerned by the fact that the generic medieval world is a major fantasy cliché. But it seemed to me that what's most generic about these worlds is that they're so often presented as existing on the same social/technical level for centuries, without any explanation for why this should be so, as if the mere presence of magic precluded cultural development. In my world, the stasis had a clear and artificial cause, which I thought provided a sufficiently different take on medievalism. (I should say that some readers didn't buy this. I've gotten otherwise positive feedback that takes me to task for not using a more original setting!)

I had the ideology, then, and the lifestyle. But ideologies don't exist independent of groups. I needed an organization that could embody the anti-tech belief system—and also enforce it, since repressive beliefs need a lot of policing. I like to use real-world models whenever possible; I think an imaginary world gains depth not just by being strange and different, but also by being recognizable. Because I wanted my anti-tech ideology to have a strong religious flavor, I decided to model my organization after the medieval Christian church.

Thus the Order of Guardians was born. It has a central seat of power, like the Vatican. Its members receive training and take vows, as in a religious order. It's ruled by a single spiritual leader, like the Pope. It governs by means of Dioceses—controlled by the equivalent of Archbishops—and parishes—administered by the equivalent of priests. It has Scriptures, in the form of the Books of Limits, which set forth the precise means by which technology is to be restricted. Like the medieval church, it's an entrenched bureaucracy concerned as much with its own preservation as with its spiritual mission. Also like the medieval church, it hoards wealth: all wealth, including magic. Last but definitely not least, it has an Inquisition: the Arm of the Stone, charged with the investigation and punishment of those who transgress the Limits.

It seemed to me, however, that even the Guardians' semi-religious ideology wasn't enough to explain why people would accept their rule and adopt their core beliefs. For an oppressive system to endure for a long period of time,

people have to buy into it. Why should someone who has no magic care whether or not technology threatens magic's existence?

Inventing a deity whose will the Guardians could claim to be fulfilling seemed like an unnecessary complication. Making the Guardians the possessors of some mysterious power that enabled them to hold sway artificially seemed like cheating. In the end, I decided to combine the two ideas. I gave the Guardians ownership of an object known as the Stone, which has an omniscient world-consciousness and is thought to sustain reality by its contemplation of it. It's also thought to be the source of all magic. By teaching the populace to believe in the Stone as a kind of god, the Guardians can present their anti-tech agenda not as mere ideology, but as a mission in service of a higher power. As custodians of both the mission and the Stone, they gain unchallengeable legitimacy as an organization.

These, then, were my core premises for *The Arm of the Stone*. I thought them out over a period of about six months, while finishing up a previous project. I then began work on formulating a plot and characters. I was most interested in the Guardians' mechanisms of enforcement, and so I decided to center my story around their Inquisition, the Arm of the Stone. In the end, I created a tale of a man who is driven by a vow of revenge to infiltrate the Arm, is seduced for a while by its ideals, and ultimately finds his way to a completely different world-view.

With plot and character in place (I do a chapter-by-chapter synopsis, and work up one- to two-page character sketches for each of the main characters), I faced the task of unfolding my core concepts into the detail required by the story: the nuts and bolts of world building. Each section of the book required me to portray a different aspect of the Guardians' rule: in the first section, the Guardians' methods of educating and punishing the populace; in the second, the Guardians' internal training systems; in the third, the special training required by the Arm of the Stone; in the fourth, the Guardians' administrative bureaucracy; in the fifth, the Guardians' ways of punishing their own.

As I mentioned above, I decided on the actual shape of these things only when it came time to write them. Before

*(Continued on page 18)*



(Showing v Telling continued from page 15)

duck into the Ladies Room. The cold, hard tile room offered little comfort.

How did she get here? What happened? From a rising sun to a fallen star. She could still hear Rick's tone, see his expression. The memory created a dark bond over her heart. She swallowed the bitter bile of rising fear.

Her phone rang, playing Michael Buble, and pulled Marlena from the precipice. She hoped it was Michael. Please, please, please.

"Marlena, Flick Dunham."

What was left of her heart shattered, leaving a ringing sound in her ears. "I can't talk now." The phone slipped in her cold, weak grip.

"That's what you said the last time."

"Nothing's changed, Flick." Marlena checked her rearview and fired out of her parking slot. Salty tears rolled down the contours of her nose and gathered at her lips.

"I can't wait any longer, Marlena."

"Then do what you have to do." She didn't wait for his answer, but pressed End and flung her phone onto the passengers seat, and ran the red light. The angles and lines of the scene beyond her dash bent in the refracted light of her tears and heading home never seemed so dark.

Here the reader "sees" Marlena upset. We know something bad has happened to her but we're not quite sure what. Her job? Her boyfriend? Was she having an affair with her boss? Is someone after her? We get a sense of her emotions, her feelings, her reaction to a disaster. There's tension. Who is Rick? Who is Michael? Who's Flick? (Rick's evil twin, mwwwahhhh.) What does she do for a living? All we've done here is set up her trouble. Even if the emotion lacks, there's enough tension and trouble to make us turn a few more pages to find out what's going on with the heroine.

The dialog relates to the action of the scene. It sets up the reader to "feel" the tension and wonder about the story question: What has happened to Marlena?

The scene is a combination of action, dialog, and prose with emotion.

The scene also has story-world. Marlena in a corporate parking lot. Sun is falling through her windshield—which could be symbolic of brighter days to come after this dark one. The reader knows she drives an expensive car so we get a sense of her affluence.

A showing scene has **SHARP** components: (courtesy of *My Book Therapy*)

#### S—Stakes

#### H—Hero/Heroine Identification

#### A—Anchoring

#### R—Run

#### P—Problem

**Stakes**—What's at stake in this scene? Our heroine's life? Her identity? Her relationships? We've set the stage for raising the stakes.

**Heroine**—Who is our heroine? What's she about? Show a small piece of her.

**Anchoring**—Setting the stage. Adding the senses.

**Run**—We entered the scene on the run, after the "incident." We're seeing Marlena's reaction.

**Problem**—The author introduced a hint of the problem. We leave the scene with Marlena in turmoil, telling Flick to do what he has to do. Then she runs a red light (which could speak of her own "tossing caution to the wind").

"Rachel Hauck's stories are filled with twists and turns that leave the reader breathless and longing for more. She is a fresh fiction voice which will stir hearts for God." Debbie Macomber—#1 NYT bestselling author.

Rachel's first book was published in 2004, the same year she left the corporate world to write full-time. Since then she's become an award-winning, bestselling author of twelve novels with more to come. It's her desire for readers to find hope and escape in her stories, and inhale a bit of the fragrance of Jesus' love. You'll find Rachel at <http://www.rachelhauck.com/books.html>

### Here Comes The Judge!

Have you ever thought about volunteering as a judge for one of RWNZ's great contests but been put off because you weren't sure about the judging process? Are you already a judge but would like a bit of a refresher? Well, we have the answer for you. RWNZ's Judge Training Scheme is now underway.

By enrolling in the scheme, not only will you receive some great guidelines on how to score, what to score, what to look for and what not to look for, but you'll also get a chance to study some pre-judged samples to see how it's done. After that, it will be your turn to have a go at judging a sample piece of writing in a non-competitive environment and you'll get feedback to let you know how you went. So, how about it? Ready to give it a go?

If so, then email the Judge Training Coordinator at

[rwnzjudgetraining@gmail.com](mailto:rwnzjudgetraining@gmail.com)

(The Impatient Writer...continued from page 17)

beginning work on each section, I paused for three or four days to sketch out settings and customs and other necessary details. While the core premises were formulated mainly in my head, I did the detail preparation on paper (I tried to think of myself as compiling a series of essays for an imaginary encyclopedia). I also made rough maps of the terrain, buildings, cities, etc. that my characters would be encountering—nothing fancy, just enough to keep myself oriented so that I wouldn't describe something as being on the left side of a courtyard and then, in the next chapter, say it was on the right.

This method does slow me down, since I have to stop writing fairly frequently in order to build settings. But it's easier for me to discipline myself to this kind of prep work in small periodic doses than

in large do-it-all-at-once lumps. Plus, I like the freedom of not being locked in to a specific template from start to finish. It gives me a sense of discovering my world as I journey deeper into it, and allows room for inspiration. Many of my best details are things I probably couldn't have envisioned at the start of the book, springing not just from my understanding of the basic principles of the reality I've created, but from the context of what I've already written.

Another advantage of building a world in bits and pieces is that I don't come up with more detail than I actually need. This is important, since I've found that if I go to the trouble of making something up, it's incredibly hard to stop myself from including it, even if it doesn't really serve the plot!

(Continued on page 19)

# RWNZ News Around the Regions

*Keeping in touch with each other.*

## AUCKLAND

Since Frances Housden will be absent, Pamela Gervais will be leading the April meeting and Lisa S Gardiner will be running the workshop. The meeting will be held at 12.30 on April 2nd in the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion at the corner of Mt Albert and Mt Eden Roads. Please bring a small plate for a shared lunch. Last month we had another good attendance I hope the April meeting will be every bit as enjoyable.

## CENTRAL NORTH C2C

Our next meeting is on Sunday, April 10th at the home of Jenny Yates, 1 Kaka Street, Piopio. Ph: 07 877 8995. Piopio is on State Highway 3 heading down toward New Plymouth (and only about 21 km south of Te Kuiti). Please bring a plate for a shared lunch at 12.00 midday. Jenny is doing an interactive workshop on Plotting and Characterisation. Please come prepared with brief notes on your hero and heroine and any other relevant characters. There will be a round-robin email reminder and directions closer to the date.

## HAWKES BAY

Our first meeting of 2011 was in Havelock North on March 9th. A very pleasant afternoon was spent sharing tips about writing romance. We plan to meet again next month so if anyone would like to join us please contact me, Ginny Suckling, by either email or on 843 9715.

## WELLINGTON

Wellington/Kapiti branch had an excellent March meeting. With Christchurch in mind, Sally pointed out that having work backed up onto a flash-drive sitting beside your computer was no use if the house fell down. We discussed various off-site ways of storing our precious work. (Cloud storage, Yahoo Group of one, etc.) Something we should all think about.

Half a dozen of us bravely read out our two-page synopses for comments – fun to hear all the different things we're writing.

Next meeting is 1pm, Saturday April 2nd at Meryl's. Please bring the first brilliant 500 words of your novel.

## NELSON

Last month our meeting was postponed for a week, so here are two reports in one go.

Our first meeting for the year gathered almost all of us including a new prospective member. Most of that meeting we used to introduce ourselves to her and tell her what we do together on our meetings. We decided to spend next meeting watching a romantic comedy either at the cinema or on a DVD at my place. In the end the latter occurred and we watched Forever Young with Mel Gibson. This film is a charming tearjerker and romance at its best. The story is great for studying plot, characters and emotions.

Next meeting will be Saturday 9 April, 2pm at 63 Golf Rd, Tahunanui, Nelson. New members always welcome! Call or email Annika.

## CHRISTCHURCH

Jill is planning to restart the meetings in Christchurch on the 9th May. If you're in the area she'll email you to let you know where and when.

## OTAGO

Our hearts and thoughts remain with RWNZ members in CHCH following the second major earthquake there in February. While we continue to donate groceries and money towards relief and recovery, and have beds and space available for those wanting time away, we'd love to hear other ways we can help. We meet on the last Saturday of each month and welcome anyone to join us. Please contact Viv for details of when and where.

If you're a finalist in an RWNZ competition then tell the world! Suzanne has created finalist logos for you to use on your websites. We're going to showcase a few for you. Here's one we're all hoping for...



So if you've finalised in a comp and would like a logo, don't be shy! Contact Suzanne on:

[suzanne.perazzini@orcon.net.nz](mailto:suzanne.perazzini@orcon.net.nz)



## REGIONAL CONVENORS

**Auckland:** Frances Housden  
email: [Fhousden@xtra.co.nz](mailto:Fhousden@xtra.co.nz)

**Central North (C2C):** Sea to Sea Or Coast To Coast  
Gaylene Atkins  
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**Hawkes Bay:** Ginny Suckling  
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**Otago:** Viv Adams  
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*(The Impatient Writer...continued from page 18)*

For me, this method of working is the best compromise I've found between the demands of good writing and my own impatience. The time spent in initial, broad-premise preparation gives me the consistency I need to produce a believable and fully-developed world, while the working out of specific details as I go allows me the flexibility I crave—and, best of all, preserves the element of discovery that is, for me, one of the greatest joys of writing. 🌱

Copyright 1998 Victoria Strauss

Victoria is a multi-published author of young adult fantasies. She's written many book reviews for Fantasy magazine and SF Site, and her articles on writing have appeared in Writer's Digest and elsewhere. In 2006, she was privileged to serve as a judge for the World Fantasy Awards, and in 2009 she was honored with the SFWA Service Award for her work with Writer Beware.

<http://www.victoriastrauss.com>

# Writers' Corner



*"Chocolate is a perfect food, as wholesome as it is delicious, a beneficent restorer of exhausted power. It is the best friend of those engaged in literary pursuits." - Baron Justus von Liebig*

Bron says:

Loads of you have asked about setting up an Author's Fanpage on Facebook. I have found some links to help you, but I'm still trying to work it all out. I will try and source a main article on this topic for H2H another month, as it is quite a big topic.

Here is a link to more information on Goodreads.

<http://www.goodreads.com/topic/show/165875-how-to-create-a-facebook-fan-page>

Here is another link on The Creative Penn.

<http://www.thecreativepenn.com/2010/12/02/how-to-create-a-facebook-fan-page-for-your-book-or-author-brand/>

Here are some others.

<http://ezinearticles.com/?How-To-Make-a-Fan-Page-On-Facebook&id=5949514>

[http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note\\_id=461955396438](http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=461955396438)

Remember—when you're setting up a fanpage:

- Select your category: I chose the third one, Artist, Band or Public Figure. (Writer is the last option in the drop-down menu.)
- Name of writer: (self-explanatory)
- Last step: Be sure to checkmark the box that you are verified to create this page for the writer you represent, including your electronic signature.

## The 2011 Strictly Single Competition

**Sandii Manning** gives us facts and figures we should know.

There were thirty-one entries into this year's Strictly Single competition. They were broken down as follows.

10 Contemporary, 2 Erotic Paranormal, 2 Fantasy, 7 Historical, 4 Paranormal, 2 Romantic Suspense, 1 Sci-Fi, 3 YA.

One entry was over the word count and received after the closing date and two entries had formatting problems which would have excluded them from continuing. It really helps if you don't send your entry one minute before closing. I sent entries back to people who had time to fix mistakes and send back, to big sighs of relief all around.

One entry was withdrawn due to a sale. (Yay Kylie!)

On a personal note, it would have been nice to have sent more thank you emails to our judges.

It was lovely to speak to the finalists and share their excitement. Squeals from southern to northern hemisphere bounced around the globe.

The comments from the judges overall were these entries were the highest they'd ever read. There were some comments that kept cropping up.

Aim to keep the characters in the synopsis the same as the characters in your story.

Don't slow down your opening with too much back story. Filter it through and, if possible, use more dialogue instead of introspection.

A lot of characters making entrances in the first chapter can be confusing.

Really weave your setting into your story. Cement it into the reader's mind

### Agent's choice

Nicola Davidson  
Tyree Connor  
Mary Jones  
Michelle de Rooy  
Christine Taylor  
Karen Browning

### Editor's choice

Tyree Connor full requested  
Michelle de Rooy  
Christina Taylor  
Nicola Davidson  
Karen Browning  
Mary Jones

and use all five senses.

Please check your work for grammar and punctuation errors. It may help to read your work out loud to pick up mistakes.

The final judges—Agent Emmanuelle Morgen (Judith Ehrlich Literary Management) and Editor Meredith Giordan (Berkley Publishing) made comments on the high calibre of the entries including: *totally original; lovely writing, but story not immediately marketable in US; not enough romance; strong writing but a tough sell in US market.*

I look forward to coordinating the competition next year.

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<b>Principal Contest Co-ord:</b> Viv Constable <a href="mailto:vconstable@xtra.co.nz">vconstable@xtra.co.nz</a>	<b>Judging Enquiries:</b> Kamy Chetty <a href="mailto:kamychetty@yahoo.com">kamychetty@yahoo.com</a>	<b>Founder:</b> Jean Drew (RWNZ founded Sept 1990)	