

HEART TO HEART

Scene And Sequel

The Building Blocks of Great Fiction.

In this two-part series USA today best-selling author, **Patricia Kay**, takes the mystery out of creating a scene and crafting a sequel.



Scene and Sequel. Two words that strike fear into the hearts of writers. Yet they shouldn't. Actually, nothing could be simpler than writing your book in a series of scenes and sequels. And, in fact, once you learn the basics of writing scenes and sequels, writing your book will become a lot easier because you'll now have the key to good story construction.

To begin, let's talk a bit about story construction. We all know about the theory of cause and effect, right? Such and such happens which causes such and such to happen which causes such and such to happen. Everything in your story should be related in this way. James N. Frey, in his book *How to Write a Damn Good Novel*, tells us that because everything is causal, readers will have a strong desire to read on, to find out what is going to happen as a result of what just happened.

I judge a lot of contests for unpublished writers, and too many times the author will have a character doing something because she wants her to—yet there is no discernible cause or motivation. Or the author will need something to happen, so she makes it happen—despite the fact there is no reason for it to happen. It's simply a convenient coincidence.

Anytime you're going to throw in an action, give it the "test." Ask yourself, "But would she really?" And if the answer isn't a clear-cut yes, figure out a way to motivate that action so that the answer will be yes. I always just shake my head when I see a movie where the heroine goes up to the attic despite the

fact she thinks there might be an ax murderer hiding up there. I want to say, "Come on, folks. No way any sensible person is going to do that." Why on earth would she? If she had any sense at all, she'd call the police, then run away as fast as her little legs would carry her.

Just like a play with three acts, a novel can be broken down into three parts: beginning, middle, and end. The beginning is the setup; it introduces the characters, establishes their motivation and goals, and introduces the conflict/s, which creates the tension. The middle develops the relationships and builds up and intensifies the conflict, which increases the tension. The ending brings all the separate pieces together through a climax and satisfying resolution.

Okay, so let's say you've figured out in broad terms where certain things in your story will happen. At the very least, you know what's going to happen in the beginning. So you jump in and begin writing. But after about twenty pages or so, you're not happy. The story seems boring. And your critique partners, although they are too nice to use the word "boring", seem to agree. What now?

I can almost guarantee you that if your story is boring, it's because you don't have enough conflict. Conflict is drama and drama is conflict. In fact, the three rules of dramatic writing are conflict, conflict, conflict. I think James N. Frey also said that in the book I quoted earlier.

At this point, you need to go back to the drawing board and plan your scenes.

Good scenes don't just evolve, and they don't ramble. Good scenes have structure and are carefully planned.

Dwight Swain, in his book *Techniques of the Selling Writer*, tells us that scenes equal action. Action is not boring. Reason? The reader is experiencing the conflict live, living through it with your character. He's not seeing it in flashback, he's not reading a summary of what happened, he's not hearing about it through your character's thoughts—he's going through the action and conflict right along with your character.

Nothing is more frustrating to a reader than to read about something interesting that has taken place off stage. I'll never forget a contest entry I judged a couple of years back. Every single event of importance took place off-stage and we learned about it afterward, with the heroine thinking about it. That's the kind of thing that makes a reader (or an editor) frown and put the book or manuscript down.

You never want to make your reader frown. It means they are either (1) confused or (2) unhappy and bored. That's not how we want our readers to react.

Scene structure is simple. The point-of-view character (the person through whom we are experiencing the scene) must have a goal. That's the first necessary element. The goal can be as simple as a character who is exhausted and just wants to go home and put his feet up and have a peaceful, relaxed evening alone. Or maybe he's trying to

(Continued on page 12)

Inside This Issue

Where you'll find what...

- 1....**PATRICIA KAY** shares her secrets for crafting scenes and sequels in Part One of this two part series.
- 3....**PRESIDENT ABBY GAINES** brings us updates on the latest Exec and Conference news.
- 4....**WOOS, HOOS, & NEWS** has all the latest woos hot off the press.
- 5....**ROXANNE ST. CLAIRE** shows how to mend broken scenes.
- 6....**CONTESTS AND MARKETS**
- 7....**JESSA SLADE** reveals her process of character creation.
- 8....**JAMES SCOTT BELL** shares ways to make a scene sparkle.
- 9....**TAWNA FENSKE** offers five ways to flesh out characters.
- 10..**LOVE & OTHER CRIMES**—more about the 2011 RWNZ conference.
- 13..**KAT LATHAM** gives website tips especially for writers.
- 14..**ALICIA RASLEY** talks about mistakes with backstory and how to avoid them.
- 16..**MARGIE LAWSON** continues with Part Two of her insights on body language and dialogue cues.
- 18..**RWNZ EXEC POSITIONS AND NOTICE OF MEETING**
- 19..**RWNZ REGIONAL NEWS**
- 20..**WRITERS' CORNER** answering your questions: GoodReads.

**Set small goals
for your sanity ...
but large goals for your soul.**

Holly Lisle

**WELCOME
TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS:**

Jill Costello from Australia

Jo Perry from Tauranga

Olivia Gates from Egypt

Editors' Desk

Did you realise we're halfway through 2011? Scary!

This month, in keeping with our "Book In A Year" theme, we're looking at the whole Scene and Sequel thing. We all know how to **make** a scene—hey, we started around age one in the supermarket. Remember? Plenty of conflict there! Heaps of drama.

The problem comes when we try to put it on paper. So if you have that difficulty then this month's content is especially for you. We guarantee you'll find something that will hit the spot and open up new ways to make your work more exciting.

If you think you have Scene and Sequel sorted out, don't despair. You'll find plenty of other things you haven't tried. I (Gracie) laughed my way through Tawna Fenske's ideas to flesh out characters—then put "Roleplay" into practice with my husband in a local café this morning. Lots of fun. And he's still talking to me. Now, as soon as I've finished here I'm back to the WIP to mend all the scenes I now see are broken (thanks, Roxanne!), not to mention a snarl of backstory I need to remove from the first act and weave in throughout the book (bless you, Alicia!).

Isn't writing fun? Isn't it so exciting when you can finally see the woods for the trees?

Gracie, Rachel, Bron, & Karen

H2H editorial team Contest

ARE YOU TEMPTED?

We've been talking about engaging characters, so here's your chance to use the helpful information and wow us with your hero.

Give us a 200 word description of your **hero** to **tempt** us. The description can be characteristics, personality, physical description... but whatever it is it has to make us say,

"Yummy! I want to meet him."

The first 30 emails containing your character descriptions received by **10th June 2011** will be entered in the contest. Email your entries to Bronwen, romance@bronwenevans.com

The rest of the Editorial team, Gracie, Karen, and Rachel, will select the top five 'temptations' and **Margie Lawson** will be the final judge who picks the overall winner.

The winner will receive a lecture packet from Margie Lawson—**Writing Body Language and Dialogue Cues like a Psychologist.**

Learn how to write body language and dialogue cues from a kinesics specialist. Writers will learn how to write fresh:

- **Body Language Basics:** facial messages, lips, eyes, chin, full facial expression, flicker-face, gestures, posture, hierarchical zones...
- **Body Language Clusters**
- **Avoidance and deception cues**
- **Vibes—beyond "spidey" senses and hair-raising**
- **Turning Points driven by subtle body language cues**
- **Body Language and Dialogue Cues for POV and Non-POV characters**
- **Body Language and Dialogue Cues with Rhetorical Devices**
- **Specific Emotion-driven full Kinesics Patterns for anxiety, fear, joy, sadness, lust, shock, surprise...**



Each teaching point will be illustrated with examples from bestselling authors, their excerpts dissected and analyzed.

Bonus Lecture from a Police Detective: Body Language in the Police and Criminal Worlds—Interrogations, Spotting Criminals, Hostage Negotiations

From The Pres.



What's happening in RWNZ?

President Abby Gaines updates us on the Exec, the conference, and the proposed changes to membership subscription rates.

We're coming up to that busy time of year: conference, AGM, exec nominations, planning for subscription renewals... and of course, we have several contests on the go.

First up, conference: Registrations are rolling in for *Love & Other Crimes*, RWNZ's three-day conference running August 19-21 at Auckland's Crowne Plaza Hotel. There's still plenty of time before the July 11 earlybird cut-off, but we're about to start promoting the conference to writers beyond the romance sphere. Experience suggests quite a few writers from other genres will sign up, so if you want to secure the editor or agent pitching slot of your choice you might want to get in fast.

On the subject of pitching. While we do, of course, have **Angela James**, executive editor at e-book single-title publisher Carina Press, **Lucy Gilmour** from Harlequin Mills & Boon, and several New Zealand editors attending the conference, it looks at this stage as if we won't have an editor from a traditional single title USA publisher. However, we're looking at creative ways to offer conference delegates the chance to pitch their manuscript to an editor in the USA, and are very hopeful we'll have something to announce on this front soon. So you can go ahead and request a pitch with a USA single title editor on your conference registration form, and when we have the details ironed out our registrar will be in touch with you to let you know who the editor is and how the pitch will work, and to find out if that suits you or if you'd rather switch to one of the other editors.

You'll find a ton of conference information at www.romancewriters.co.nz including info about transportation and parking, plus a link to the hotel reservations at our amazing conference rate of \$128 incl. GST per night. And—drum roll, please—we now have online credit card payment available on the website. This will make things much easier for members and our hard-working treasurer. When you click to pay by credit card online, you'll be taken to a secure server run by DPS, a third-party processing service that links in with our bank, ASB.

Online payments are also available for new members, and will in future be added to the renewals page, and available for contests.

Next, the RWNZ Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 20 August at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Auckland. All members are welcome to attend the AGM, you don't have to be registered for conference. You'll find details in this newsletter, including information about how to submit a remit or a nomination for the Executive. **The entire Executive is up for re-election every year—all offices are held on a 12-month basis.** I'm delighted to say that most of the current team have expressed their willingness to stand for another year. We will definitely need a new Publicity Officer as Jackie Coates is standing down from that particular role, though she will be continuing to help out in other capacities. I will be standing down as President and, in keeping with the intention of the position, our Vice-President Iona Jones will be standing

for president. If you're interested in submitting a remit or running for the Exec and have any questions, feel free to contact me or any other member of the Exec named in this newsletter.

Member subscription renewals will be coming up in September. The executive will be meeting soon to decide on the subscription rates for next year. As you know, subs actually went down last year for those members who paid on time, and RWNZ chose to absorb the cost of the GST increase. This year, we'll definitely need to pass on the extra GST charge to members, and we're also considering raising the subscription to allow for credit card and Paypal fees, rather than having members add 4% to each transaction when they pay by one of those means. This would reduce administration for our Treasurer and Membership Secretary and make pricing easier to decipher for members. If you feel strongly one way or another about this issue, please email your thoughts to a member of the Executive.

Don't forget to enter our **First Impressions contests** to win the chance to have one of our visiting editors or literary agent meet with you to critique your entry. You'll find the entry forms available on the RWNZ website. These contests are short-entry and cheap to enter, so a great opportunity to fire off more than one attempt to snag the attention of a publishing professional.

That's it for this month. I hope your writing is going wonderfully! ♥♥♥

RWNZ CONTEST SCHEDULE 2011

CHAPTER SHORT STORY CONTEST

Finalists announced on Page 4!

Finalist entries are with Julie Redlich,
Fiction Editor of *Woman's Day*
Good luck everyone!

HMB GREAT BEGINNINGS CONTEST

Judging in Progress

FIRST IMPRESSIONS CONTESTS

All contests close Friday, 24 June 2011

Final Judges:

No.1 Contest: Jessica Faust, BookEnds Literary Agency

No. 2 Contest: Lucy Gilmour, HM&B, London

No. 3 Contest: Angela James, Carina Press

(All 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



Woos, Hoos, and News

Celebrating our members' achievements.

Tyree Connor keeps us rocking and rolling with our successes here and overseas. Let her know yours at rocker.t@xtra.co.nz

SALES!

Vonnie Hughes **sold** a Regency to Aurora, the Regency arm of Aspen Mountain Press.

Sue Mackay has **sold** *Surgeon in a Wedding Dress* to M&B's Medical line. It's due out Dec 2011/Jan 2012.

SUCCESSES!

Emily Gee w/a **Emily May** (see Ruby list) has also **finalled** in **The National Readers Choice Award** and the **Booksellers Best Award** with her M&B Regency, *The Unmasking of a Lady*.

Sandra Hyatt has **finalled** in **four** USA contests with her three releases from last year; the **Book Sellers' Best**, **The Book Buyers' Best**, **The Readers' Crown** and the **National Readers' Choice Award**!

Anna Campbell's *My Reckless Surrender* has **finalled** in **Regency** category of the **Phoenix Desert Rose RWA 2011 Golden Quill Contest**.

Nicki Davidson has **finalled** in the **Beau Monde Royal Ascot** competition. (Romance Writers of America Regency chapter)

Annie West's *Forgotten Mistress*, *Secret Love Child* is a **finalist** in the **WisRWA's Write Touch Readers' Award Contest** and *Passion, Purity and the Prince* **won** the **2010 CataRomance Reviewers' Choice Award**.

Chapter Short Story Finalists

Tyree Connor
Kendra Delugar
Rachel Corner Jones (x2)
Melissa Smith
Sherilee Wakelin
Yvonne Walus

RWAust Emerald Finalists

Michelle De Rooy
Suzanne Hamilton
Rebecca Skrabi

RWAust R*by Awards

Sophia James
Emily May
Natalie Anderson

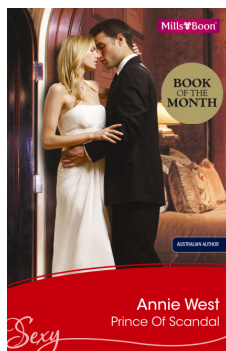
REMEMBER CHRISTCHURCH

A CITY CRIES,
A LOVED ONE DIES,
AND LIVES ARE
TORN APART.

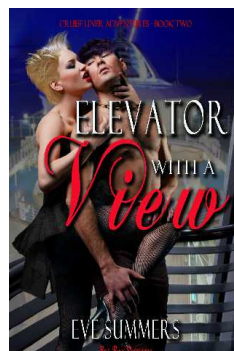
WHAT CAN WE DO?
HOW CAN WE, AS AN
ORGANISATION, HELP?

Send your thoughts to
angelique@kiwiwriter.co.nz

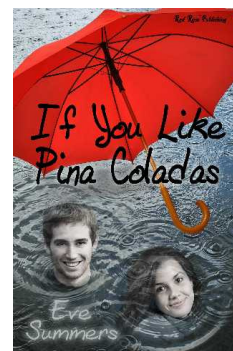
NEW RELEASES



Prince of Scandal
Annie West
Release: June, 2011
Harper Collins Australia



Elevator with a View
Yvonne Walus w/a
Eve Summers
Release: April, 2011
Red Rose Publishing



If You Like Pina Colodas
Yvonne Walus w/a
Eve Summers
Release: March, 2011
Red Rose Publishing

How Do You Mend a Broken Scene?



Hint: you don't need PVA glue or Duct Tape!

Bestselling author of romance, suspense, and women's fiction, Roxanne St. Claire, shows us how to make a broken scene healthy.

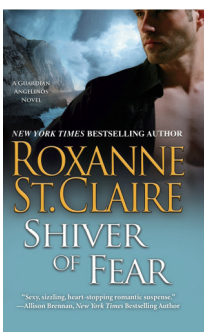
Writing is rewriting... how many times have we heard that? If that expression is true, then knowing how to rewrite is as important as knowing how to write. I'm definitely one of those writers who enjoys (read: lives for) revisions and absolutely loathes the blank page. I'm also one of those writers who focuses on one scene at a time, preferably one per day. Combining these two, I've come up with some great techniques for mending broken scenes.

For me, every scene is a mini book, with everything a whole book has, only in a bite size chunk: a compelling opening, rising action, conflict, tension, character change, a climax, and a hook. In addition, a rock solid scene must address the goal, motivation or conflict of one of the characters, evoke an emotion (or five), paint a vivid multi-sensory image, deliver new information, further the story, and leave the reader wanting more. And maybe, if you're really good, you can make the reader cry. Or laugh. Or turn on all the lights and lock the doors. It all depends on what you (re)write and how well you (re)write it.

In order to understand the difference between a powerful, "healthy" scene and a sick one, you'll have to be a tough critic. When you've finished your first draft, look for the following:

Characteristics of a Healthy Scene:

- A character wants something—every scene has a "character goal"
- Creates tension regarding **that** goal (and others)
- Has an arc: beginning, middle, climax, hook
 - Complicates and furthers the story
 - Gives readers more than they had before
 - Showcases the author's voice and "signature"



Characteristics of a Broken Scene:

- Full of action, but nothing happens
- Characters are flat, untrue, clichéd, uninvolved, distant
- No identifiable plot point
- Massive amounts of backstory
- Forced, unnatural dialogue
- Huge, unbroken paragraphs of description
- Noticeable lack of emotion, humor, sexual tension or conflict
- Reader, writer, editor and critique partner fall asleep

In my workshop, "*How Do You Mend A Broken Scene*," I review three "levels" of revisions, from the easiest to a complete rewrite.

A **Level I** revision is necessary when the scene is just not quite right. Not a disaster, not a headbanger, but just not singing to a sweet high C. This scene needs little more than a polish and shine, probably layering in more emotion, character depth, or backstory. Your fixes may be no more than one quick rewrite, during which you might try some or all of the following:

- Replace internal monologues to dialogues
- Be sure characters are true
- Add senses and imagery
- Don't back away too soon
- Draw out emotion
- Gracefully drop in backstory and description
- Strengthen the hook

Level II is a little more serious. Something has gone awry either in the story or the character. It's not a D&D (delete and drink heavily), but more likely a character needs to be reigned in and controlled, or a plot point must be reconsidered. To know what's wrong and how to fix it, you'll probably find you need to answer the following questions:

- What does the character want when

the scene starts and how are things worse when it ends?

- Can you find a much stronger reason/plot point for a scene?
- Can you make it more poignant? More tense?
- How can the plot be turned on its head to surprise the reader or character?
- Can you show the character's true nature... and the conflict?
- Is the scene as "ier" as it can be (funnier, sexier, scarier, wrenching-ier)?

Level III requires you to drag out that shovel and dig deeper. Much deeper. This might be a scene that's right from a "plot point" perspective but the characters are completely flat, the tension is non-existent, the scene really has no reason whatsoever for being in the book. Maybe you "need" the scene from a plotting standpoint, but it's not doing anything on an emotional, character-driven level. When you've got a scene like this, you've got the opportunity to not only cut it, but replace it with one that takes the reader by the throat and squeezes. You might try some of these techniques:

- Plot out a brand new character goal and more complex hook
- Kick emotion (or sensuality/danger/humor/whatever) to infinity and beyond
- Put the character in a miserable lose/lose position
- Go for broke on sexual tension and character conflict
- Write a scene unlike any you've ever written before
- Make the scene address the character's worst fear or deepest desire
- Create a "signature" (unforgettable) scene

All of this is much easier said than done, and learning these techniques takes some time and effort. When I

(Continued on page 15)



Contests and Markets

P.D.R. Lindsay-Salmon shares some potential markets and Karen Browning suggests a few contests.

Potential Markets

Ellora's Cave

US e-publisher.

Ellora's Cave is always open for submissions in all their genres.

Guidelines: www.jasminejade.com/t-writerscircle.aspx

Details: www.ellorascave.com

Ellora's Cave

US e-publisher.

Special theme series for 2011 is love letters, cards, diaries. Story length 18K—45K words. Any genres, settings. Must use the theme as a primary story element.

Stories will release in January/February 2012 (in time for Valentine's Day).

Deadline: 31 August, 2011

Guidelines: www.jasminejade.com/t-writerscircle.aspx

Salt Publishing

UK publisher, new digital imprint: Embrace Books.

Embrace currently has two romance series open for submissions of novels, novellas and trios of short stories: *After Dark* and *Red Velvet*.

Guidelines: <http://embracebooks.co.uk/submissions/>

FinePrint Management

Agent Suzie Brown is looking for women's fiction, historical romance, paranormal romance, urban and dark romantic fantasy.

Website: <http://fineprintlit.com>

Guidelines: <http://confessionsofawanderingheart.blogspot.com/2011/01/suzies-updated-submission-guidelines.html>

Storm Moon Press

POD and e-publisher seeking erotic anthologies and erotic romance novels.

Details: www.stormmoonpress.com

Sourcebooks

US publisher, print, apps and ebooks, seeking all sub-genres of romance for their Casablanca imprint.

Details: <http://www.sourcebooks.com/>

Overseas Contests

Maggie (Unpublished)

Deadline: 10 June, 2011

Eligibility: Unpublished, RWA members only

Entry: Synopsis and first chapter up to 35 pages

Fee: \$US25-30

www.georgiaromancewriters.org/the-maggies

Heart of the Rockies

Deadline: 15 June, 2011

Eligibility: Unpublished

Entry: First two chapters plus 1-5 page synopsis (max 35 pages)

Fee: \$US25-30

www.coloradoromancewriters.org/hor.html

2011 Published Beacon Contest

Deadline: Postmark 30 June, 2011

Eligibility: Published

Entry: Books with a 2010 copyright date

Fee: \$US25

www.firstcoastromancewriters.com

Dixie Kane Memorial Contest

Deadline: 15 July, 2011

Eligibility: Unpublished

Entry: No electronic submissions; first five double-spaced pages plus one-page single-spaced synopsis

Fee: \$US15

<http://solawriters.org>

HeartBeat Contest

Deadline: 15 July, 2011

Eligibility: Unpublished

Entry: Query letter and first five pages

Fee: \$US10-15

www.heartla.com

Writing With The Stars

Deadline: 15 July, 2011

Eligibility: Unpublished

Entry: Electronic only; 80-90k full mss, 2-7 page synopsis, cover letter

Fee: free

www.bravaauthors.com/contest/brava-contest/

Where The Magic Begins Contest

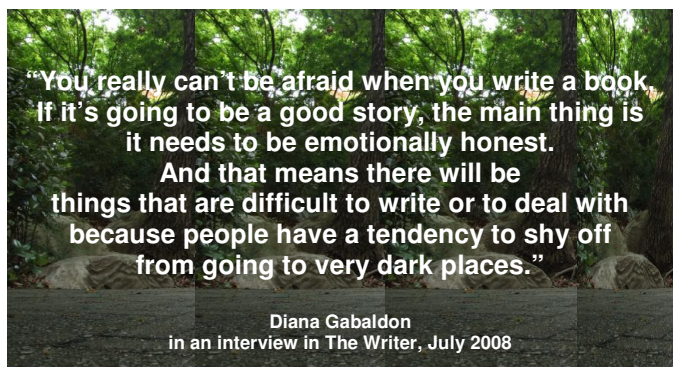
Deadline: 1 August, 2011

Eligibility: Unpublished in past 3 years in category entered

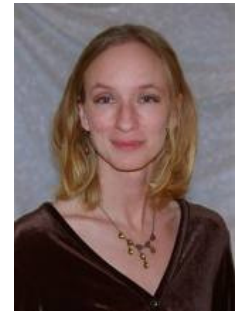
Entry: Electronic only; first 25 pages plus one-page single-spaced synopsis.

Fee: \$US25-27

<http://rwimagiccontests.wordpress.com>



Creating The People



Plot first or character first?

Urban fantasy romance writer **Jessa Slade** writes about “hot guys and chicks with knives”. Here she shares her process of character creation.

Which comes first, plot or character? Like the chicken-egg question, it's basically irrelevant. For successful poultry and story creation you need both. For me, though, plot comes more readily. “What happens” bubbles up in my brain before “who it happens to.” Since character doesn't come first for me, I have a process to create the people who will live (live through!) my story.

Warning: Pantsers/organic writers, back away slowly. This technique will give you contact dermatitis.

1. What sort of person will suffer the most from this particular storyline?

Okay, that sounds a little mean, but conflict is the heart of commercial genre fiction, so the characters are going to have to suffer to earn their happy ending. Story conflict is amplified by building personalities who will struggle most vigorously against (and ultimately for) the lesson they have to learn. Thoughtful character creation is especially important in romance because not only are the characters fighting their way through the plot, the hero and heroine will fight against and for each other.

For me, thinking about the theme helps me find my characters. In my *Marked Souls* urban fantasy romances with alpha male warriors possessed by repentant demons, the series theme is the shifting balance between good and evil, but each book in the series explores that question from a slightly different angle. For example, in the latest story, *Vowed in Shadows*, the book theme is about weaknesses of the flesh. Naturally, the heroine is a stripper with a boa (not the feathered kind; the reptilian). Nim's body is a sensual weapon she uses against an uncaring world...and it is also her weakness because she still carries the scars of childhood sexual abuse. So who would suffer most from such a conflicted heroine? A married man who hasn't had sex in eighty years! Unlike the heroine, the widower hero holds

femininity sacred. I'm being a bit wry by saying 'holds' since a maiming in an earlier story left Jonah with only one hand; his weakness of the flesh is quite literal.

I find that it helps to list the characteristics of the hero and heroine side by side to make sure the conflict between them and the plot is inherent in their personalities. I also make sure the seeds of their need for each other is nestled in that conflict by answering the question, “What does he/she learn from her/him because of the story?”

2. What made the character this way?

When I first started writing, I took a character-building class that handed out a twelve-page dossier to fill out. Eye color, okay, but favorite ice cream? Really? It paralyzed me because it seemed so arbitrary. (People with processes tend to dislike arbitrary.) If dreaming up a character to that level of minutia works for you, of course, carry on. I find that knowing the character's likes and dislikes **now** is less important to me—and to the story—than the roots of their discontent. Working backstory into the actual pages is tricky, but knowing the character's history can help flesh out the present without seeming so random. Not all of it (please, not all of it!) will show up in your story, but hints of those experiences will tint the character at every level.

The rule of backstory creation is: Go deeper. For example, Jonah is an ex-missionary. Of course he is, since Nim is a stripper! I wanted that source of conflict between them from the beginning. But I also wanted to give a reason for their eventual relationship. So I went deeper. Sure, he's a missionary, but why? He was a religious man (another level of conflict with his demonic possession) and his wife was a minister's daughter (the exact opposite of his heroine) but what more? Go deeper. Ah, he was a missionary, in part, for the adventure. But why? Going deeper, I find out that

as a child he read a penny dreadful with bare-breasted native girls! That spirit of adventure along with a touch of male ogling gave him the history to bond with his heroine. Eventually ;)

3. How will the character get from the beginning to the happy ending?

Once the basic characteristics and backstory are nailed down, I track the character's growth through the plot. As a plotter, it's easy for me to let the battle scenes run amok without making sure the characters get something out of it besides bruises. But since our genre is about conflict **and** change, I want to make sure the characters are embedded in the experiences on the page.

Time to make another list. I start with Point A: where the character begins the story, which is usually some version of 1. despairing, 2. lost, 3. oblivious, 4. willfully blind, or 5. happily puttering and about to be catapulted into the gleeful hell that is the plot. I end with Point Last, where the character finally “gets it,” whatever it is for the particular story. Since stories where the characters come to unmotivated insights and unsustainable epiphanies are unsatisfying and unbelievable, I chart the clear steps between Point A and Last.

For example, Nim goes from the kind of girl who metaphorically wields a gallon of gasoline and a match, to being a powerful positive light against the darkness. A few of the steps between include: selfishly taking on a demon to improve her chances of winning the stripper all-stars; facing monsters in real life and in herself and learning she finally has the power to fight them; finding tentative friendship with other women in the demon-possessed league; admiring the hero for his dedication to fighting evil; believing his love for her means her scars don't make her damaged goods; valuing the goodness in the world.

Here is where plot and character and

(Continued on page 15)



Freshen Those Scenes

Are you writing the same old same old?

Best-selling suspense author James Scott Bell shares three ways to make your scenes sparkle.

Scen es are the building blocks of fiction. A great premise will not stand without solid scenes to prop it up. Colorful characters can flit across the page, but unless they are engaged in pitched battle, the reader won't care.

Don't let your scenes fall into cliché or monotony. Always look for ways to freshen them up. Here are three techniques to help you do that.

Dialogue Flow

Try writing a scene only in dialogue. Let it flow. Don't think much about it. When you're finished, you can look back and figure out what the scene is really about.

I once wrote a scene between competing lawyers. Part of it went like this:

"You think you can get away with that?"

"Whatever works."

"Disbarment works, too."

"You want to try to prove that? Know what that'll make you look like?"

"Don't presume to know what I will or will not do."

"I know you better than your wife, Phil."

That last line of dialogue came out of nowhere. Why did the character say that? I could edit it out, of course, but it seemed far better to explore the implications. What that led to was a plot point where the one lawyer reveals he's had an investigator on Phil for six months. And has pictures and places and dates Phil will not want revealed to his wife.

All that just from playing with dialogue. Try it, and you'll discover undercurrents for your scene you didn't know were there.

Cut or Hide Exposition

Any time the author gives information in narrative form, the immediate story is put on hold. This exposition, if you don't watch it, can bloat and choke off a good scene.

The first thing to look for is exposition you don't need. If it's not crucial to the story, consider cutting it altogether. The more important information can often

be "hidden" by putting it into either dialogue or a character's thoughts.

Here's an example of clunky exposition:

Cosmo was a successful doctor, but he had a dark secret. Early in his career he took out a patient's liver, thinking it was an appendix. This caused him to turn heavily to drink, but he never let his colleagues or patients catch him at it. For all anyone knew, he was a pillar of the community.

Pretty dull, eh? But what if Cosmo is sitting at his desk when his ex-wife bursts in holding a court order for more spousal support?

Cosmo looked up from his medical reports. "Mildred!"

"Court order," Millie said, throwing an ominous looking document in front of him.

"You can't just barge in like this! I have patients to see."

Millie laughed. "Don't play honorable doctor with me. I'm the one who had to pick you up at the local bars all those years. Still hiding the whiskey in your cotton jar?"

Cosmo cast a quick glance at the jar by the window, then turned back to his former spouse. "So what, are you going to try to smear me now?"

"If I wanted to smear you, I would have told the papers a long time ago about Mr. Santini and the young doctor who took out his liver."

Cosmo pounded the desk with his fist. "You're still holding that over my head?"

"How could anyone, let alone a doctor on the staff of a major hospital, mistake a liver for an appendix?" Millie shook her head.

"I'd like to mistake you for a cadaver!" Cosmo said. "I will not have my good name in this community besmirched by you!"

"Harrumph!" Millie turned and walked out of the room. Cosmo took a deep breath, then went to the cotton jar, opened it, and pulled out a bottle of Jim Beam.

You get the idea. When in doubt, have two characters argue about something, and put some exposition in the argument. It works every time. Elmore

Leonard once said, "All the information you need in a book can be put in dialogue."

Thoughts are another way to do this. Here's one from Millie's POV:

Millie shook her head. He was so pathetic. Probably still on the juice, still trying to drown out the fact that he took out a liver during an appendectomy.

One caution: use character thoughts judiciously for exposition. Too much of it and readers will catch on to the technique.

Flip the obvious

Our minds work by reaching for the most familiar choices available. For writers that usually means choosing a cliché. If your characters are mere types, your scenes won't engage the readers.

Imagine a truck driver rumbling down the highway at midnight, holding the steering wheel in one hand and a cup of hot, black coffee in the other.

Got that?

Now, I'll bet the first image your mind provided was of a burly male, a "manly man," because that is our familiar image of a trucker. It's a cliché, and therefore not very interesting.

But what if you flipped it around? What if the trucker was a woman?

Try it.

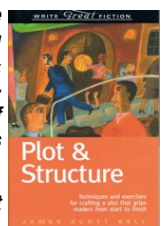
Now you have an image to play with that is not so familiar. Your writer's mind will look for original material.

But I'll wager you still pictured a rather "tough" woman, because all truckers are tough, right?

Flip that around, too. Put this woman in a nice evening dress. What does that do for your image? Now you've got a unique character to work with. Such make for memorable scenes. ♥♥♥

James Scott Bell is the author of three bestselling books for writers: *Plot & Structure*, *Revision & Self-Editing*, and *The Art of War for Writers*. He lives and writes in Los Angeles.

You can visit James at www.jamesscottbell.com



Five Tips for Getting to Know Your Characters



Tired of getting naked, making armpit noises, and singing showtunes?

*Romantic comedy author, **Tawna Fenske**, offers five far less stressful ways of fleshing out our characters.*

It's no secret many writers are introverts, so getting to know new people can be tough. Sure, there's the usual approach—open a bottle of wine, ask everyone to get naked, and take turns making armpit noises and singing showtunes.

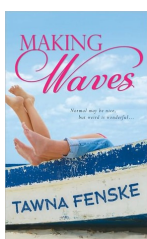
But that approach doesn't work as well when you're getting to know characters in a new manuscript. Developing strong characters is the cornerstone to building a great story, so it's crucial not to shortchange this part of the writing process.

While there are advantages to diving in and discovering your characters' idiosyncrasies as you move through the story, it's smart to put some thought into it before you begin writing. Otherwise, you may end up on page 250 wondering why your heroine forgot to tell you that in addition to being a kindergarten teacher, she's also a deadly spy with six toes on her left foot.

Below are five tips for getting to know your new characters and ensuring they're multi-dimensional and interesting enough to make you want to spend an entire book in their company.

The quirk doc: On the desktop of my computer is a simple Word document titled, "tidbits." The file contains a bulleted list of thoughts that have popped into my head in the middle of a workday or after an extra glass of wine. It wouldn't likely make sense to anyone else opening the file, but it's essentially a list of little character quirks that might be useful for fleshing out future characters.

In my debut novel, *Making Waves*, my heroine loves to play games—not in a "messaging with his head" sense, but in a "let's play Strip Battleship" sort of way. It's a small character quirk that was once in my "tidbits" document and just happened to fit the fun-loving, offbeat character I wanted to build for Juli.



Ditto that for a personality quirk in the heroine in my second contracted novel. She has a habit of asking a series of rapid-fire questions without really expecting an answer. She knows she's met her match when the laidback hero responds to her each time by deadpanning a list of one-word responses in the order she asked the questions. The heroine's quirk not only allowed me to show her high-strung personality, but to flesh out the dynamic between those two characters.

Try starting a Word doc or a special notebook where you keep notes about character quirks that pop into your head. When the time comes to build new characters, you can go shopping from your list to find the ones that work best for your new friends.

Job hunt: One of the first things I usually decide with a new novel is what my characters do for a living. From there, I try to learn as much as I can about those professions. What's her daily routine like? What schooling would he need to have? Does she go out for martini lunches or huddle in a corner of a dimly lit break room eating a peanut butter sandwich?

I spend a lot of time researching professions both online and in person, a process that's given me the delightful excuse to spend time roaming funeral homes, wineries, and my local landfill. Understanding what my characters spend most of their time doing is a big part of understanding what they're like as people, so this is a part of the character development process I relish each time I do it.

10 things no one knows: This is an exercise I've found helpful with characters whose personalities aren't rising to the surface as quickly as I'd like. Sit down with a pen and paper and make a list of ten things about your character that few people know. These things don't have to appear in the book—in fact, it's best if they don't—but they're a good way to gain insight into the character's inner self.

Is she secretly afraid of the dark? Does he talk to his cat when no one's around? Does she refuse to eat apricot jelly because it reminds her of that unfortunate incident with the jumper cables and the guy who insisted she call him Marsha? If you're lucky, you'll stumble over a few surprises as you go.

People watching. If I weren't an author, I think I'd make an especially good spy. It goes with the territory that writers are a bit voyeuristic and fond of watching strangers do the funny little things they do when they think no one's watching. I keep a notepad in my purse so I can jot notes about some of the more interesting characters I see when I'm out and about.

One of my favorite spots for people watching is my local dog park. If you want fodder for writing romantic comedy, there's really nothing more satisfying than watching a nervous-looking bald guy chasing a poodle and shouting, "No, Sheila! Stop humping him!"

Likewise, the woman who spontaneously offers a 30-minute lecture on the history of her dog's dental hygiene is an excellent character study. What's her story? Does she spend all day at the dog park prowling for someone who looks interested in knowing intimate details of her dog's bowel movements? Is there a reason she thinks I'm that person?

Regardless of whether you do your people watching at the grocery store, bank, or bowling alley, be sure to have a notepad handy. If you can get your hands on one of those spy cameras that looks like a pen, even better.

Roleplay: Sadly, this isn't as kinky as it sounds. Grab a friend or critique partner, sit down with a cup of coffee, and pretend you've just met. Not only have you just met, but you are your character. Ask each other typical "getting to know you" questions. Where did you grow up? What's your family

(Continued on page 17)



Love & Other Crimes

ROMANCE WRITERS
OF NEW ZEALAND

CONFERENCE AUGUST 19TH - 21ST 2011

Sponsored by  **HARLEQUIN**[®]

FOR FULL CONFERENCE PROGRAMME AND REGISTRATION

VISIT WWW.ROMANCEWRITERS.CO.NZ

Conference: The Social Side

RWNZ's conference is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the craft of writing and the publishing industry... but it's also a great chance to get together socially. Put faces to the names you know from the NZRomance email loop, meet writers (and potential critique partners!) from around the country, and celebrate the wonderful achievements of so many RWNZers.

Here's a rundown of what's happening on the social front.

Friday 19 August

6pm-7pm: First Timers' Welcome Reception

Attending your first ever RWNZ conference? Then you're invited to join us at this informal reception. Enjoy complimentary drinks and nibbles, and meet a few members of the RWNZ Exec or Conference Committee (guaranteeing you some familiar faces when you walk into the main session on Saturday morning!). We'll give you a warm RWNZ welcome, and answer any questions you have about the conference weekend.

7pm-9pm: "Royally Romantic" Cocktail Party



Kick off your conference with a buzz, and come along to the cocktail party. If you've registered for the weekend conference, it's free! It's \$42 (GST inclusive) if you're not attending the weekend conference or if you're bringing a date. Drinks are free for the first hour, cash bar for the second hour. Finger food will be served throughout. Dress to the theme—think Wills and Kate's royal wedding, or Mills & Boon sheikhs and European principalities. Wear the crown jewels, a tiara, royal colours—you choose!

Saturday 20 August

7:30pm: Harlequin Awards Dinner—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!). Enjoy a three-course dinner with house wine and orange juice, then sit back and relax while you listen to our after-dinner speaker. And the awards? We'll be celebrating the winners of RWNZ's various contests, and—the highlight of the night—announcing the results of the Clendon Award. Dinner tickets are \$69 (GST inclusive).

In addition to these "formal" activities, there are numerous opportunities to chat over morning and afternoon teas, conference lunches, drinks in the bar, breakfast... See you there!

Conference: The Craft Side



Tess Gerritsen

Saturday Morning Keynote Address:

Find the Heart of Your Story

Learn how a New York Times-bestselling author uses emotion to tell a good tale.

 **HARLEQUIN**[®]
entertain, enrich, inspire™

Diva of the Digital Dark Side

Executive Editor of Carina Press, Harlequin's digital-first imprint, and veteran of the digital publishing industry, Angela James is a long-time advocate for digital publishing. She has enjoyed nearly a decade of experience in digital publishing, including successfully launching, building and serving as executive editor for two digital-first presses. Angela frequently travels to regional, national and international writing conferences to meet with authors and readers and to drag them to the digital dark side. She's creator of the online self-editing course, *Before You Hit Send*, which she offers to authors at all stages of their writing career.

You can find Angela daily on both Twitter and Facebook.

Though Angela does not do much acquiring and editing these days, spending most of her time on the administrative end of things, she continues to edit a small group of authors she's had a long-time editorial relationship with, as well as the special, invitation-only, Carina Press holiday collections. In addition, she's been known to be seduced into editing the random novella that catches her attention while she's browsing the submissions inbox. And Angela is still waiting for someone to write her the ultimate cowboy space opera romance adventure, in the vein of *Firefly*. For that particular project, she'll give up sleep in order to edit!



Supporters Wanted!

And we're not talking about a WonderBra!

One of the most fun parts of conference is being handed your goody-bag when you sign in.

We all love those little treats!

If you have friends or family in a business that might be willing to supply goodies for our conference goody-bags, we'd love to hear from you! Past goody-bag supplies have included

- beauty product samples
- magazines
- pens
- stationery
- books
- snacks
- sweets
- chocolate
- breakfast items

Your imagination is the limit!

Please contact:

Trudi Caffell trudij@paradise.net.nz
or Abby Gaines abby@abbygaines.com

if you can help.



You know you're among
writers when...

Kindles
are more popular than
jewellery.

Bron Evans

Request for Raffle Prizes

Imagine...
a basket of goodies
wrapped in cellophane
and decorated with a tasteful ribbon.

Mysterious.

Magical.

Imagine winning one at the Conference.

Magnificent!

Meanwhile,

Imagine...
contributing something to the raffle.

A suitcase full of books?
Those three bottles of wine
you've had since Christmas?

Or that fabulous makeup set
you've seen on special
at Smith and Caughey's?

This year, as every year,
the Conference Committee
is relying on your generosity
to make our raffles memorable.

Please contact Yvonne on
yve@xtra.co.nz or (09) 483-8411
if you'd like to contribute.

(Scene And Sequel continued from page 1)

keep from being fired. Or maybe he needs to escape from a situation that is unpleasant or dangerous. Or maybe he desperately needs to find something. It doesn't matter what your character wants, as long as he has a goal.

Once you have a scene goal established, you need a barrier to the goal. The barrier adds the second element necessary to the scene—conflict. Somehow our hero (or heroine or whoever the point-of-view character is) has to outwit the person or situation keeping him from reaching his goal. Perhaps there is an unexpected (and unwanted) visitor waiting for him when he arrives home. Perhaps his boss fires him the moment he arrives at the office. Perhaps he's trapped in a locked building. The more obstacles (struggle) he has to overcome in the pursuit of his goal, the more interesting, exciting, and dramatic the scene will be to the reader.

Once your character either reaches his goal or seems to be on the verge of reaching his goal, you need something to happen—some new action or piece of information or story question that will propel him (and the story) forward into the next scene. Something that will “hook” the reader and keep him happily turning pages. This “hook” will satisfy the third and last necessary scene element—the disaster.

The disaster doesn't have to be an earthquake, a murder, a betrayal, or a painful breakup, although those would certainly qualify. The truth is you can still have a great hook without huge drama. You especially don't need to resort to melodrama. All you need is something that leaves a question in the mind of the reader, something that makes him want to read on. Let's say your scene is between hero and heroine and she says something to the hero that makes him uncertain of her feelings for him. So the last line of the scene (if we're in his point of view) could be: She doesn't love me.

Then, of course, you'd write the next scene, or the sequel, from her point of view where she despairs of ever getting the hero to love her the way she loves him. Readers adore being privy to information the characters don't have. That's one of the reasons secret baby stories do so well.

Now that we know the three key elements necessary for a successful scene, let's talk about general scene construction. We already know that a scene is made up of action, reaction, cause and effect. Can a scene have only one character? Yes, says Swain.

He gives an example of a man climbing a mountain, encountering lots of obstacles to his goal of reaching the summit, and just as he's about to have success, he falls and breaks his leg. All three scene elements are present: goal, conflict, disaster.

In the prologue to my December 2000 Berkley single title, *The Wrong Child*, I had a one-character scene. The scene took place in a small hospital during a blizzard. The point-of-view character was an overworked, exhausted nurse who'd had to work two shifts because most of the scheduled personnel hadn't been able to reach the hospital. She had just helped deliver two babies born within minutes of one another and was now working to get them cleaned up and ready to go and see their mothers. She felt sick, but she kept working. While attaching their identification bracelets, she mistakenly put the wrong bracelet on the first baby. Immediately realizing her mistake, she started to

... “tell” has gotten a bad rap
and it is not
a four-letter word.

remove the bracelet, but before she could, she suffered a heart attack, collapsed, and died. The scene ended with the other bracelet, the one she should have put on the baby she was attending, rolling onto the floor.

As you can see, even though there was only one character, the prologue qualified as a scene. There was action, cause and effect, a scene goal, conflict, and a disaster to end the scene.

But most scenes do have more than one character, usually because that's the way to include dialogue and move the story forward faster. So your first decision about those scenes will be which character's point-of-view to use. Most of the time, you'll pick the character in the scene who has the most at stake because that will make the scene more exciting and interesting. But not always. Alicia Rasley, in her point of view workshop, said that sometimes using the character with the most interesting perspective will give you a better scene.

When I teach point-of-view in my classes, I always use this illustration from my second Berkley release, *The Other Woman*. While writing the last section of the book I was struggling with a scene. No matter what I did, the scene seemed boring to me. It was a scene between Adam (my hero) and

his sister. He was at a low ebb and telling his sister about his problem. I finally realized the sister should be the point of view character and not him. We already knew how he felt about things—we'd been in his head *ad nauseam*. But we had no idea how his sister felt about his situation; she and Adam had not had the most congenial relationship. They were only then beginning to become friends again. When I switched to her head, the scene came together as if by magic. In fact, it's one of my favorite scenes in the entire book.

Once you've decided on your point-of-view character, you can begin the actual writing of the scene. Because scenes equal action, you'll want to use action verbs as much as possible, keep internal thought to a minimum, and use lots of dialogue—but don't completely eliminate internal thought. A bit of judiciously placed internal thought can greatly increase the emotional intensity of a scene.

Yes, dialogue is a great way to show how people feel without telling the reader, but I don't view internal thought as something to avoid—especially when the thoughts can't be expressed aloud, either because the character fears something or whatever it is he/she is thinking is a secret and if the other person or persons in the scene discovered that secret, there would be fireworks. So the secret adds tension and emotional intensity.

In one of my classes, I devote one entire lesson to the fact that “tell” has gotten a bad rap and it is not a four-letter word. Basically, here's the way the scene should go: action, reaction causes new action, reaction causes new action, reaction. Cause and effect. And the last “effect” should be the disaster that ends the scene. And one very important note: flashbacks have no place in a scene. Save those for your sequels.♥♥♥

Tune in next month when we'll study sequels in Part Two of Patricia's fabulous article! This article was first published in the Romance Writers' Report and has been reprinted with permission from the author. (Editors)

Patricia Kay is the USA Today best-selling author of 51 novels of romance and women's fiction. Her first single title for Berkley was nominated for a RITA, and she is an acclaimed speaker and writing teacher whose classes receive rave reviews from her students. Her latest release, Meet Mr. Prince—the 4th novel in the Hunt for Cinderella II—is now available. To learn more about Patricia, her novels and writing classes visit

www.patrickay.com

Writing for the Web



Five things novelists should do.

Website content manager by day. Contemporary romance writer by night. **Kat Latham** gives some website tips specifically for authors.

In my day job, I manage the content for a large charity website. I spend lots of time training my colleagues on writing for the web.

When I visit authors' websites, I'm sometimes struck by the simple ways they could make their sites easier to use. When Roni Loren wrote about the [*ten components to a rocking author website](#) her number one tip was to make sure a drunken monkey could navigate it. Excellent tip.

Today I'll show you how the content you write can make your site easier to use. I won't focus on how you use your voice or how to market your books. Instead I'll show you easy ways to ensure your message is clear and easy to act on—whether it's "Buy my book!" or "Get to know who I am!"

Though I'm writing this mostly for my fellow novelists, the principles here can apply to all websites.

1. Understand that web writing needs to be different than print writing because we read differently online.

In fact, people don't tend to read online. And when we do, we read more slowly on a computer screen than we do a printed document. Plus, when we're online, we often have other things competing for our attention, unlike when we settle down with a good book.

Instead, we scan for information online. This means you need to...

2. Make your web pages easy to scan.

You might love long, lush paragraphs in your novels, but your web audience will bash their heads against their keyboards if you present them with information that way. Unless they love you with stalkerish devotion, they'll probably give up on your site and try to find their information elsewhere.

So how do you make your pages easy to scan? Simple. Don't use a single word more than you have to.

There are several other ways to draw our eyes to your most important information:

- Write descriptive links.
- Limit paragraphs to three short sentences at most.
- Use descriptive subheadings to break up paragraphs.
- Use bullet points for lists instead of long

sentences with lots of commas.

Because they're crucial in helping our website visitors scan, let's look more closely at links and subheadings.

3. Make your links descriptive.

It's so easy to overlook link text, but it's crucial in helping people find the information they want. Good link text also helps make your site more accessible to visually impaired people (more about that in a second).

Here's a quick exercise. Sit back for a second and look at the choices below. Which of these two links jumps out at you?

a. [Click here](#) to follow me on Twitter

b. [Follow me on Twitter](#)

Most people will say b. Your link text should tell me immediately where you're taking me. If I see a page full of 'Click here' links, then I'm forced to read all the surrounding words, which slows me down even more.

'Click here' links also make pages very difficult for visually impaired people, who can use something called a screen reader to read out web pages to them. If you've ever seen someone use a screen reader, you'll know how remarkable it is. (I searched for videos of people using screen readers, but most of them had such terrible sound quality that they weren't very helpful.)

Visually impaired people scan with their ears the way sighted people use their eyes. They can have their screen reader read out all the links on a page. Imagine how frustrating it would be to hear 'Click here' ten times when you really want to find a link taking you to an author's bio page, or information about whether a book is available in large print.

Link text should:

- closely match the title of the page you're taking people to (see my link to Roni's post above for an example)
- preferably be 3-5 words long, unless the page you're linking to has a longer title.

Even if the only thing you change about your site is to make your link text more descriptive, your site will be immediately easier to use.

4. Write descriptive subheadings.

If I'm looking at a long page all about a

single novel, I want the page to be broken up with subheadings that immediately tell me what information comes below.

Let's say you have a page about your latest novel. Here's some of the information you might want on it:

- Blurb
- Excerpt
- Links to reviews
- Places to buy the book
- Extra fun stuff

If I see all that information without any subheadings, I'll go nuts. It's so simple to write 'Excerpt' in big bold letters before pasting your excerpt onto the page, but it makes a huge difference and helps readers find what they're looking for.

5. Put your most important information at the top.

In English we read left to right, top to bottom, so it shouldn't be a surprise that the top left of the screen is where our eyes start out. That's your prime real estate. That's where you should put your most important information—whatever you decide that is on a particular page. (Check out this cool [**eye-tracking heat map](#) showing where web users look.)

Photos are rarely the most important thing, which is why you'll always see my blog photos justified right. They're just eye candy. Words rule. Give me the blurb on the left of the page, and the book cover on the right. ♥♥♥

Kat writes single-title contemporary romance. With degrees in English lit and human rights, she loves stories that reflect the depth, humor and emotion of real life.

She also writes weekly posts about contemporary romance for The Season blog:

<http://theseasonforromance.com/>

Her own blog is:

<http://readericreatedhim.wordpress.com/>

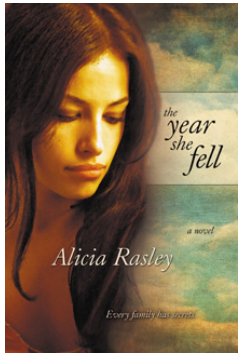
In her day job, Katrina is an editor for a charity in London.

**You'll find Roni Loren's article in paragraph 2 here:*

<http://fictiongroupie.blogspot.com/2011/04/ten-components-of-rocking-author.html>

***You'll find the eye-tracking heat map (2nd to last paragraph) here:*

<http://www.useit.com/eyetracking/>



Back Story Blunders

Backstory: you've got to have it, but where do you put it?

Author and writing teacher **Alicia Rasley** shows what works, what doesn't, and why.

You can tell a new writer by how she handles backstory. (Backstory, by the way, is everything of relevance that happened before the story opens.) A new writer often thinks, "I better tell why this person is the way he is early, or I'll lose my readers' identification." Or "I have to explain everything about how we got to this point, or the readers won't be able to follow the events."

That's the understandable motive behind those long passages of "backstory dump" in so many Chapter Ones.

By laying out the backstory, those preceding events that motivate the characters, the writer might be wasting a powerful tool in creating plot suspense and character conflict.

Check out these examples of backstory blunders:

Emily Wilson opened the door of her childhood home and entered the large marble foyer. She gazed up at the lofty domed ceiling and was overcome with memories... especially the memory of her mother's body, hanging from a homemade noose tied to the chandelier. A note on the dining room table explained her reason-- the desertion of her husband Tom, Emily's ne'er-do-well father. In the fifteen years since, Emily had been fleeing from that memory, but now that she had come into her inheritance, she was coming home again. She would have to sell this house, because she could not bear to live with the memories.

John Merritt was born thirty years earlier in a small hollow in West Virginia, the son of a poor farmer and his deeply religious wife. In grade school he discovered an affinity for art, and a devoted teacher helped him hone his skill. He wasn't much of a student at Whiskey Hollow High School, but his art talent earned him a scholarship to the state university. There he met and married Joan Feinstein, a pretty blonde finance major from a middle-class Morgantown family. Their marriage was hobbled by class differences, and they divorced after five years and two children.....

Subconsciously, Teri worried that she might have inherited her sister's promiscuity, and so she avoided attractive men. She fooled herself into believing that her long-term relationship with a boring fellow programmer was all she wanted out of love.

So what's wrong with that, you might ask. Why not let the reader know all that's going on, all that's motivating the protagonist, all that's affecting the plot?

Why is it a blunder to begin with backstory?

For one thing, the backstory dump kills the suspense by telling right away how we got here to this opening situation. It answers the question, "What led to the character being in this situation?" almost before the reader has a chance to ask it. In the Emily example above, a major revelation—that Emily had discovered her mother's suicide—is just dropped into a description of the foyer. The reader will go "Huh?" reading that, and wonder how important this detail is, because usually revelations of major formative traumas like that get a bit of foreshadowing or setting up (thus increasing the suspense). Here the suicide is just tossed away, and its effect on Emily spelled out in undramatic terms—we're told of, not shown, her flight from the past.

Consider how much more dramatic this opening scene might be if Emily unlocks the door of her elegant childhood home, steels herself, walks in, glances around the foyer, sees the chandelier, stops short, and then, resolutely, goes into the dining room, past the table, into the kitchen, and pulling a cell phone from her purse, calls a realtor and says, "I want to sell a house. Immediately. I don't care how much I get for it." The readers will be asking, "Wait a minute! It's a beautiful house! It's her childhood home! Why does she want to sell it? And if she sells it, why doesn't she try to get a good price?" On the heels of those questions will come the canny conclusion, "It must have something to do with that chandelier. I wonder what."

Once you have the readers speculating about the situation you've set up, you've hooked them. They have to keep reading to get more clues to see if their suppositions are correct.

But if you tell them everything upfront, you might lose the narrative drive that comes from posing the story question, in this case, "Why does Emily want to unload her beautiful childhood home?"

And it slows down the pacing by having paragraphs and pages right upfront which aren't taking place anywhere but (maybe) the protagonist's mind. The "capsule biography" (such as the John Merritt excerpt above) doesn't even take place in the character's mind—it just sort of sums up his existence in the driest of omniscient voices.

Not to mention that the readers have no way of knowing how any item on that list related to the action of the opening scene. In some cases, that sort of retrospective actually substitutes for the scene's action. Since they know very little of who John Merritt is and what he's doing, they can't evaluate which in that list of life events matters—his religious mother? His art skill? This is where readers start to skim—and you don't want them skimming in Chapter One. If you let those details come out gradually, through the action, when they're needed, readers can begin putting together the puzzle of who this man is, and what matters to him, and how he will live in this plot.

So consider each of those biographical items, and which matter to the story, and when you can sneak them in. For example, if the religious mother is important, maybe John can think, at some crucial moment, that his mother would be praying hard at this point, but that when he left West Virginia, he left the praying to her. What this does is make for a more character-driven read: readers learn what's important from the characters' thoughts and actions, not from author summation. They learn much more about who this character is

(Continued on page 15)

(Back Story Blunders continued from page 14)
from what he remembers of his past (his mother's prayers) and how he currently interprets it (he has abandoned prayer himself) than from a long list of biographical details.

And most important, the backstory dump doesn't leave enough for the characters—and the readers—to do. The story is a journey for the protagonist, from an embarkation to a destination. The protagonist doesn't necessarily choose that destination, especially if it is a point of psychological growth (which can be painful!). But part of the journey is coming to recognize limitations and finally, because of the events of the plot, decide to overcome them.

Readers participate in this journey by identifying with the protagonist. That identification will be sharpened if you don't tell readers ahead of time what the protagonist needs to learn or overcome, but rather show it through the events of the plot. That way readers can discover, along with the protagonist, the destination from the journey itself.

For example, if Teri's response to her sister's promiscuity is still subconscious, part of her journey will be towards bringing it to the surface and dealing with it consciously, rather than just reacting irrationally. You don't have to tell the reader what Teri doesn't understand herself, but you can show her reacting to the sister's past. Say she meets an attractive man, and is thinking about deepening the acquaintance when he says casually, "You know, I went out a few times with your sister." Teri might freeze up and immediately, without further consideration, decide to have nothing more to do with the man. Maybe he will have to pursue her, even charm her against her will, force her to confront her fear that if she gives into attraction, she will be like her sister—out of control.

In the end, it comes back to "Show, Don't Tell". If backstory is important to the story, that importance should be demonstrated within the story, not merely by some authorial comment on top of the opening scene. This will have the effect of creating a little bit of reader suspense, as they put together the puzzle of the story. This increases reader involvement even in books without external mysteries.

So how do you know when to show

backstory? Here's the rule of thumb: Wait until the readers need to know it. And then give them only as much as they need to know at that point, and as "transparently" as possible—if you can, through the thoughts, actions, memories, or dialogue of the characters. Let the readers be part of the "making of meaning" by providing them the context to ask questions ("What's up with that chandelier?") and puzzle out the answers. ♥♥♥

Copyright ©1998 Alicia Rasley and Edittorrent. All rights reserved. This article is published with permission from Alicia Rasley.

Alicia Rasley is the author of *The Power of Point of View* and *The Story Within Plotbook*, all available on her website or amazon.com. Her latest novel, *The Year She Fell*, was released in November 2010 by Bell Bridge Books. She teaches writing at a community college, and is a guest lecturer and writing advisor at a state university. Visit her at her website or at her Editing blog: <http://www.edittorrent.blogspot.com/>

(Creating the People continued from page 7)
romantic relationship intertwine on the page. The forward progression of the plot drives changes in the character, and the character's changes drive the plot forward, and the hero and heroine push each other. I find that I usually have to move pieces around a few times—can't have the hero injured in the battle here because that would force the heroine to acknowledge her feelings and she can't do that yet, etc. Personally, I think that character rules plot because I find you can more easily massage the plot to echo the character's growth; fudging the character's growth to fit the plot can feel forced and unrealistic (always funny when you are talking about fiction).

I have other, smaller tools for refining a character's motto, behavioral quirk, personal imagery dictionary, etc. but these three steps give me a sturdy launch for a story. You can also write most of a synopsis with these pieces. Pantsers, if you made it this far, you can see there's still a lot of room for on-the-fly characterization, like favorite ice cream. I also use these character notes during revisions to make sure I told the story I wanted to tell.

Although I consider myself a very analytical writer (shocking, I know) in the end, I do believe a character comes

(How do you Mend... continued from page 5)
give the "Broken Scene" workshop (I'll be in NYC this summer doing a two-hour version), I use real life examples from my first draft (very unhealthy scenes) to the printed version in the books. I don't allow these scenes to be digitally reproduced (the 'before' scenes are so bad, my career could be over), but I do have handouts that I give workshop attendees that help demonstrate the techniques.

Since I can't include them here, perhaps I will someday have an opportunity to visit New Zealand (hint, hint!) and present the workshop in person. In the meantime, best of luck with your scene revisions and keep 'em healthy! ♥♥♥

Roxanne St. Claire is a New York Times bestselling author of twenty-seven novels of suspense and romance. She currently writes romantic suspense for Hachette/Grand Central Publishing, with two titles released this year. In 2012, Delacorte Press will release her first Young Adult novel, which has been optioned as a feature film, and she will also launch a new contemporary series for her current publisher. In March and April of 2011, look for back to back releases: *Shiver of Fear* and *Face of Danger*, the latest in the popular Guardian Angelino series.

In addition to being a four-time RITA nominee and one-time RITA winner, her books have won the National Reader's Choice Award for best romantic suspense for two consecutive years, as well as the Daphne du Maurier Award, the HOLT Medallion, the Maggie, Booksellers Best, Book Buyers Best, and others. Her novels have been translated into dozens of languages, are routinely included as a Doubleday/Rhapsody Book Club Selection of the Month, and have regularly resided on bestseller lists. She can be reached via her website, www.roxannestclaire.com

alive through some indescribable jolt of magic. But I think it's a lot like Frankenstein's monster; Frankenstein had to do a lot of work first—grave robbing, sewing, decanting mysterious bubbling liquids—before the lightning brought his creature to life. Happy mad scientisting! ♥♥♥

Jessa Slade wrote one of almost every romance sub-genre (some of it quite badly) before getting *The Call* for her first *Marked Souls* novel. To learn more about the *Marked Souls* books or for Jessa's *More Than You Ever Wanted to Know About Plotting*, visit

<http://jessaslade.com>

You can find her online at

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

and <http://twitter.com/jessaslade>



Writing the Best Body Language And Dialogue Cues

Amplifying your readers' emotional responses.

Psychologist and author **Margie Lawson** shares more insights on writing fresh.

We're continuing with Part Two of Margie's article from the May edition.

Deep Editing Analysis:

Dennis Lehane, *Moonlight Mile*

Example: Reaction of teenage girl

Her façade of apathetic cool collapsed and she looked about nine years old. Nine years old and abandoned by her parents at the mall.

Body Language: Lehane *tells* it, he doesn't show her face. But it's written *fresh*. That's why it works. The reader conjures an image of a teenage girl with her I-don't-care apathetic look of teen-coolness collapsing into the look of a nine-year-old who is terrified.

- Power Words: façade, apathetic, collapsed, abandoned
- Rhetorical Devices—Alliteration: cool collapsed
- Rhetorical Device—Amplification: Second sentence
- Rhetorical Device—Anadiplosis: ... about nine years old. Nine years old and...
- Cadence: Strong. Read it out loud as is:

Her façade of apathetic cool collapsed and she looked about nine years old. Nine years old and abandoned by her parents at the mall.

Now read it out loud without the last three words:

Her façade of apathetic cool collapsed and she looked about nine years old. Nine years old and abandoned by her parents.

Hear the difference? Now you know why Lehane added those three words "at the mall". Cadence. Cadence. Cadence.

Example: Here's another deceptively simple line that carries the power of cadence.

The smile that blew across his face was the kind movie stars give on red carpets—

that much wattage, that much charm.

Fresh Writing and Dynamite Cadence

Lehane did not write these overused basics:

He shot her a charming smile.

He gave her a movie-star smile.

He gave her a high-wattage smile.

Lehane didn't write that smile in a basic way, because they're tried and trite. We've all read those smiles. They don't carry interest or power or cadence.

Body Language Examples

This section and the following section (dialogue cues) share examples from published authors. These authors are all Margie-grads, writers who have taken my on-line classes, ordered the Lecture Packets, attended full day Master Classes, and/or attended three-day intensive Immersion Master Classes.

Melanie Milburne, *His Inconvenient Wife* (Margie-grad)

- Two shrugs: 1st shrug, amplified; 2nd shrug, hyphenated-run-on:

Damien shrugged in that detestably aloof way that had annoyed her the first time she'd met him.

He gave another one of those could-mean-anything shrugs.

- Touch—simile; stimulus/response:

Damien's hand on her arm felt like a rope burn. She could feel her skin prickling in reaction to his flesh on hers.

- His glance (stimulus) elicited her visceral response; includes dialogue lead-in:

"You can't stop me."

"Oh, can't I?" The light of challenge in his eyes made her stomach free-fall in panic.

Christa Allan, *Walking on Broken Glass* (Margie-grad)

Set Up: POV character is with therapist. He just asked if she would describe her mom as affectionate.

"Are you kidding?" This was a no-brainer. "Mom was the queen of the 'air hug.' You know, the stiff-armed hug where another person can almost fit in the middle between the two of you.

Next Example: A hug from friend in rehab:

Later, she hugged me, a warm, round squeeze, just Goldilocks right.

Jeri Smith-Ready, *Shade* (Margie-grad)

When Megan drew me into a tight hug, I clung to her with arms I could barely feel.

Dialogue Cues:

Tracey O'Hara, *Night's Cold Kiss* (Margie-grad)

- Volume, Simile: *"Clever girl." Christian's voice, no more than a whisper—like silk across glass—was far too soft for those below to hear.*

Tracey O'Hara, *Death's Sweet Embrace*, (Margie-grad)

- Tone, Stimulus/Response: *"SLOW DOWN," Ealund's rich voice echoed out of the surrounding air—the resonance deep and dark, sending a clammy chill across Gideon's skin.*
- Quality: *"Raven." It came out in a hushed expelling of breath, as if even her voice was afraid to give him form.*

CJ Lyons, Erin Brockovich, *Rock Bottom*, (CJ Lyons is a Margie-grad)

- Rate: *His words skidded together, building momentum like a NASCAR driver spotting the checkered flag.*
- Inflection: *"Guess we'll have to remedy that," I matched my inflection to her singsong dialect that wandered up and down the scale like the mountain switchbacks.*

Melanie Milburne, *The Australian's Marriage Demand*, (Margie-grad)

- Volume: *"You need to take a little more care, Jasmine," he said, his voice a soft rumble along her liquefying spine.*

Marie-Claude Bourque, *Ancient Whispers*, (Margie-grad)

(Continued on page 17)

(Continued from page 16)

- Tone: *His voice was rich, entrancing, a caress on her beaten spirit.*
- Quality: Incongruence: *Her voice was dead calm, completely different from the fury and sadness she felt inside.*

Jaye Wells, *The Mage In Black*
(Margie-grad)

- Quality, Simile: *His voice was hoarse, like he'd smoked a dozen packs a day for a millennium.*

Jeri Smith-Ready, *Shade*, (Margie-grad)

- Volume: *"I really have to go," I whispered, like I'd hurt ex-Hazel less if I lowered the volume.*

Janet Dean, *Courting Miss Adelaide*, (Margie-grad)

- Interpretation by POV Character: *Mr. Evans chuckled, the sound as inappropriate to Charles as giggling at a hanging.*
- Simile: *Her voice sounded thick, like she had tears running down the back of her throat.*

Jeanne Adams, *Deadly Little Secrets*, (Margie-grad)

- Two Dialogue Cues: *She kept her voice brisk, impersonal. "I'll need to speak with him. You are welcome to be present, Mr. Bromley." She put all the I Am An Agent Of The Law insistence she could in her voice.*

Joan Swan, *Facing the Fire, to be released April, 2012*, (Margie-grad)

- Using dialogue cue as stimulus and showing response: *The low, smooth timbre of his voice gave her belly an uncomfortable twist.*

- Humor Hit: *She didn't attempt to quell the duh in her tone.*

Jessa Slade, *Forged of Shadows*, (Margie-grad)

- Fresh: *In her calmest pre-saloon-brawl voice, she said, "I don't want any trouble."*

Darynda Jones, *First Grave on the Right*, (Margie-grad)

I stood in the aftereffect of his presence, the rich tones of his voice flowing down my spine like molten gold . . .

"But, Uncle Bob," I said, whining like a child who'd just been told she couldn't have a pony for her birthday. Or a Porsche.

Anna Campbell, *Tempt The Devil*
(Margie-grad)

- Amplified: *"Olivia..." he said on a long sigh. The murmur of her name in that deep voice soaked through her skin right to her bones. He sounded like an angel had pointed him toward a heaven he never thought he'd attain.*

Kudos to all these uber-talented authors.

I'm betting these authors would agree, writing the best body language and dialogue cues makes writers work harder. They push themselves to use the full range of body language and dialogue cues, and push to write fresh.

Best writing is worth the time and brain

cells. Best writing entices readers to come back for more. Best writing entices readers to become fans for life.♥♥♥

Margie Lawson—psychotherapist, writer, international presenter—has developed innovative editing systems for writers.

Her Deep Editing tools are used by writers, from newbies to NYT Bestsellers. She teaches writers how to hook the reader viscerally, how to edit with full psychological power, how to write page-turners.

Margie's Upcoming On-line Courses:

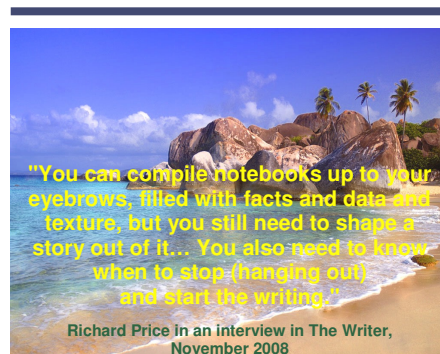
June 1—15: Writing Body Language and Dialogue Cues Like a Psychologist

June 16—30: Powering Up Body Language in Real Life: Projecting a Professional Persona When Pitching and Presenting

For specifics about these on-line courses: www.MargieLawson.com

Margie is also supporting Brenda Novak's Diabetes Auction with some fabulous donations. You'll find a list of those at her website (above) and at the auction site:

<http://brendanovak.auctionanything.com/>



(Five Tips... continued from page 9)

like? Do you prefer boxers or briefs? You won't always have the answers in mind before you start, but giving fast, gut-level responses to questions like these can help get you into the mindset of an unfamiliar character.

Get crafty. Some authors make elaborate 3D collages for books they're beginning to write. It's a practice I've long admired in theory, but have never pursued due to inherent laziness and a general lack of craftiness. Even so, I like the idea of having something visual to start my wheels turning, so I recently spent an hour browsing online for photos that matched my mental picture of the characters in my next novel. I printed out the pictures and pinned them on the bulletin board beside my desk. This comes with the added bonus of having them staring disdainfully down at me as I spend an hour playing

around on damnyouautocorrect.com instead of working.

No matter what approach you take, getting to know your characters' likes, dislikes, and subtle quirks is a big part of building a strong story. Now go out there and create some people! ♥♥♥

A romantic comedy author who can peel and eat a banana with her toes, Tawna Fenske has traveled a winding career path from journalist, to English teacher in Venezuela, to marketing geek. She's the author of the popular daily blog "Don't Pet Me, I'm Writing" and a member of Romance Writers of America. Her debut novel, Making Waves, hits shelves in August 2011 as the first in a trio of quirky romantic comedies from Sourcebooks, Inc. It's available now for pre-order!

<http://www.bookdepository.co.uk/Making-Waves-Tawna-Fenske/9781402257216>

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

Romance Writers of New Zealand Inc. National Executive Committee Brief Job Descriptions

President Tasks:

- Serve as the Chief Executive Officer of RWNZ.
- Serve as spokesperson in regard to established policy.
- Call, set the agenda for, and preside over all meetings of the Executive Committee and meetings of the membership.
- Appoint, with Executive approval, such committees as may be needed or provided for in the Rules and the chairpersons of such committees.
- Serve as ex-officio member of all committees.
- Appoint, with the approval of the Executive, non-voting office holders.
- Execute RWNZ business as specified by the Executive Committee and established policy including, but not limited to, the expenditure of RWNZ funds in accordance with the annual budget approved by the Executive.
- Open and close all bank accounts in conjunction with the Treasurer and Secretary.
- Act as cheque signatory.
- Co-ordinate all activities.
- Attend Executive meetings (in person, via phone or the internet).
- Fulfil any other obligations designated by the Executive.

Membership Secretary Tasks:

- Maintain a membership list.
- Respond to queries by people seeking membership.
- Register new members and send them membership packs.
- Send out membership accounts.
- Attend Executive meetings (in person, via phone or the internet).
- Send address labels to the newsletter editor.
- Fulfil any other obligations designated by the Executive.

Treasurer Tasks:

- Open and close all bank accounts in conjunction with the President and/or Secretary.
- Act as cheque signatory.
- Ensure all monies received are receipted and banked.
- Ensure all accounts are paid by due date.
- Keep annual cash book, computerised accounts and/or any other records deemed appropriate by the auditor showing adequate record of financial transactions to enable a clear, up-to-date position of financial statements.
- Ensure that the financial statements are ready for auditing at the end of the financial year.
- Attend Executive meetings (in person, via phone or the internet).
- Present a financial statement at Executive meetings.
- Arrange for accounts to be audited annually.
- Present an audited set of financial statements at the Annual General Meeting.
- Prepare budgets.
- Keep an asset register.
- Fulfil any other obligations designated by the Executive.

Publicity Officer Tasks:

- Serve as spokesperson in regard to established policy.
- Have responsibility for all publicity and press releases.
- Arrange sponsorships.
- Organise fundraising through events and applications to funders.
- Attend Executive meetings (in person, via phone or the Internet).
- Fulfil any other obligations designated by the Executive.

WHAT'S A REMIT?

A remit is a proposal put forward for discussion at an Annual General Meeting.

Secretary Tasks:

- Open and close all bank accounts in conjunction with the President and Treasurer.
- Be responsible for the recording and preserving of minutes to all Executive meetings and presenting such minutes to the Executive for corrections and approval.
- Prepare the nomination form, proxy form, notice of AGM and Agenda.
- Send forms to members at the appropriate times.
- Send election ballot papers (if necessary) to members.
- Prepare minutes of the AGM.
- Fulfil any other obligations designated by the Executive.
- Act as cheque signatory.

Vice President Tasks:

- Preside over all meetings of the Executive in the absence of the President.
- Assume the duties of the President in the event the President is temporarily incapacitated or otherwise unable to perform.
- Until such time as the Vice President may be required to assume the duties of the President they will:
- Act as Chapter liaison
- Assume other duties to be decided upon in consultation with the rest of the Executive at the beginning of the term.
- Attend Executive meetings (in person, via phone or the internet).
- From time to time fulfil any other obligations designated by the Executive.

WHEN SHOULD I PROPOSE A REMIT?

Propose a remit if you believe RWNZ needs to change something in its Constitution or bylaws.

Romance Writers of New Zealand Inc. Notice of Meeting

It is hereby given that the tenth Annual General Meeting of the Romance Writers of New Zealand Inc. (RWNZ) will be held on Saturday 20 August 2011, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Auckland.

Members wishing to propose remits to be considered at this meeting must send them to the Secretary at:

*AGM Remits
RWNZ
PO Box 10264,
Dominion Road,
Auckland*

by 5pm Saturday 25th June 2011.

Please note that to be accepted remits:

- May only be proposed by a current member.
- Need to be seconded by a current member.
- Must be dated
- Must be accompanied by arguments for the remit.

Abby Gaines, President

WHERE'S THE CONSTITUTION?

You'll find a copy of RWNZ's constitution on the RWNZ website.

*"My theory is,
if I'm not getting
a rejection
every week,
I'm not working."*

*A.S. King
in an interview
in Writer's Digest,
February 2009*

RWNZ News Around the Regions

Keeping in touch with each other.

AUCKLAND

Our May meeting went very well with Ann Russell's workshop on *Scent and Sensuality* and we had a very good attendance.

Our next meeting takes place on Saturday 4th of June at 12.30pm at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion on the corner of Mt Albert and Mt Eden Roads. Bring a small plate and be prepared to buy raffle tickets—the prizes are always worth it. The workshop will be announced in the Auckland Chapter e-newsletter the week before the meeting.

CENTRAL NORTH C2C

Our April gathering at Jenny's home in Piopio proved to be highly entertaining as well as informative—on many levels! There was an excellent workshop on personality traits, 'belly-laughs' (think donkeys, ladies) were inspired by Lizzie, and off-the-cuff-writing was shared with much hilarity. And, since then, two of our newest writers have made it into the final round of judging in separate comps. Well done to Nicky Davidson (for her regency chapter in RWAmerica's 'Beau Monde—Royal Ascot' competition) and also to Rachel Jones with two entries in our own Chapter Short Story comp. We await the final results and good luck to you both!

Our next meeting will be at Vicky English's home in Thames on Saturday 18th of June, 12.00 midday. Please bring a plate for a shared lunch. Meeting details and directions will be emailed prior.

WELLINGTON

Wellington/Kapiti branch had an excellent May meeting—and lots of us tried writing a piece using the words *forlorn*, *duvet*, and *pizza* (or *eiderdown* and *cottage pie* for historical stories.) We had royal weddings—old and new—a proposal by a magician, dreams, stranding on a lonely road, and a duvet being loaded with soon-to-stink prawns—among other themes!

Next meeting is 1pm, Saturday 11th of June at Meryl's. Writing exercise: Janet and Julie-Ann are bravely sending local members a first-draft page, and we're to get some editing practice by bringing their words up to submission standard. Should be fun.

NELSON

At this month's meeting we celebrated that our local monthly magazine *Wild Tomato* had an article about our group in their May issue. We celebrated in style, of course, with pink bubbly, cheese and crackers, and other goodies. Then we seriously got working. We read each other's first paragraphs—looking at them from an editor's perspective—discussed every one of them, and Shirley took notes of our opinions.

Next month we will go back to each beginning and try to write a first page of how we think the story will progress. It will be interesting to see if our respective writing will have any resemblance with the original author's idea of the continuation.

Sally, who this weekend was at the Portage Writers Resort with Joan Rosier-Jones as tutor, will tell us all about it next time. Maybe more of us will be able to go next year.

As usual we meet at 2pm on the second Saturday of every month at 63 Golf Rd, Tahunanui, Nelson. Anyone interested in Romance writing is welcome!

OTAGO

"To focus on the story with the most persistent voice and finish it" was the answer to last month's dilemma of how to deal with too many ideas at once.

As we shared our writing with Kura Carpenter and Joan Anderson, our two new members, this gem became obvious. We each offered our hottest idea—the one with the steamy cover already awaiting it—and received fresh insights from fresh eyes. This month, with our focus on preparing for the First Impressions Comp at Conference, we'll bring our brightest jewels for another (grinding!) and polishing.

Join us on Saturday 18th of June. Time and place? Contact Viv.

How many science fiction writers does it take to change a light bulb?

Two, but it's actually the same person doing it.

He went back in time and met himself in the doorway and then the first one sat on the other one's shoulders so they were able to reach it. Then a major time paradox occurred and the entire room, light bulb, changer and all was blown out of existence. They co-existed in a parallel universe, though.



REGIONAL CONVENORS

Auckland: Frances Housden
email: Fhousden@xtra.co.nz

Central North (C2C):
Gaylene Atkins
email: ada.farms@xtra.co.nz

Hawkes Bay: Ginny Suckling
email: ginny.suckling@xtra.co.nz

Wellington: Leeanne Morgan
email: morgan.leeann@clear.net.nz

Nelson: Annika Ohlson-Smith
email: allan-annika@xtra.co.nz

Blenheim: Iona Jones
email: iona.jones@xtra.co.nz

Christchurch: Jill Scott
email: scotts@snap.net.nz

Otago: Viv Adams
email: whitecliffodge@xtra.co.nz

**If you're a finalist in an RWNZ comp
then tell the world!**

Suzanne has created finalist logos for
you to use on your websites.

This month we're showcasing the
Strictly Single Contest one.



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

Writers' Corner

Here's where we find the answers to your writing questions. Any topic. Any problem. Nothing is too hard, too boring, or too silly. Email us at romance@bronwenevans.com



Kylie Short asks, "What is GoodReads and how should I use it?"

Bron Evans did a bit of research and this is what she came up with.

GoodReads www.goodreads.com is a free website for book lovers. Imagine it as a large library that you can wander through and see everyone's bookshelves, their reviews, and their ratings. You can also post your own reviews and catalog what you have read, are currently reading, and plan to read in the future. And it doesn't stop there—you can join a discussion group, start a book club, contact an author, and even post your own writing.

But authors can also use it as a great tool to get their book noticed. It's never too early to join GoodReads. Sign up as a reader before your book comes out and create friends and groups. Then once you have a published book, join the GoodReads Author Program and you'll have instant readers.

From the GoodReads website

GoodReads has a wonderful Author's Program. The GoodReads Author Program is a completely free feature

designed to help authors reach their target audience—passionate readers. This is the perfect place for new and established authors to promote their books.

Take Control of Your Profile

Make your profile a dynamic destination for curious readers. Here are some of the features you can use on your profile:

- Add a picture and bio.
- Share your list of favorite books and recent reads with your fans!
- Write a blog and generate a band of followers.
- Publicise upcoming events, such as book signings and speaking engagements.
- Share book excerpts and other writing.
- Write a quiz about your book or a related topic.
- Post videos.
- Add the GoodReads Author widget to your personal website or blog to

show off reviews of your books.

Promote Your Books

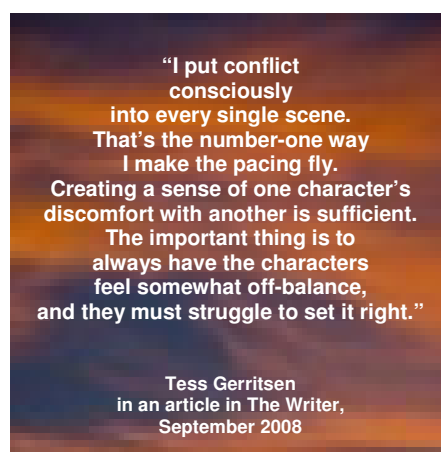
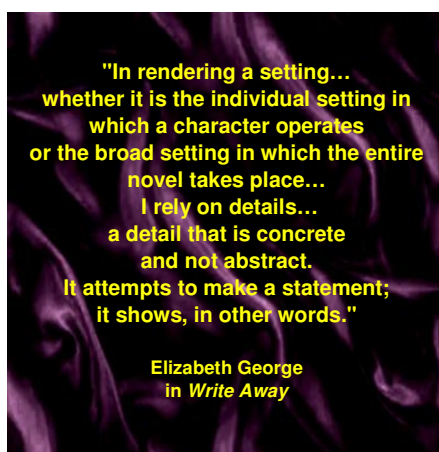
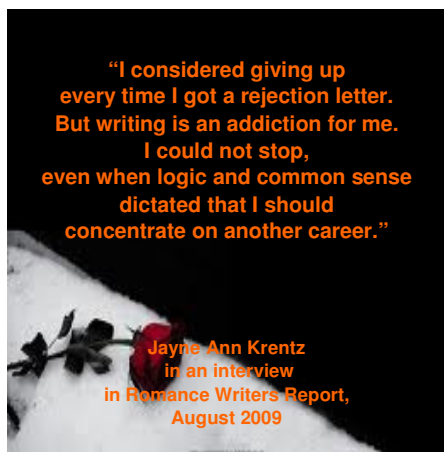
Get the word out! Here are some of the promotional tools available on GoodReads:

- Sign up to advertise your book to the GoodReads Community—up to 4,600,000 readers!
- List a book giveaway to generate pre-launch buzz.
- Lead a Q&A discussion group for readers.
- Participate in discussions on your profile, in groups and in the discussion forums for your books.

Everything you want to know about joining the authors program is on their website: <http://www.goodreads.com/author/program>

I listed a book giveaway and in one day had over 250 entries.

Remember, selling your book is about marketing. It's never too early to think about how you can use websites like GoodReads. ♥♥♥



President: Abby Gaines abby@abbygaines.com	Vice President: Iona Jones ionajones@xtra.co.nz	Secretary: Louise Groarke louise@wlg.net.nz	Treasurer: Miriam Paxie Miriam.paxie@gmail.com	Contact Details: Romance Writers of New Zealand, Inc PO Box 10264, Dominion Road, Auckland. Heart To Heart (H2H) is the official publication of Romance Writers of New Zealand (RWNZ) and is published eleven times a year. No part may be reproduced or used for profit by RWNZ or others without prior written permission from the editor. The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of RWNZ, its executive, or its editors. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, no responsibility will be taken by RWNZ or the editors for inaccurate information. To subscribe to the RWNZ online loop, which is dedicated to the support of its writers by and for members, send a blank email to NZRomance-subscribe@yahoo.com or contact Kris Pearson kris.p@paradise.net.nz for more information.
Membership: Kris Pearson kris.p@paradise.net.nz	Publicity: Jackie Coates jackiec@paradise.net.nz	Immediate Past Pres: Pat Snellgrove pat.snellgrove@xtra.co.nz	Website Co-ord: Kamy Chetty kamychetty@yahoo.com	
H2H Co-ord: Rachel Collins collins.rachel1@gmail.com	H2H Content: Bron Evans bronwene@slingshot.co.nz	H2H Layout: Gracie O'Neil gracieoneil@xtra.co.nz	H2H Proofreading: Karen Browning kmbrowning@gmail.com	
Principal Contest Co-ord: Viv Constable vconstable@xtra.co.nz	Judging Enquiries: Kamy Chetty kamychetty@yahoo.com	Founder: Jean Drew (RWNZ founded Sept 1990)		