

HEART TO HEART

Make Your Hero More of a Guy

Are there good reasons why a man doesn't ask for directions?

With more than thirty-five million copies of her romances in print, Leigh Michaels' advice to writers on this subject is gold.



Why can't a woman be more like a man? Professor Henry Higgins asked plaintively in *My Fair Lady*. He was dealing with a much different time period and social system, but the question is just as valid today. There are differences between men and women—in how they think, act, and talk.

But Henry Higgins fell into the same trap most humans do. We expect members of the opposite sex to react in the same way we would. Our way feels like the natural way, the right way. Most of the time we don't even realize there's another way to react—totally different but equally valid.

And that's why writers get into trouble when we create characters of the opposite sex. We show our characters talking, thinking and behaving the way we would if facing the same situation. If a female writer's male characters think, act, and talk in a feminine way, her audience will be turned off, even if they don't understand why they're dissatisfied. The same is true if a male writer's female characters don't think or act or talk like real women.

Of course, gender-different behaviors are tendencies rather than firm laws. Furthermore, each individual's actions are influenced by upbringing, profession, life experience, and interests—creating a behavior pattern unique to each person.

But there are certain traits which most men and most women show. If we can identify and understand the

main characteristics which lead us to subconsciously tag someone as masculine or feminine, then we can create characters who are realistic and unique—and not at all stereotypical.

In other words, if you understand why men don't stop to ask for directions, then your male character will be much more convincing when he does it.

Men approach life as a competition; women approach life as a cooperation.

Men tend to see every action as a competition which puts them in either a one-up or one-down position. Since they want to win, they will try to avoid ending up one-down. The idea of one-up or one-down is much less likely to occur to a woman.

Men systematically try to figure things out on their own, or they adopt a wait-and-see policy, rather than ask for assistance. They do not want to admit there's something they don't know or can't figure out. Asking for directions indicates weakness.

Even when a man asks for assistance, it's usually not a clear request. Instead of saying, "Will you help me?", he'll say, "I'm working on this project..." In doing so, he invites the other person to offer advice or assistance, without actually asking—he gets what he needs without reducing his status in the process.

A man will often state something as fact, even if he's not sure, rather than appear uncertain or ignorant.

When an invitation for a couples' activity is issued to one member of the couple, the woman often says she needs to consult her partner before answering. The man is more likely to

dodge the question. Actually saying that he must consult his partner feels like he's admitting he isn't the boss in his own life and needs her permission.

Men see compliance (going along with what she wants) as submission; women see compliance (going along with what he wants) as cooperation.

Men focus on action; women focus on emotion.

Men's relationships are held together by activities. Men get together to do something—fish, play cards, go to a game. Women's relationships are held together by talk. Women get together to chat. Even when they have an agenda, a main reason for gathering is the talk.

Women see conversation as a way to develop harmony and get to know someone. They use conversation to develop a sense of community and intimacy. They like to 'just talk'.

Men see conversation as a way to relay information, to show independence, and to illustrate status. Their conversations tend to be brief, episodic, and focused on concrete issues and events. They don't like to 'just talk'.

Men make decisions; women form a consensus.

Men state what they want. When women make their preferences known, they often add reasons for their requests in an attempt to convince the other party. Men don't volunteer reasons, and when asked for reasons, they often feel they're being challenged or checked up on.

Men are direct; women are indirect.

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Inside This Issue

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WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS:

Carmen Seed in Tauranga
Trish Peers-Adams in Nelson
Suzanne Hamilton in Australia
Glen O'Leary in Hamilton
Kristina O'Grady in Hawkes Bay
Sasha Cottman in Australia

RWNZ CONTEST SCHEDULE 2011

STRICTLY SINGLE CONTEST
Closed Friday, 23 September 2011

Good luck, everyone!

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

Editors' Desk

The December 2011 edition of *Heart To Heart* will be this Editorial Team's last issue. We've loved being involved in such a rewarding endeavour, but now it's time for our successors to step in and take *Heart To Heart* to the next level.

If you're looking for a way to put your writing skills to work for the organisation then *Heart To Heart* is it. We've found that having an Editorial Team rather than one individual Editor has allowed us to spread the load and work in our areas of strength.

If you think you'd like to take it on but you're not sure how it all works, or you've never done something like this but would like to try, then—at the risk of sounding like an Infomercial—here's our offer... **a free three-month apprenticeship in Professional Magazine Creation.**

Between now and February we'll show you how to:

- create a twelve-month editorial calendar so you know where you're going, what your monthly themes are, and how much room you have available in each edition
- find people with expertise in your themes
- contact those people for articles and interviews
- make sure you're asking for what you need
- track who you've contacted, who has responded, who has given written permission, what they want in return, who needs reminding, and what to do when a promised contribution doesn't arrive
- ensure you deliver what you promise to contributors
- build a magazine "style sheet" so you keep a consistent look every month and don't make your proofreader's job (too!) difficult (Can you see Karen banging her head on her desk? Or—even more therapeutic for her—banging Gracie's head on her desk!)
- set up a magazine template (Gracie currently uses Microsoft Publisher running via VMWare Fusion on a Mac laptop, but she did the first two magazines of 2011 using Word on a Windows laptop.)
- lay out single and double pages for maximum visual effect and ease of reading
- choose suitable fonts
- find appropriate fillers and quotes
- source the latest contests/etc info
- set up an Excel spreadsheet for easy communication between proofreader and layout person
- hone your proof-reading skills
- turn your work into a pdf suitable for the printers
- turn your work into a pdf small enough for general email

and we'll also explain why all this stuff is important.

Does it sound intimidating? It's not. It's fabulous fun, and you get to meet many authors (even some NYT bestsellers—handy when you need a quote for your first book!)

We know there are some of you who would love to contribute to RWNZ but have been put off because you don't have the skills. Or think you don't. Now's your chance to learn. Perhaps you're afraid of making a mistake. Well, you might... so what? We all have too. The current team will be at the end of an Internet connection if you need help.

Your first step is to drop Iona an email at iona.jones@xtra.co.nz and volunteer.

Gracie, Rachel, Bron, & Karen

**Hard times don't create heroes.
It is during the hard times when the 'hero' within us is revealed.**
Bob Riley

From The Pres.



What's happening in RWNZ?

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

I can't believe another month has gone by already. I spend a good part of my year looking forward to conference and then suddenly it's over and I'm getting ready to rip yet another page from the calendar on our fridge. I suspect, though, that for many of our conference-goers the last month or so has been anything from exciting to nerve-wracking to just plain terrifying, as they summoned up the courage to push the 'send' button on those very special emails—the emails with those magic words "Requested materials" in the subject line.

We had a marvellous array of editors and agents at the conference this year and congratulations to everyone who faced down their demons, made a face-to-face pitch, and received a request. I think the jury is still out on whether it's harder to make the pitch or to send the materials, but as Bob Mayer said, "If you don't send the stuff, then you are rejecting yourself!" So give them that final polish you just can't stop yourself from doing, and then **send them!** There are more than enough people in this industry ready, willing, and able to reject us. We don't need to be doing their job for them.

Okay, enough preaching from me—and before anyone who knows me says anything, I do intend to practise what I preach for a change!—but I would like to wish everyone who has sent their precious babies out there into the world of editors and agents the very best of luck. Here's hoping there will be some good news to celebrate soon, but in the meantime it's back to BICHOK (Butt In Chair, Hands On Keyboard) and time to get working on the next one!

And what better way to get you working on that next one than to start thinking about entering it in one of RWNZ's great contests? The RWNZ 2012 contest year has already kicked off with the *Strictly Single* contest. By the time you read this the closing deadline of 23 September will have already passed, so I hope all you Single Title and Young Adult writers got your entries in to Sandii on time. Good luck to you all and I look forward to seeing the finalists announced. However, there's no cause for despair if you missed the deadline or you don't write Single Title. There are other contests coming up for our category and short story writers. Details can be found in H2H and on our website, so check them out and get writing!

I would like to pass on apologies from this year's Conference Committee. Unfortunately, in the midst of all the craziness that is the lead-up to conference, the Supporters' Wall fell through the cracks and was not put on display this year. We sincerely apologise for this and we would, of course, like to thank everyone who made a donation. In lieu of the bricks being displayed at conference, I would like to acknowledge the following people for their generous support of RWNZ:

Natalie Anderson, Jillian Britnell (x2), Donna Evans (x2), Ellie Huse (x2), Iona Jones, Helen Kirkman, Giovanna Lee, Sue MacKay (x2), Julie McKechnie (x2), Jacquelyn Moran, Leeann Morgan, Cheryl Phipps, Ray Prowse, Nalini Singh, Virginia Suckling (x2), Wendy Vella, Jenny Wheeler, Jenny

Yates.

A big thank you also goes to Jillian Britnell. Jillian was the winner of the Out-of-Towners raffle at this year's conference which entitled her to a refund of her weekend conference fees. However, Jillian has asked not to be reimbursed and would like the money to be used to help someone attend next year's conference. That's very generous of you, Jillian, and I'm sure it will definitely be appreciated by the lucky recipient. Thank you, too, to Robyn Donald and Frances Loo. Both these lovely ladies have made donations of the cost of their complimentary Awards Dinners.

I thought this month I'd introduce you to the newest member of our Exec—Tyree Connor. She's not new to RWNZ, of course, and many of you will know her already, as being on the Exec is not her first job for RWNZ. Tyree lives about twenty minutes north-east of Hamilton with her husband, stepson and two daughters, and is a member of the Coast to Coast regional group. She started writing romance in November 2007 and credits joining RWNZ for the reason her writing has been on an upward slope ever since. Over the last couple of years she has discovered that she has a paranormal voice and a medical voice—and no, she doesn't mix the two! Tyree has been coordinator for the *Strictly Single* contest and currently coordinates the Member Successes page of H2H, a job she's held since 2009. When she's not writing, Tyree competes in Rock 'n Roll Dancing and pimps out bulls during the mating season (and yes, you did read that right!). As you can imagine from that little blurb, Tyree is full of energy and enthusiasm and I'm thrilled to have her join the Exec this year as Vice President. I look forward to working closely with Tyree in the coming months.

Hopefully you have all renewed your memberships by now. If you haven't you'll have to pay the \$5 late fee to renew after 30 September. I know I can be bad at remembering things sometimes, but the thought of paying money I don't have to is usually enough to keep me on track! Make sure you get those renewals in, as I'm sure you don't want to miss out on some of the exciting things we have planned for the next twelve months. A big thanks to our Membership Secretary, Kris Pearson, for all her hard work at this time of the year, and also to our Treasurer, Miriam Paxie, for helping to keep the money side of the renewals in order.

Remember, we are always looking to increase the membership—the more members, the more services we can bring you—so if you have a friend (or two!) who is writing romance-related fiction but isn't a member, or someone who is keen to get started, then why not invite them to join?

I think that's me for this month. Remember, if you would like to be a part of the Conference Committee for next year's conference, please drop me a line at iona.jones@xtra.co.nz. I'd be especially pleased to hear from anyone interested in taking on the Conference Treasurer role, or the Conference Registrar role, but even if you're only looking to help out on a small scale, do get in touch—the more, the merrier!



Dialogue 101

Should your hero chortle? Should your heroine gasp?

Rachel Collins shares some tips from her workshop on Dialogue.

Beginner writers often struggle with dialogue, thinking it's one of those things that comes naturally to some and not to others. Big shake of the head here! A starting point for good dialogue is to know your characters and then learn the mechanics of some simple techniques so you too can produce dialogue like a pro.

Making Dialogue Real

Dialogue is not real conversation but it needs to sound like it. Listen to real conversations and you'll be surprised how often we insert surplus words, go off at a tangent, and generally say a lot of fairly uninteresting stuff.

The filler words need to be taken out. Don't waste word count with 'Hello' and 'How are you?' Get to the core of what needs to be said and say it. Every word of dialogue has to count and contribute to the plot. If it's unnecessary leave it out.

How many times have you thought of a good put-down line a couple of hours after the event? In your book your heroine always has the right words because you have slaved over them for hours. This is why dialogue is not real conversation.

If you're not sure your dialogue is working try reading it aloud. This is a great way of highlighting what works and what doesn't. Clunky phrases, words that don't fit your character, lack of flow—all will be revealed when you read it to your mirror.

What's The Purpose?

There are three main types of dialogue. Put simply they are:

Direct—"I love you," he said.

Indirect—"He said 'I love you.' Can you believe it?" She told her friend.

Internal monologue—I love her, he thought.

Dialogue, whether direct, indirect or internal monologue, is used to move the story forward, to show and build character, and to give information.

We can pass the reader important information, facts or secrets. But we must not state the obvious. "How is Tom, your husband?" We already know, or will soon know, that he is the husband, so there's no need to slap the reader in the face with it. And if we don't need to know, don't say it.

Evan Marshall describes what for me is an easy to remember system that gives dialogue purpose: FAD—feeling, action, dialogue.

The hero sees a sniper on a roof (setting). His gut clenches (feeling), he starts to run toward the president (action), "everybody down" (dialogue), he said.

If your dialogue isn't accompanied by feeling and action, it loses impact. The reader needs more than just witty repartee to hook them into your story.

Building Great Dialogue

The 'Rule of Three' is important. Don't let a character speak for longer than three sentences without breaking for some narrative—for example, to remind the reader of setting, or to insert action, as characters need to be doing things to move the story forward.

Avoid info dumping. Dialogue is an excellent way of feeding the reader an important piece of information, but don't dump too much information or backstory in one speech. Standalone dialogue is no different to a page of exposition. It is boring and the reader will be left wondering what it was there for, or—worse—they will skim the page as their eyes glaze over.

Dialogue Don'ts

Dialogue tags are limited to one: said. If you stick to he said/she said they become invisible for the reader. To put in 'he shouted' will stand out and pull the reader from whatever you are trying to say. A tag is not always required, either. Again, this is where feelings, action and narrative come in. Dialogue broken up by a character's actions will not need a tag.

Adverbs will kill you, she says

menacingly. Don't use them. Ever. They can be identified by their ending. It's those pesky "ly" words. Keep away from them at all costs. They are for lazy writers. There are plenty of ways to show feelings without using an adverb.

"What the hell are you doing here?"
He shouted angrily. (Note the use of a dialogue tag and adverb.)

This doesn't show us a lot about the hero—only that he is shouting.

The door flew back with such force she wondered if it would come off its hinges. "You," he said, thrusting the word at her with almost as much force as he'd opened the door. A small vein pulsed at his temple and his knuckles whitened as he grasped the back of a chair.

Oh yes, she thought, he was really pleased to see her, wasn't he? She felt like a small child in the headmaster's office and tried not to smile as she looked at him.

In the second example, the single word 'you' is a lot more powerful than the original sentence as the reader now wants to know what has gone before and why the hero is so angry. We know what happens to his body when he gets stressed, and the next time we see his temple pulsing we will know he is angry. We also get a look at the heroine and her reaction to his behaviour, as the scene comes from her point of view.

Incorrect punctuation is irritating and will pull a reader or competition judge out of your story. Learn the conventions that are particular to dialogue. Although there may be a few variations between publishers, there are some standards you need to follow with consistency. (If you are really desperate for more on this topic, ask the editors for a dialogue punctuation article in another issue!)

The use of dialect, slang and profanity need to be handled with care. It is too easy to fall back on these to try and show facets of character, but

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Why Romance Authors Love Men



Real conflict. Real emotion.

Harlequin Romance/Mills & Boon Sweet author Soraya Lane talks about a hero's non-negotiable traits.

I think I'm right in saying that most romance authors love men. Not all men, but a certain type of man. Sure, the men we write about are usually tall, gorgeous and charismatic, but what's most important of all is that they possess the necessary "hero" traits. In saying that, I do like to start with a visual first, which leads me to hours on the internet looking at gorgeous males... although I inevitably end up looking at images of Hugh Jackman!

Every author will have a different take on what makes a fantastic hero, and it's often established by the type of story in question. For me, writing for Harlequin Romance (published downunder as Mills & Boon Sweet) means my heroes have to be real men that women all over the world can relate to, and it suits me just fine! I don't write about princes or billionaires—or millionaires either, for

that matter—but everyday guys that are believable heroes.

Most of my books feature soldiers or other men-in-uniform types, and for me they make perfect hero material. Why? Because from the get-go it's obvious that they're physically strong and tough, but they can believably be very emotionally damaged too. In my first published book, *Soldier on Her Doorstep*, my hero (Alex) is an ex-special forces soldier, recently returned from war. Alex is handsome and strong, but he's incredibly messed up from what's happened in his past. He has no family, he held his fellow soldier (the heroine's husband) in his arms as he died, and he's full of guilt. He wished he was the one to have died, so the heroine and her daughter didn't have to lose their husband/father.

In a romance novel, sustaining a believable emotional/internal conflict for the hero is crucial, and in the case of Alex, his past trauma stops him from being able to fall in love with the heroine. As the book develops we see

more of the man... and realise that he craves the family he never had. He would do anything for a wife and children of his own, but for him it's about getting over the guilt of living a life that he doesn't feel he deserves.

So what are my non-negotiable traits for a hero when I start brainstorming? He must be able to protect my heroine, no matter what. Whether it be in a fight, a natural disaster, or simply that she needs help, he must be physically capable of caring for her. He needs to be tough enough to win a fist fight (if he ever had to defend her!) or carry her home with a sprained ankle if she can't walk.

A hero must also be intelligent. He needs to be able to hold his own, intellectually, in any situation and be the heroine's equal in this respect. And he must always be caring. Most of my books feature children, animals, or both, so my heroes need to be kind; the type of men who would do anything to save a child if they ever needed to, and who would never do harm to an animal. If the heroine's dog runs away, he won't come home until he finds it, and if her child falls into a lake he'll be the first to jump in, without hesitation, to save a life. I like the heroes in my stories to be in touch with a softer side of themselves, even if they won't admit it—it's okay for him to hang out with his dog and tell his four-legged friend all his woes!

There are many types of heroes, and while I would still describe the main men in my books as alphas, they are also the kind of real guys women could imagine sharing their lives with. Hardworking men who can support a family financially, but aren't ridiculously wealthy; and men who would ultimately do anything for the woman they love.

♥♥♥

Soraya's first two books are part of a series called *Heroes Come Home*. Both *Soldier on Her Doorstep* and *The Army Ranger's Return* are available on Amazon. For more information head to www.sorayalane.com. Soraya's next release, *Rodeo Daddy*, will be available from November.

(Dialogue 101... cont from page 4)

instead it will distract the reader and for many can be a turn-off, especially when repeated too often. A swear word is much more powerful when it is used very occasionally and at a moment of high tension when the word will serve a purpose. Do the police ever say, 'You're nicked'? With dialect, an occasional word can identify where someone is from. Don't ever have a character speak entirely in dialect.

Dialogue in Romance

Within romance writing dialogue has a special place. Along with building character it shows conflict between characters and this is at the heart of the story. Dialogue is a great way for characters to flirt with each other. This is where subtext comes in. Characters like to speak in subtext. They like to hide their real feelings and emotions and where better than when speaking to each other. Sarcasm is a great tool here, too.

"What's wrong?"

"Whatever makes you think anything could possibly be wrong?"

Of course we must make mention of sexual dialogue. Writing good sexual dialogue is critical to a good love scene. Characters don't always speak while making love, but when they do the dialogue needs to be there for a purpose. Perhaps the heroine is shy, and speaking while in bed with the hero is a really big deal for her. Or maybe they are role playing! In any event the same rules apply—no long speeches in bed, please. This subject could probably cover a whole article itself.

Practice Makes Perfect

Here are a couple of exercises to get you in the mood for dialogue writing!

1. Listen to people talking at the next table in a coffee shop. Listen to what they talk about and the way they say it.

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Contests and Markets

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

Potential Markets

Noble Young Adult—Noble Romance Publishing, LLC

"Not Just Romance!"

Deadline: Open.

Eligibility: Any writer.

Seeking: YA Romance with characters between the ages of 18-24. 'Keep it real but don't sugar-coat the truth.' All sub-genres and genre mixes, all story lengths—shorts, novellas, novels.

Payment: An advance up to US\$1000 against royalties. Advances are paid upon publication and are negotiated on an author-by-author basis.

Guidelines: <https://www.nobleyoungadult.com/Submissions>

Email: submissions@nobleromance.com

Website: <https://www.nobleyoungadult.com/About>

Vampire Anthology from Noble Young Adult Publishing

Deadline: When full. Anthology to be published in 2012.

Eligibility: Any writer.

Seeking: Original, unpublished vampire short stories and novellas for a YA anthology to be published in 2012. MC to be 18 to 25 years old. Stories may cover any theme.

Payment: Payment is a royalty in U.S. dollars ranging from 12-36% of Cover Price of all copies sold.

Guidelines: <https://www.nobleyoungadult.com/Submissions>

Email: Erika Galpin, YA Submissions Editor; submissions@nobleromance.com

Website: www.nobleyoungadult.com

'Paramourtal Two' from Cliffhanger Books

Deadline: October 31, 2011.

Eligibility: Any writer.

Seeking: Unpublished short stories of paranormal romance, between 6,500 to 8,000 words, which approach the love story from 'a fresh angle or motivation.' PG-13 rated and 'Please think beyond vampires and werewolves.'

Payment: A royalty payment for each story.

Guidelines: <http://www.cliffhangerbooks.com/submit.html>

Email: submit@cliffhangerbooks.com

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

'Dark Tales of Lost Civilizations' Anthology from Dark Moon Books

Deadline: October 31, 2011.

Eligibility: Any writer.

Seeking: Dark tales of horror, speculative fiction, relating to civilizations that are lost, or have been forgotten, or have been rediscovered, or perhaps merely spoken about in great and fearful whispers. 2,000 and 7,000 words.

Payment: 1 US cent per word and 1 contributor copy.

Guidelines: <http://www.absolutewrite.com/forums/showthread.php?t=218021>

Email: eric.guignard@gmail.com

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

Potential Markets (continued)

40k—an imprint of DigitPub

Deadline: Open.

Eligibility: Any writer.

Seeking: 40K specialises in e-books under 40 thousand words, in particular novelettes. Seeking 'Smart' romance, Paranormal romance and 'Smart' chick-lit.

Payment: 40K offers a three year, renewable contract with royalties. This is a negotiated contract—get professional advice before signing.

Guidelines: http://www.40kbooks.com/?page_id=5054

Email: query@40kbooks.com

Website: <http://www.40kbooks.com>

Choc Lit Publishing

Deadline: Open.

Eligibility: Any writer—but complete novices must have had their manuscripts professionally assessed before submitting.

Seeking: Novels, 70k—100k words. Pure old-fashioned romance for 18—65+, no chick lit, leave sexual content to the imagination, and novel must include the hero's POV.

Payment: Contract and royalties said to be standard.

Guidelines: <http://www.choc-lit.co.uk/html/submissions.html>

Email: submissions@choclitpublishing.co.uk

Website: www.choc-lit.co.uk

International Contests

Bump in the Night IV Flash Fiction

Deadline: October 28, 2011.

Eligibility: Anyone.

Enter: Paranormal story complete in 1000 words.

Fee: None.

Website: <http://wprw.wordpress.com>

14th Annual Gotcha! Contest

Deadline: October 30, 2011.

Eligibility: Not published in category entered.

Enter: First 15 pages.

Fee: \$25.00.

Website: www.SVRWA.com

26th Annual Hook, Line & Sinker

Deadline: November 1, 2011.

Eligibility: Published and unpublished.

Enter: First three pages of your manuscript.

Fee: \$10.00.

Website: www.hudsonvalleyrwa.com

******STOP PRESS**** 2011 RWA Golden Heart**

Entry form and fees to RWA no later than 15 November and entries to be received by 02 December. More details in the November issue of H2H.

http://www.rwa.org/cs/contests_and_awards/golden_heart_awards/contest_rules

Creating the Believable HEA



How do you resolve that conflict between your hero and heroine?

Bestselling author for *Silhouette Desire*, Bronwyn Jameson shows how.

What makes a satisfying end to a romance? What leaves you with a smile on your face, convinced the characters have achieved a lasting happy-ever-after?

1. Satisfying resolution of internal conflict.
2. Plot has a believable resolution.
3. You believe the hero and heroine will make it together, even after the consuming heat of first love has cooled.

What works against this happening? Why would you doubt that the h/H will be happy together and not facing the divorce court in a couple of years' time?

- The I hate you-I hate you-I hate you, swiftly followed by the I-love-you about-face without sufficient motivation/credibility
- The relationship is all about lust rather than love
- They have nothing in common beyond a mutual physical attraction
- They haven't resolved the conflict satisfactorily
- They still have issues
- They haven't changed or grown during the book

In a romance we need the reader to believe that this pair has something very special going on, that despite all the conflict pushing them apart during the pages of the book, they will make it. And yet... if we make that too obvious, too early, we risk diminishing the tension.

How do we set up a believable HEA without sacrificing tension?

We need to recognise that this is a juggling act of conflict versus attraction. We need to acknowledge that our characters will clash and will bond. We can think about the points or road-signs on the rocky path to love.

Ensure your characters clash (conflict) and bond.

This is a lesson I learned from *Heroes and Heroines—Sixteen Master*

Archetypes, where suggestions are provided for how each pair of archetypes might bond and clash. This is something I work out for my characters in the story planning stage. In the books I write, I need there to be plenty of spark between the hero and heroine, and not only based on external plot or conflict. BUT to create a believable HEA, I also like to know their common grounds.

Taking an example from *The Ruthless Groom* (book #3 in my *Princes of the Outback* trilogy):

Alex and Zara clash/conflict:

- She craves independence and a career, after delaying her medical studies to nurse her mother through a debilitating illness; he not only wants a marriage and family, he needs a baby to fulfill his father's dying wish.
- She has secrets that would lead to scandal, secrets she has vowed to protect; he is a high-profile personality (*Princes of the Outback*) and all his relationships provide instant tabloid fodder.
- He thinks marriage should be based on similar interests, leading to a nice, solid, stable relationship; she would only marry for passionate, intense, can't-live-without-you love.

Alex and Zara bond:

- Both are strong, athletic and competitive; they acknowledge, understand and respect this in each other
- Recognition of a common sense of humour leads to instant attraction
- Both have a notorious mother (which led to scandals in the past) and a birth father who had no part in their upbringing—this means they understand a lot about each other on a level that doesn't require talk (they work it out quickly). Because of the circumstances in their past, each has a fierce protective love of their mother which motivates some of their current choices.

Exercise: Think about the hero and heroine of your WIP—write 3 points on

which they clash, and 3 on which they bond. (NB: 3 is an arbitrary number—your particular characters may have more areas in which they bond and/or clash.)

Your homework is working out how to incorporate both some points of conflict and some points of bonding into your story. How we can show the bonding points, in particular, because I think that is something we overlook in the pursuit of strong conflict. (Or at least I do!)

That said, conflict is oftentimes the starting point of the relationship between your hero and heroine. That may be the external conflict, but it's often what creates the compelling beginning to drag the reader into the story. But, along the way, the reader needs to see change and growth in their relationship—gradually, in little steps, which may include both give and take. Things get better, things get worse, things get better, things get MUCH worse, before they're ever close to the HEA.

Along the way we need to show:

- Conflict—the kick-off point.
- Attraction—the spark of awareness, the special intensity that is recognised and which makes the conflict far worse than it otherwise would have been.
- Respect—this may start out reluctant or begrudging, but at some point there needs to be recognition and acceptance of the other's good qualities (even though the conflict is still there). This may be as simple as our heroine thinking, he's not ALL bad. Or our hero deciding, she's still a PITA, but she's smart and gutsy and I can't help liking those qualities.

Can you see how our characters' attitudes can start to change? How this might challenge a character's perceptions and influence his/her choices? This doesn't have to happen for both characters at once or in this order e.g. best friends have respect and liking for each other from the start, before the conflict, before the change in

(Continued on page 18)



How to Write Compelling Villains

What makes a real bad guy tick?

Veteran police investigator and author **Lee Lofland** gives us some clues to look for.

Villains. They're the bad guys of our stories who are devoted to wickedness. They have specific goals and will stop at nothing to reach them. Are you as driven to write them as compelling characters?

Unlike antagonists, villains are sociopathic, narcissistic, and can be quite unpredictable. And they often use fear to get their way.

Readers must be able to identify with the villain. Perhaps he has an interest in animals, or children. Maybe he's a devoted church member or the hero's letter carrier. Maybe the villain is the babysitter for the hero's children.

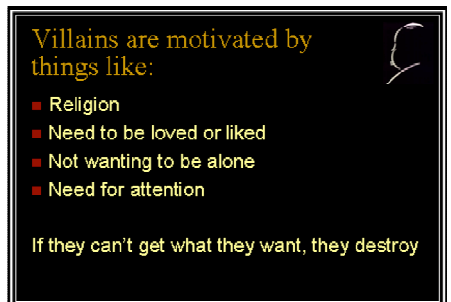
Villains are extremely motivated.



The hero of the story is a stumbling block for the villain. He's in the way, therefore the villain must do all he can to eliminate the him. An antagonist (someone who merely opposes the hero) simply makes waves for the hero.

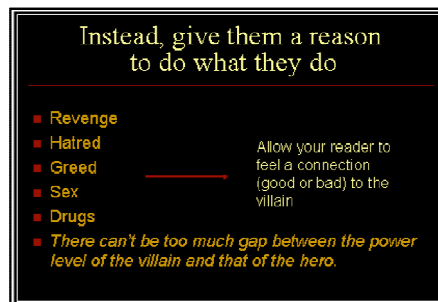
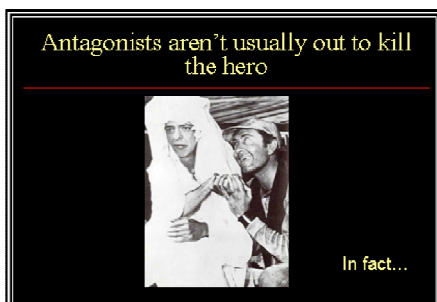


Villains must be layered characters—three dimensional. And they absolutely must have a reason to do what they do. Do not make your villain a mindless killing machine!

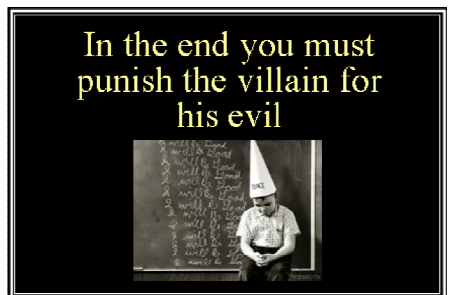


Don't go "villain crazy"! Over the top villains are unbelievable.

Finally...

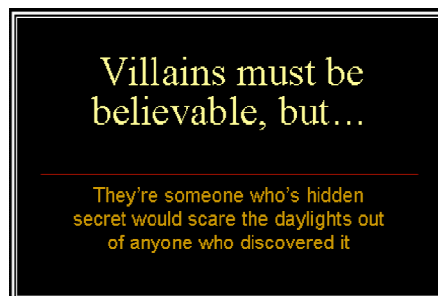
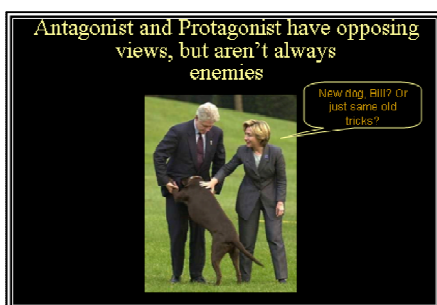


Think of real-life villains... What makes them so creepy, and scary? Yep... they're real.

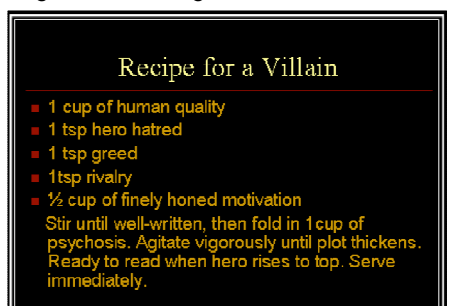


Those were just a few basic guidelines for creating a compelling villain. If all else fails you could follow a simple recipe I concocted.

It goes something like this.

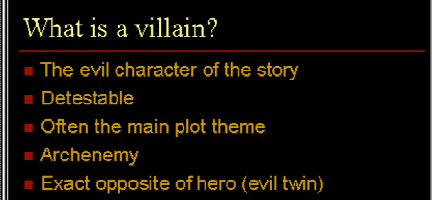


When should you first bring your villain to the page?

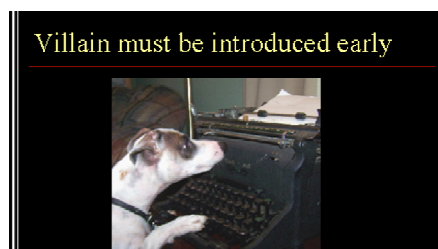


Of course, like all good cooks, I've kept a few secret ingredients to myself. ♥♥♥

Lee Lofland is a veteran police investigator who began his law-enforcement career working as an officer in Virginia's prison system. He later became a sheriff's deputy, a patrol
(Continued on page 9)



Villains are used to create tension in a story. They also provide much-needed hurdles for the hero to overcome during his journey.



What Makes an Engaging Heroine?



Here are four criteria to bear in mind.

*Regency-set Paranormal author **Alix Rickloff** shares what she looks for in a heroine.*

When I open a romance novel I want to be swept away. I want the story to take me over and the characters to come alive, especially the hero and heroine. As a writer, I'm looking for the same thing. I want my creations to strike a chord with my audience and live on long after the happily-ever-after. Since the majority of my readers are women, it's especially important for my heroine to grab them and not let go. She's the character with which my readers will most closely identify, the foundation upon which the novel rests. If my readers find the heroine less than appealing, everything else falls a little flat. Seems a little less perfect.

So what makes an engaging heroine? Or more personally, what do I look for as I read and as I write?

Relatability—She may be beautiful. She may hold an aristocratic title or have a fabulous well-paying job. She may have wonderful friends, a supportive family, and maybe even, in some instances, a great boyfriend. But I want her problems to be my problems. After all, I'll be reading or writing about them for at least four hundred pages. So, maybe she's beautiful but men are only ever interested in her looks. Maybe she has a fast-paced, high-stakes career but was pressured into it

by her family. Maybe on the surface, she's perfection itself. Yet dig a little deeper or peek into her past and you'll unearth the insecurities and personality quirks that will transform her from cardboard cutout into a living, breathing person, and hopefully move the plot forward. When I write, this is where character charts help. Through answering the questions, I can begin to flesh her out and solidify her backstory, which in turn will give me her motivation for the current storyline.

Strength—So, now I know my character and she's someone readers will root for. But my work's not done yet. I need to place her amid conflict up to her eyeballs to see what she's made of. This is where writers walk a knife edge between reality and fantasy. A bit too far one way or another and the reader disconnects, the magic unravels. On the one hand, the heroine must be capable. They need to be strong, independent, take-charge women with minds of their own. They don't flinch under pressure. They don't run from a fight. They don't curl up into a fetal position when the villain makes his appearance. Yet, by imagining the heroine this way, I want to be certain I don't create a woman TSTL—too stupid to live. My heroines do not walk into gloomy cellars where the monsters lurk. They don't stroll unarmed through back

alleys in dark cities. They don't turn down assistance from the hero or ignore unmistakable dangers simply to move the plot forward. Heroines who do these things without a really darn good reason or something in their background that makes it plausible (she's a Navy SEAL or an FBI special agent or a sword-wielding Amhas-draoi warrior) immediately pull me out of the story. It's as if I can suddenly see behind the curtain to the author pulling the strings and the plot's natural flow becomes a series of stilted contrivances.

Involvement—Conflict swirls and danger looms. While my heroine may wish herself a thousand miles away, she must be—willingly or unwillingly—smack in the thick of it. She cannot be a simpering miss on the sidelines while my hero faces the challenge alone. Readers will witness her strengths as they cheer her victories, and discover her flaws as each choice she makes appears to drag her closer and closer to catastrophe. But these scenes serve to shape my heroine, making her as three-dimensional as possible. Giving her depth and layers of personality that turn her into a real person, not just a player on a stage. And just as my readers are falling in love with her so is the hero who sees her as helpmate and

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 8)

officer, and finally, he achieved the highly-prized gold shield of detective. Along the way, he gained a breadth of experience that's unusual to find in the career of a single officer.

He's a proud member of the National Sheriffs' Association, International Thriller Writers, Mystery Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, and he previously served as a Board Member on the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, NCADD in the Silicon Valley, and the New England chapter of Mystery Writers of America.

In addition to his books, Lee writes articles for both Mystery Writers of

America and Sisters In Crime newsletters. He also writes regular features and exclusives for newspapers across the country. He's written for *The Writer* magazine and has served as a consultant for *Slate Magazine*, *Spike TV*, and for many bestselling authors. Lee has appeared on BBC television, CNN, and on NPR radio's *Talk of the Nation*, and he's the founder of the *Writers' Police Academy*, a fun and exciting hands-on event for writers.

Lee is currently represented by Scott Hoffman of Folio Literary Management.

Lee's book, *Police Procedure And Investigation*, is available through Amazon.

Lee also runs the *Writers' Police Academy*—The *Writers' Police Academy* offers the most hands-on, interactive and educational experience writers can find to enhance their understanding of all

aspects of law enforcement and forensics.

<http://writerspoliceacademy.com>

The Graveyard Shift

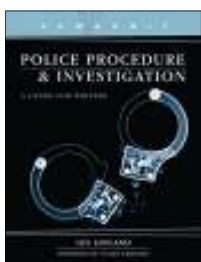
<http://www.leelofland.com/wordpress/>

A hero is a man
who is afraid to run away.

Proverb

Aren't most romance heroes,
or heroes in fiction of any kind,
generally superior to real men?
Same goes for heroines
and real women.

Nora Roberts





Cool-Eyed Women, Cold-Hearted Men

What traits are common to your ideal heroine or hero?

Gracie O'Neil from *RomanceSheWrote.com* shows you how to find out.

So, how do you know which qualities your heroes and heroines need in order to grab your reader by the throat and drag her from the first page to the last? Let's do a few exercises to find out.

First. Go to your own bookshelf and decide who are your **five** favourite authors.

Second. Of those five authors' works, which individual books are your absolute favourites?

I want you to pick them off the shelf. You don't have to choose one book from each author. It just has to be *five individual works* from your selected authors.

For example, mine would be:

- *Naked in Death* by J D Robb
- *Conspiracy in Death* by J D Robb
- *Birthright* by Nora Roberts
- *One for the Money* by Janet Evanovich
- *A Kiss of Shadows* by Laurell K Hamilton

Beauty? Brains? Backbone? The Believable Heroine

Now, let's dissect the heroines.

Third. What five elements of personality do the heroines of your selected books have in common?

Your Exercise: Write a quick character synopsis for each of your heroines.

Here are mine.

Eve Dallas (from the *In Death* series) is a wounded hard-ass with a carefully hidden soft centre. She's the best at what she does (homicide cop) and knows it, without being obnoxious about it. She handles the stress of her job with physical outlets (fighting, martial arts, swimming), an acerbic tongue, and a dry sense of humour. The dead belong to her and she moves heaven and earth to get them justice. Her romantic relationship with **Roarke** is something she isn't ready for and she fights her need for him in order to maintain her emotional independence.

Callie Dunbrook (from *Birthright*) is an archaeologist and also the best in her chosen field. She has a stormy relationship with her ex-husband, **Jake Graystone**. And—while she loves him—is afraid to trust him again after his betrayal. She doesn't suffer fools gladly, doesn't trust easily, and will not allow herself to make another romantic mistake. She handles her stressful life with focus, cello music, and humour. She has a strong sense of family in every sense of the word. She is an intensely responsible person.

Stephanie Plum (from *One for the Money*) is the world's worst bounty hunter. She doesn't have the hard heart necessary to drag the scumbags to jail. What she *does* have is dogged determination to win, because winning means having access to the money to keep her independence. She is part of an insular and eccentric family dynamic that oscillates between comforting and totally cringe-making. She has a solid—if slightly skewed—sense of responsibility, and a sense of humour in all her relationships. In her romantic relationships with cop **Joe Morelli** and security specialist **Ranger** she is commitment-phobic, and deals with her problems by means of the "engineer a fight and run away" method of relationship building.

Merry Gentry (from *A Kiss of Shadows*) is a fae princess hiding from certain death should the Fae Courts find her. Although working in the human realm as a private investigator specialising in magical solutions, Merry is also hiding the extent of her magical ability. She can't trust anyone with the knowledge of who she is. But when her aunt—Queen of Air and Darkness—sends her personal assassin, **Doyle**, after Merry to bring her home to become co-heir and provide a child for the Unseelie throne, Merry finds herself responsible for the safety and well-being of the Fae world, and the target of people determined to destroy her.

Chloe Zanders (from *Dark Highlander*) is an enthusiastic and overworked student of antiquities who finds her twenty-first century life thrown into utter turmoil when she encounters **Dageus**

MacKeltar, a time traveling medieval Druid. If she cannot help him gain freedom from the thirteen evil Druids who possess his soul then he will destroy the world as we know it today. Chloe has no family still living and she is drawn to Dageus' family in both the present and the past. She is also fascinated—initially against her will—by this magnetic man and fights an attraction she knows can have no future.

Lindsay Danner (from *Tell Me No Lies*) is a curator of Chinese bronzes whose ability to tell the fake from the real is something that has made her name a legend in the antiquities trade. Raised in China by missionary parents, she loves China and the Chinese people with all her heart. Now, thanks to **Jacob Catlin**, she is being pulled into a situation where her gift is being used as a medium to destroy the people she loves.

Honorias Anstruther-Weatherby (from *Devil's Bride*) is the granddaughter of an English aristocrat. However, because of a childhood trauma, Honorias refuses to take her place in society in order to work as a "finishing governess" to the *ton*. She is sought after because she's good at her job. She isn't looking for a romantic relationship and when she finds it in **Devil Cynster** she fights it, and him, with everything she has. She wants to solve Devil's cousin's murder and get on with her plans to travel to Egypt.

So here are the things my heroines seem to have in common.

- She has a strong centre but she's been wounded in some way, and lives with secrets.
- She's not an innocent looking for romance—sometimes doesn't even believe in love.
- She finds herself in the middle of something huge that is going to shatter her world unless she intervenes.
- She's searching for family and connection.

- She's intelligent, competent, career focused, independent, and has a sense of humour.

Your Exercise: Working from your character synopses, write down the five elements of personality your favourite heroines have in common.

What I Really, Really Want: A Hero for All Seasons

Well, it doesn't take any huge stretch of the imagination to figure out what the next question will be.

Fourth. What five elements of personality do the heroes of your selected books have in common?

Your Exercise: Write a quick character synopsis for each of your heroes.

Now, I have to tell you that as I was doing my own exercise in answering this question I learned something I wasn't expecting. I noticed I have an entirely different method of evaluation for a heroine than for a hero. And, as someone who doesn't like the thought of being biased, I can tell you it was a little lowering to discover. More about this at the end.

In the meantime, here are my heroes.

Roarke (from the *In Death* series) I think Roarke is my ideal hero; the epitome of tall, dark, and handsome. He has a scarred past in terms of both upbringing and in his professional choices on the dark and gun-metal grey side of the law. He's also had a chequered career in terms of romantic and sexual relationships. But from the moment he sees Eve, he's as sunk as... well, something really, really sunk. Not only that, but he's determined to do whatever is necessary—inside and outside of the legal system—to get what she needs and, ultimately, to get her as well. The fact that he owns half the planet (and a reasonable section of the off-planet wealth too) is pretty neat.

Jake Graystone (from *Birthright*) I love that he is still carrying a huge torch for Callie and, while he realises he's made mistakes in their marriage relationship, he's going to get her back no matter what it takes. I also love the combination of his protectiveness and his determination not to drive Callie away by not allowing her to fight her own battles. He's man enough to know when to back off and when to put his foot down. He isn't afraid to take risks. He doesn't have wealth but he's not hurting financially.

Ranger (from *One for the Money*). OK. Here's where I admit it. I'm a Ranger girl. Morelli is probably better for Stephanie in terms of what she is looking for long-term, but Ranger does it for me. Why? Well, it's not just because the man is dark, dangerous, calm, cool, humorous, and exudes sex like the scent of his Bulgari shower gel—although none of those things are bad. I think it's because he doesn't waste his time trying to make Stephanie into someone she isn't. She's a lousy bounty hunter? He takes her under his wing and teaches her to be better. The bad guys blow up her car? He gives her another one. She has a gun phobia? He calmly announces she'll be using his company's gun range for practice—and doesn't take "no" as a viable answer. He doesn't try to stop her doing dangerous things. He simply ensures she has the things she needs to minimise the risks. And, if all else fails, he assigns some of his own men to keep an eye on her. Ranger is the kind of man I'd want standing with me in a fight because who he is and his skill-set would make me feel safe. He has money, but not pot-loads like Roarke.

Doyle (from *A Kiss of Shadows*) is one of a multiple ménage of lovers "assigned" to Merry by her Aunt, the Queen of Air and Darkness, but he's the one who, right from this first book, has appealed to me the most. He has the whole "Dark Side" thing going on (the Queen's personal assassin for more than a millennium), he doesn't try to rule over Merry when she is coming to terms with the change in her circumstances, he doesn't get resentful about the multiplicity of lovers she has (which is something I find difficult to understand, but hey, he's more than a thousand years old and had plenty of time to get over any "jealous lover" issues). He loves Merry beyond life itself. He also loves his people and has the physical and emotional skills to be a strong and fair Consort to Merry's Queen. Besides, the man can walk through mirrors. That is seriously cool. On the down-side, his symbol is the spider... which (shudder) isn't even slightly cool.

Dageus MacKeltar (from *Dark Highlander*) appealed to me from the first time I met him in his brother's book. His humour and devil-may-care attitude to life has morphed in *Dark Highlander* to something far more emotionally sinister. I suppose having your soul possessed by thirteen evil

Druids will do that to you. However, the fact that Dageus' possession happened because he loved his brother and broke some major Fae rules in order to preserve his life, well, this covers a multitude of sins for me. It makes me trust his motivation, want to see him win the battle he's fighting—both internal and external. I love that he tries to protect Chloe from himself even though she is the only person who can slow his ultimate degeneration.

Jacob Catlin (from *Tell Me No Lies*) has a moustache. I can't believe it. I'm afraid the first thing I do before I re-read this book is mentally get out the razor. So I guess I like my heroes clean-shaven. Catlin is ex-CIA and spent years undercover in Asia. He doesn't trust anyone, until he gets to know Lindsay Danner. Then, the man is toast. He has to pretend to be who he really is (it's complex) and, at the same time, bodyguard Lindsay so those wanting to influence or kill her don't get the chance. The things that appeal to me about Catlin? I guess the whole aspect of a woman being a powerful man's entire focus and need is pretty much the basis of most romantic fiction. It certainly works for me here. Add into that mix the slow peeling away of a strong alpha male's emotional layers as he discovers the reality of the "true love" he's learned not to believe in. It has some explosive moments. I also like that although Catlin knows Lindsay will be safer if she lies about what she knows, he also understands her god is "truth" and he does nothing to diminish her or to change who she is, in spite of pressure from those in authority.

Devil Cynster, Duke of St Ives (from *Devil's Bride*) is the head of a large and rambling aristocratic family, and a survivor of the Battle of Waterloo. He's alpha, determined, utterly focused on his family and lands. He needs a Duchess, and Honoria is perfect—according to him, anyway. When Honoria doesn't share his opinion he does what every red-blooded alpha does; goes into stealth mode. I love that sneaky aspect of Devil. He knows what he wants. He's going to get her. End of story. He also, when he discovers Honoria's childhood trauma, knows he will not be able to finesse her into marriage. He has to change his approach so that she faces the past and come to some sort of peace with it. I also find that aspect of his personality very appealing. He is not a gentle man, but he learns gentleness in some, at

(Continued on page 18)

(Making Your Hero...continued from page 1)

Men tend to make statements; women tend to ask questions, even multiple questions. Men use shorter sentences and fewer of them; women use longer, more complex sentences and string more of them together.

Women ask questions rather than make statements about their wishes. Instead of saying, "I want to go out for dinner" she's apt to ask, "Would you like to go out for dinner?" When he says, "No," she's irritated because he didn't consider her wishes—but he doesn't understand why she's mad, because all he did was answer the question.

Women make suggestions rather than stating their wishes. Instead of saying, "I want to go to Pizza Hut," they'll say, "We could go to Pizza Hut." Then when he says he'd rather go somewhere else, she's hurt because she thinks he didn't consider her wishes.

Women tend to turn statements into questions. "This is a really good pizza, don't you think?" is a way of asking for validation of her opinion.

Women invite discussion by using phrases like, "Maybe this is a stupid idea, but..." "I kind-of think", "Would it be okay if...", "Perhaps we should...", "Have you thought about..." Men hear those statements as expressing uncertainty and are apt to dismiss them outright. If she isn't sure, why is she even bringing it up?

Women suggest rather than ask for help. Rather than saying, "Will you go to the store?" she's apt to say, "I really need a few things from the store" and hope that he'll volunteer. Instead, he's likely to take it as a statement of fact and not even question if it has anything to do with him.

Women use understatement and speak in euphemisms; men are blunt. "That wasn't a very smart thing to say" is a feminine statement; "That's the stupidest thing I ever heard" is the masculine version.

Men try to solve problems; women talk about problems.

Men usually make a decision, act, and move on. Women usually wallow in the problem before or instead of acting.

Men try to help others solve problems. Women want to talk about problems but not necessarily to solve them.

Women listen to other people in order to give support. Men listen to other people in order to give advice. A

woman who talks to a man expecting to receive support, and instead getting advice, is likely to feel that he isn't taking her seriously. (She comes home from work and vents about her unhappiness with her boss. He says, "So get another job." Her female friend would say, "That's awful, I know just how upset you are.")

Women talk in order to feel better. The woman venting about being unhappy on the job feels relief once she's talked about it, even if the situation hasn't changed in the least. That may drive the man in her life nuts—if she's so unhappy, why won't she do anything about it?

Men's actions and body language often do not reflect their feelings; women's usually do.

Men are direct in talking about concrete things, but indirect in talking about emotional issues. When forced to discuss emotions, men may attempt to distance themselves by avoiding eye contact, slouching, or turning away.

Men tend to sprawl out while talking, especially about a serious subject. Women tend to gather in. Men sit in relaxed, sprawled positions with men or in mixed groups. Women sit in sprawled positions with other women but sit upright in mixed groups.

Men avoid discussion of emotional information; women invite it.

If men make reference to personal problems, it's usually in a brief and general way. If someone asks him how he's doing, he might say, "It's been rough." He's unlikely to volunteer even that much without being asked. If women make reference to personal problems, it's often every detail and very specific.

Women express emotion relatively easily, even in public—except for anger, which they tend to repress at all times. Men generally do not express any emotion other than anger in public.

Men don't ask about their male friends' emotional states or personal problems, because to do so would be to put a pal in a one-down position. (He comes home and says, "Brad and Sheila are getting a divorce." She says, "But why?" He shrugs and says, "I didn't ask.")

Women figure out how they feel by talking about it; men by thinking about it.

Men tend to be more analytical and take more time to sort out how they feel, and are more likely to do so by themselves rather than in discussion.

In general, however, men don't participate in a lot of self-examination

or self-doubt. A woman is more likely to go over and over an issue, either to a friend or in her head, than a man is.

Women are more likely to sit down quietly and think through the whole history of a problem. Men are more action oriented, thinking what he's going to do about the problem, then moving straight on to doing it.

Men interrupt; women wait their turn.

Men interrupt in order to change the subject or to express their opinion; women interrupt with supporting noises or to avert conflict.

Men take over group conversations because they interrupt each other and keep talking, while women who are politely waiting for an opening keep waiting. A man talking to a woman feels that if she had something to contribute she'd interrupt and say it, so to him the fact that she's quiet means she must not have anything significant to contribute.

Men ask questions to get information; women ask questions to further the conversation.

Men see talk as information; women see talk as interaction. Women are more likely to make a telephone call just to talk; men make a telephone call to accomplish a specific purpose.

Men don't ask rhetorical questions; women often do.

Men don't ask leading questions; they get specifically to the point.

A woman's speech has a characteristic rising intonation, as if she's always asking a question. She's saying—with the tone of her voice instead of with words—"Do you understand? Am I making myself clear?" A man tends to hear the rising intonation as indicating uncertainty of herself and doubt about what she's saying. This makes him tend to take her less seriously—if she isn't sure of herself (which is what he hears), how can she be convincing to him?

Women make agreeing noises when they're listening; men listen in silence.

"I know", "I understand", "Really?", "Uh-huh" are all feminine mannerisms. Women nod and smile and make agreeing noises to show that they're listening and to invite further conversation, not necessarily to indicate agreement. Men interpret these actions as agreement, because they don't nod or smile or make agreeing noises unless they actually agree.

Women who are used to their feminine

(Continued on page 14)



The Sensual Hero

It's more than sex.

Maree Anderson shares her secrets to writing a hero who arouses the senses.



I recently read *The Spymaster's Lady* by Joanna Bourne. For me, the hero, Grey, (the spymaster of the title) typifies the Sensual Hero. He's still an alpha—very much so. He knows exactly what he wants, and what he wants is the heroine, Annique. But Annique is so very much his equal that Grey knows he has to be patient or risk losing her. Riding roughshod over this woman, and merely paying lip-service to the deeply held principles that drive her, will only provoke her to repay him in kind—or even kill him. (Yes, she is that capable, and that much his equal. J) He has to be smart and devious in his pursuit of her.

For me, the sensual tension throughout this book was breathtaking, and not once was I disappointed that the love scenes were not explicitly described.

Here're some examples:

"The hall gets chilly. Sleep with me tonight, in that bed."

He cradled her cheek into the warm hardness of his palm. He was so aware of her... even the infinitesimal nod of her head, she felt.

"You have to say it."

"Yes." She was without shame.

"I'll hold you to that." He drew her against him, body to body, and nuzzled into her hair, breathing the scent, making a growl deep in his throat. It grappled at her heart, that he desired even her smell.

And:

He set his chin on top of her head. "Just hold on to me for a while."

With her eyes closed, in darkness, it was like being back in France, being blind, knowing Grey by the touch and smell of him. After a time, a clock sounded in one of the rooms along the hall. Seven strokes. His back muscles tightened under her hands, and she knew the little truce between them was over. Truces were of that nature. They ended, sooner or later.

He let her go. "I shouldn't have made love to you this afternoon. I've made you doubt your own judgment. You'd trust me better if your body weren't hungry for me." He looked down and traced the shell of her ear with his fingertip. "See? When you feel even that much, you pull back, thinking I'm trying to manipulate you."

"Are you not?"

He opened his hand, as if he released something. "I don't know how to convince you. I want you so much I can't think clearly."

One final example:

Grey's hand moved lightly to the nape of her neck, beneath her hair, warm against her skin. He did this to strengthen and reassure her. She had the thought that it does not take much to convince a woman she is in love if one is even a little kind to her when she is alone and frightened.

Sorry, I can't resist. One last one:

"Oh." She breathed onto his shoulder. "Well." He could feel each separate breath. Neither of them moved. Slowly she let her forehead lower till it rested against him. Her tongue—a soft, warm touch—tasted him. Tasted his skin.

He knew for sure, then. This hit her as hard as it hit him. They were both lost. No way back for them.

His hand shook with the effort of keeping control. Slow. He had to go slow. He didn't trust himself to touch her anywhere but her hair. Her neck. The shell of her ear.



By the end of this book, I was more than a little in love with Grey, myself! He's strong, capable, ruthless, and utterly determined. And his pursuit and eventual winning of Annique is the most sensual 367 pages I've ever had the privilege of reading. Grey truly did capture my heart.

So how does one define sensual? A dictionary definition is: of, or arousing

gratification of, the senses and physical, especially sexual, pleasure.

I think the key words here are "arousing the senses". For some people, physical beauty is arousing. A sculpted physique or a beautifully proportioned body really does it for them. I can admire physical beauty in a hero—boy, can I what! But for a truly sensual hero, I need more. For example, I have a huge crush on Vin Diesel. Listening to him is like bathing in warm liquid chocolate. That man... All he needs to do is speak and I'm weak-kneed. A Facebook friend of mine agrees. She swears Vin could read the phone book aloud and make it sound sexy.



But I would be irritated as heck by the heroine commenting *ad nauseam* about her hero's chocolatey voice. His voice is something I want to know about, of course, just like I want to know about his physical looks. But once I have those fixed in my mind, I'm more interested in what goes on inside his head, and how he treats the heroine. I'm greedy. I want to be gratified by all the components that make up a hero. His looks. His voice. His actions. His inner thoughts. And I want all the heroine's senses to be aroused by him, too.

The way I see it, like all good things, arousing all the senses takes time.

For me, the most important characteristic a sensual hero can possess is patience. He knows what he wants. He'll stop at nothing to get it. He's smart enough to know that if he goes too fast, he'll lose his prize, AKA the heroine. His method? Slow, sensual seduction. He cherishes all of her little quirks, shows her that he cares about her in a myriad of tiny ways. He entices all her senses but respects her wishes, even as he challenges her and does her head in. He never crosses that invisible line she has metaphorically inscribed in the sand, no matter how much his lust-fuelled masculine parts demand otherwise. And when that

(Continued on page 16)

**ARE YOUR MALE
CHARACTERS MASCULINE?
A CHECKLIST**

**A convincing masculine
character will:**

- Be direct
- Be issue-oriented
- Be analytical
- Act casual even in serious discussions
- Interrupt
- Make statements
- Use short sentences
- State his preferences clearly
- Talk about concrete issues
- Verbalize only things that he sees as important
- Give advice
- Ask specific questions
- Choose to sit at angles from the person he's talking to

**A convincing masculine
character will not:**

- Ask lots of questions
- Ask leading questions
- Turn statements into questions
- Invite a "just talk" situation
- Speak in euphemisms
- Use understatement
- Downplay his ideas
- Let his sentences trail off
- Make agreeing noises
- Volunteer his reasons
- Hold eye contact for significant periods
- Say "I'm sorry" unless he really means it
- Tell stories about his failings
- Use personal anecdote to make a point in a professional setting
- Get bogged down in introspection or self-doubt
- Ask for help with emotional issues
- Volunteer information about his feelings
- Ask about others' feelings
- Ask for validation

(Making Your Hero...continued from page 12)

friends' agreeing noises often subconsciously feel that a man who isn't making those noises isn't really listening. She keeps talking, trying to evoke a response, while he wishes she'd get to the point. This is why some men will make agreeing noises to give the impression that they're listening, when they're really not hearing a word.

Women say "I'm sorry"; men say "I apologize."

"I'm sorry" implies taking responsibility, while "I apologize" indicates regret that there's a problem without necessarily accepting responsibility for causing it.

Women say "I'm sorry" not only to apologize but to express regret, sympathy, or concern. "I'm sorry" is an all-purpose feminine answer. Men see it as an apology and are often confused when women use it to indicate compassion.

Women are more specific with information.

She'll tell you a dress is robin's egg or teal or aqua or periwinkle. He'll say it's blue.

Women are more likely to call the other person by name in conversation.

Women are more likely to use their loved one's pet names when talking to other people.

Women share secrets to build rapport; men hide secrets to maintain status.

Women share problems; men keep problems to themselves. Women see talking to outsiders about their relationships as part of developing a friendship. Men see talking to outsiders about their relationships as disloyalty. She talks to her friends about her husband and doesn't give it a second thought, but he regards her conversations as betraying him.

Men react to the message; women interpret the meaning of the message.

A woman is much more likely to say, "And what exactly did you mean by that?" She's also more likely to brood over possible hidden meanings.

Both men and women have a tendency not to answer the question which was actually asked but the one they perceive was meant—but they have different justifications for doing so. Men see it as a protective measure to get to the real point of her question (though women interpret their protection as controlling). Women intend it as a helpful and caring measure to get to the real point of his question (though men see their helpfulness as non-responsive or condescending).

Men are more approving of their self image; women are more critical.

On their worst day, men look in the mirror and say, "Not bad for an old guy." On their best day, women look in the mirror and say, "Look at those awful love handles."

Men tend to boast publicly; women to boast privately, if at all. Women tell stories about their failures; men tell stories that make them look good. Women are more likely to use personal

anecdote to make a public point.

Men are more able to compartmentalize and separate issues, while women are more likely to let feelings in one area spill over into another.

A man can go from angry to amorous much faster and more believably than a woman. An argument or a bad day will be more difficult for a woman to set aside when getting into bed.

Men see challenge as constructive; women see challenge as destructive.

Women see disagreement as threatening; men do not. Women find raised voices and arguments upsetting; men see the ability to fight as a sign of intimacy, because only those who are intimately involved with each other argue.

A good knock-down-drag-out fight leaves him feeling energetic, but leaves her feeling weary and defeated. The long conversations she values as a sign of intimacy leave him feeling tired and worn out.

What to do?

Men and women display very different approaches in handling life and relationships. Women authors, used to their own way of reacting, usually fall short in creating their male characters' dialogue and thoughts.

Their men are chatty, they ask leading questions, they follow up perfectly reasonable statements with questions, they volunteer their feelings, they negotiate—just like a woman would. And they think things to death—as women often do.

If you're worried about your male character, the first fix is to check the dialogue for questions, euphemism, and understatement. Change his questions to statements; remove any questions that don't call for concrete answers; make his statements short and direct and to the point, and cut anything that hints of self-deprecation. Follow up by shortening and tightening his thoughts—keep his introspection concrete and specific, and don't let him wallow or explain.

With just a few fairly simple shifts, you'll have gone a long way toward making him a convincing man. ♥♥♥

Leigh Michaels (www.leighmichaels.com) is the author of nearly 100 books, including Regency romances *Just One Season in London* and *The Wedding Affair*, as well as *On Writing Romance*.

A six-time RITA finalist, she teaches romance writing online for Gotham Writers' Workshop (www.writingclasses.com).

Her online seminar called *Writing Between the Sexes* will be offered by Colorado Romance Authors <http://crw-rwa.ning.com/page/workshops-1> beginning October 31, 2011.

The Mistress' House—February 2011, Sourcebooks Casablanca

Just One Season in London—July 2011, Sourcebooks Casablanca

The Wedding Affair—September 2011, Sourcebooks Casablanca

ebooks: Check out her ebooks at:

<http://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/LeighMichaels>

Bravery and Sacrifice

From Waterloo to Afghanistan.

Julie-Ann Miskell shares how to write realistic military heroes.



There is something special about a military hero, and it's not just about how hot he looks in uniform.

It doesn't matter whether your hero fought in the Battle of Waterloo, if he's a present-day soldier on deployment in Iraq or Afghanistan, or the captain of a warship deep in space. These servicemen all share the same attributes that are honed from living a life in the military.

And what traits make an irresistible military hero? The best place to look is by examining some real life examples:

Integrity

From the moment your hero applies to join any of the armed forces, he is assessed to determine if he meets the service's moral and behaviour standards. Addiction testing, background checks, criminal record examinations, and psychological evaluations are carried out on both enlisted and officer candidates. A failure in any of these areas will likely result in a rejection. And once your hero joins the military, his honour is continually assessed, both by his teammates and superior officers. Paragraph seven from the U.S. Navy SEALs creed summarises this well: *"Uncompromising integrity is my standard. My character and honour are steadfast. My word is my bond."*

Self-Discipline and Self-Motivation

The purpose of basic training is to transform your hero from a civilian into a serviceman by conditioning him to submerge his individuality for the good of his unit. The training instructors apply significant degrees of physical and mental stress on your hero in order to teach him the core values of self-discipline and self-motivation.

Having gained confidence in his abilities, a military hero will develop the drive to succeed no matter what challenges he faces during his career. A sentence from the U.S. Army Rangers Creed states: *"Never shall I fail my comrades, I will always keep myself mentally alert, physically strong,*

and morally straight and I will shoulder more than my share of the task whatever it may be, one hundred percent and then some."

Loyalty

Loyalty to country, to the hero's chosen military branch, to his platoon, and to his teammates, is the glue that binds military units together. Teamwork and loyalty are the two critical skills first learnt in basic training, and they are reinforced with every training mission and deployment a platoon is sent on. In a career where your hero will spend more time with his teammates than with the heroine or his family, the friendships made in the military are usually lifelong and strong. This is especially true if your hero is a member of the Special Operations Forces (NZSAS, U.S. Army Rangers, Australian SAS, U.S. Special Forces, U.S. Navy SEALs, MARSOC, to name a few). In a world where high-risk missions are the norm, having the loyalty and trust of your teammates can mean the difference between life and death, and success or failure of a mission. Many Special Operations Forces refer to the bonds between teammates as a brotherhood. The New Zealand Army values of "Courage, Commitment, Comradeship, and Integrity" show the importance of loyalty and teamwork in their mission statement.

Compassion

While a military hero is trained for war, he is also expected to protect the innocent. Humanitarian missions are an important part of ensuring stability in regions during times of civil emergency and disasters. One example of this was after the February 22nd 2011 earthquake in Christchurch. Large contingents of the New Zealand Defence Force and the Singapore Armed Forces were in the city preparing for the start of an international military exercise when the earthquake occurred. Following this disaster, New Zealand Navy personnel participating in a first aid training course in the city entered the CBD to assist with the rescue operations.

Sailors from the HMNZS Canterbury, HMNZS Otago, and the HMNZS Pukaki provided food, water and security to those living in Lyttelton after the town was cut off from Christchurch. Members of the New Zealand and Singapore Armies provided security in the city during the days after the earthquake. The New Zealand Air Force, Singapore Air Force, and the Australian Air Force provided air bridges between Christchurch and Wellington/Auckland.

Education

Education is important no matter whether your hero is an officer or if he's enlisted. If your hero joins the military as an officer, in most countries he will require a college degree. And even then he won't be guaranteed a commission due to the restricted number of officer slots and competition from other candidates. If your hero is enlisted he will require at least a high school diploma, and possibly even a college degree, if he wishes to enter the Special Operations Forces like the Navy SEALs. With the dropout rate of Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training (BUD/S aka Navy SEAL Selection) being over ninety percent, the probability of surviving the training and becoming a SEAL is higher if your hero has life experience and a college degree. Paragraph ten from the Navy SEAL creed explains the importance of education: *"We demand discipline. We expect innovation. The lives of my teammates and the success of our mission depend on me—my technical skill, tactical proficiency, and attention to detail. My training is never complete."*

Duty

Having made the commitment to serve his country, his teammates, and the innocent, your hero's sense of duty to protect those he feels responsible for will be a driving force in his life. No matter whether he is an officer or enlisted, your hero will use the attributes of integrity, self-discipline, loyalty, compassion, and education, to carry out his responsibilities to the best

(Continued on page 17)

(What Makes an Engaging...cont from page 9)
equal. A woman worthy of his respect and love.

Master of her own fate—Finally, as I come to the climax of the story, so my heroine rises up to meet the last and impossible challenges I've thrown at her. But never fear, she has the alpha-male love of her life to ride to her rescue, doesn't she? No! I want the heroines I read about as well as those I create to be the hero of their own story. Just as they aren't allowed to be passive watchers to the action as it's pulling them forward, so too are they prohibited from swooning on a couch like a silent-movie actress while the man saves the day. They must solve their own problems, slay their own dragons, and last but not least make their own happy-ever-after. This doesn't mean my heroine is a muscle-bound testosterone-laden she-man who takes no prisoners, but that circumstance and character combine to bring her strengths to the fore, and with all on the line, she will use them to win the day.

So, now you have my four essential elements for an engaging heroine. I hope this spurs your creativity as it inspires you to take a deeper look at the characteristics you require in these larger-than-life women that allow them to leap from the page and into our hearts.

A college graduate with a degree in European History and a minor in Anthropology, Alix Rickloff joined RWA (America) in 2002 and began to pursue her dream job—that of a writer. Four manuscripts, an agent, a Marlene award for best Historical, and a Golden Heart Final in Short Historical later, the dream became reality with the sale of *Lost In You*—a Regency-Set Paranormal—to Kensington Books. Now Alix writes about the Other—mortals bearing the blood of the Fey, and the world they inhabit... a world that lies beyond the glittering balls and damped muslin of the Regency many think they know so well.

For more about Alix's *Regency Romance Touched by Something Other* visit www.alixrickloff.com



(The Sensual Hero...continued from page 13)
invisible line is finally crossed, it's apparently all the heroine's idea... and then he pounces and she doesn't have a chance. *evil grin*

I was allocated the Sensual Hero as part of our Writers Gone Wild "We Give Great Hero" series of posts by fellow Wild Woman, Jennifer, who commented, "You have the perfect two-appendage alien pleasure slave." Jenn's one smart cookie. Plus she's read my SFR book, *From The Ashes*, so she must have a reason for believing that Asher, despite his extra set of male parts, and despite being genetically bred as a sex slave, is an example of a Sensual Hero.

After giving it some thought, I think she's right. Asher is a Sensual Hero. Through the mental bond he shares with Calista he knows her deepest thoughts and desires. He knows she lusts after him in the worst way. But he also knows how she feels about slavery, and that if she had sex with him, she'd not be able to forgive herself for taking advantage of him, using him. So rather than using his obvious charms to seduce her and satisfy her sexually, he is determined to overcome his genetic programming, and become the man she wants him to be. His own man, in other words. A man who is worthy of being loved by a woman like Calista, rather than a victim bred to be a plaything for others. And along the way, while he learns to stand up for himself and his own needs, and defend himself against those who desire to use him, he must convince Calista that she, too, is worthy of being loved and cherished.

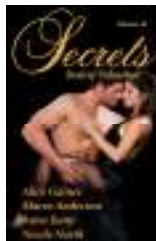


How does he do that? By holding back whenever she becomes too overwhelmed by his sexuality and her own physical needs. No matter how much he wants her, Asher is her voice of reason whenever she's provoked to space her morals and beliefs out of the airlock and jump his bones. And because he knows all her secrets and understands what motivates her, Asher becomes the man who finally helps Calista let go of the past, and embrace a future where she can love and be loved... By him, of course. It is a romance, after all!

I believe that Jace, the hero of *Kat On A Hot Tin Roof* (my novella in Red Sage's *Secrets* Volume 30 "Desires Unleashed" anthology) is a sensual

hero, too... Eventually. When Kat finally allows him to be.

In one of my favourite scenes, he turns up on her doorstep, only to find an exhausted, sleep-deprived, stressed to the max woman. So what does he do? He runs her bath, pours her a glass of wine, takes care of her. Even more importantly, he sits beside the bath to keep her company while she relaxes, and lets her quiz him about his childhood. Which is a Big Deal so far as Kat's concerned, because he's finally revealing himself to her in a way that's even more intimate than sex. And when Jace comes back from paying the pizza delivery boy, and discovers Kat's fallen asleep in the bath, he tucks her into bed and doesn't join her—even though it just about kills him not to crawl in with her. What a man. *sigh*



So there it is: my take on the Sensual Hero. Long may he grace the pages of our books! ♥♥♥

Note: this article originally appeared as part of the Writers Gone Wild "We Give Great Hero" tour, on 21st July 2011. For more "great heroes" please visit the Writers Gone Wild blog to check out the rest of the posts in the tour: <http://writersgonewild.blogspot.com/2011/07/introducing-writers-gone-wild-we-give.html>

For excerpts, blurbs, and more information about *From The Ashes*, *Kat On A Hot Tin Roof*, or Maree's other published books, please visit the Books page of her website, <http://www.mareeanderson.com/books>

or her Facebook author page.

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

In my mind I picture a billboard...
"Crime stalks the city.
He's a brave cop. She's in danger."

...I call it
'The man does, the woman is'
syndrome; the male character is
defined by what he does, the female
character by what she *is*...

... But the standard plot of a
romance novel cannot be summed
up with the cliché, "Boy meets girl,
boy loses girl, boy gets girl."
In the romance fiction I write
the *girl* does the meeting,
the losing and the getting.
The woman does.

Judith Arnold
From *Dangerous Men and Adventurous Women*

(Bravery and Sacrifice... cont from page 15)

of his abilities. Navy SEAL creed paragraph five summarises this well: *"My loyalty to Country and Team is beyond reproach. I humbly serve as a guardian to my fellow Americans always ready to defend those who are unable to defend themselves."*

Bravery

For your romance hero bravery is a product of all the attributes mentioned above. Courage is the ability of your hero to confront pain, hardship, death, or threat of death, despite fear and risk to himself. There have been many instances of bravery in the current war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan. One example was NZSAS soldier Lance Corporal William Apiata, who was awarded the Victoria Cross after he carried a severely wounded comrade seventy metres to safety while under enemy fire during a battle in Afghanistan in 2004.

Sacrifice

Already having the attributes of integrity, self-discipline, loyalty, compassion, education, duty and bravery, it is easy to see how your military hero would be willing to make the ultimate sacrifice, his life, for his teammates, his family, and the heroine if necessary. One example of a serviceman giving the ultimate sacrifice for his teammates was Navy SEAL, Petty Officer Second Class, Michael A. Monsoor. He was posthumously awarded the United States Medal of Honor after he jumped on a thrown grenade and covered it with his body in order to protect his SEAL teammates who—trapped on a small rooftop space in Ramadi, Iraq—would otherwise have been unable to escape the blast. Thanks to Michael Monsoor's sacrifice, his two teammates, although injured, survived.

It is easy to see that a military man can be a complex individual who will make a great alpha hero in your romance novel. But these same traits can also be seen in a negative light. Self-discipline and self-motivation can be mistaken for ego. Bravery and sacrifice can be seen as recklessness. A drive to be the best might be seen as pride. Loyalty to teammates first, over family and the heroine, can drive a wedge in relationships. All of this makes for great conflict in your novel.

It is also important to remember that a perfect military hero makes for a boring

one. One sure-fire way to introduce realistic flaws in your military hero is to attack one or more of the attributes mentioned above. Make him choose between integrity and loyalty to his teammates. Have him struggle with duty to his country versus keeping his marriage together.

Another aspect to consider when writing a realistic military hero is the fallout of what he does for a job. Even though he is trained to kill, your military hero is a human being too. There is an emotional and mental cost to ending someone else's existence and that can affect every area of his life. A military hero who comes home from war will not be the same man the heroine knew before. Adjusting to life back at home can cause stress both to the hero and his family. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is another serious issue your hero may deal with, either on his own behalf or with a teammate. Injuries are another factor to consider, especially if your hero can no longer serve in the military and is forced to become a civilian.

These attributes and considerations are only some examples of how to bring a realistic military hero to life. To give even more depth to your hero as a fully-fledged character it is important to research the military, your hero's career, and examples of real-life military heroes. Most military romance readers have a good knowledge of the genre so it pays to get your world building (equipment, uniforms, weapons, terms, etc.) and characterisation right if you want them to follow your career.

Now, you may ask, how are military heroes different to other romance heroes? The truth is there aren't that many differences. The things we love about military heroes are the same attributes we love about all romance heroes. Your medical hero has compassion for his patients. Your fire fighter hero is brave enough to risk his life for a little girl trapped in a burning building. Your paranormal hero is loyal to his brothers fighting along beside him. Your contemporary hero has the drive to build a business empire despite growing up on the streets.

When it comes down to it, the military hero is just one of many types of hero who capture a reader's heart. The key to making him work is in-depth characterisation, research, and authenticity. ♥♥♥

**Strong heroines nurture us
and are our role models.**

**In romance books
strong heroines win, and even when
our own victories are elusive,
these women keep us
believing in ourselves.
They keep us believing
that we can triumph, too.**

Elizabeth Grayson

Julie-Ann Miskell grew up with a love for the military, history, research, science, and romance novels. Science won out, however, and after earning her PhD in Biochemistry she spent the next six years researching stuff she isn't allowed to tell you about. Looking for a career change she fell back into the arms of those first loves—the military, and romance novels. Now she writes military romances with a contemporary feel, under the pseudonym Julieann Thomas.

You can find her online:

www.julieannthomas.com

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www.twitter.com/julieannthomas

**My idea of a strong character is one
who makes her own choices, makes
her own mistakes, owns up to her
own failings. She might fall, but
she'll pick herself back up. She
might have help, but she doesn't
rely completely on that help.**

Caitlin R. O'Connell

**From a writer's point of view, Anti-Heroines are great for another reason:
they come with instant conflict.**

**A girl with a shady past or bad habits is
going to burn a lot of bridges.**

**Whether she's a courtesan or a thief,
she'll have enemies out for her blood
and mistakes that come back to haunt
her. Both of which are exceedingly
helpful when that sagging middle of a
manuscript comes around.**

**This conflict also gives us a great way
to tackle the Anti-Heroine's main
problem, likability.**

**It's not a coincidence that most stories
featuring heroines of dubious morality
start after a crisis of some sort. Whatever
it is— a newly broken scandal or an
impending arrest—something has to
bring our girl low. She's bottomed out
and trying to get back on her feet. Poof!
Unlikable mean girl turns into plucky
heroine worth rooting for! A reader likes
nothing so much as a heroine who's
resilient in the face of utter disaster.**

Mary Danielson

<http://www.writechic.com/2010/01/anti-heroine-advantage.html>

(Creating the Believable...cont from page 7)

thinking that leads from best-friends to love.

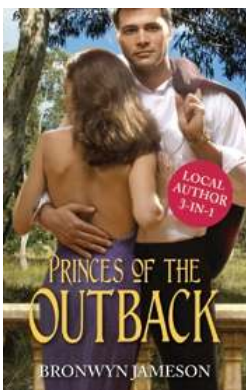
Another point to ponder: sometimes the reader will see that growing respect before the character is prepared to see and admit it.

Trust—to create a believable resolution and HEA, I submit that our hero and heroine need to trust each other. How can you demonstrate trust in your book? Is it stronger for one character to decide, in introspect: I trust him now? Or is it better to show that trust by sharing a secret or admitting a weakness—something he/she has never shared with another person or perhaps even admitted to themselves?

Trust is about taking a risk on the other person, about exposing a vulnerability, about giving without any expectation of reward. And it sure does help if this crucial scene develops naturally from the plot, from character growth, from

cause and effect. You do not want the reader thinking: now why the blazes is she telling him that?!

This can be a very useful tool when you're planning your book's emotional climax. Think



about how powerful and emotional and all-is-lost your black moment could be if that admission, that secret, comes back and bites them on the butt.

Acknowledgement of love—This may be an admission only to oneself, not shared with the other character, but even so it can be tricky in terms of maintaining tension. If the character acknowledges love, you may need this to make matters worse between your protagonists, not better.

Demonstration of love—which is what happens in the resolution). Notice the use of the term "demonstration" rather than admission. The reason, once again, is the power of show over tell. Yes, it's always lovely to read a lyrical and moving declaration of love, but think about the power of showing that love. Think about the power of sacrifice. This demonstrates the character's change and growth. It may not come to anything—it can be just a willingness to give up something of vital importance that provides the winning final touch.

Example:

At the end of *The Ruthless Groom*, Alex doesn't care about the scandal of marrying Zara. And in the final scene, when he proposes marriage, he says he will move his home, his office, to another city so Zara can finish her studies there, if that's what she wants. That offer, that willingness to sacrifice, is enough because it shows his change/growth and is a demonstration

of how much being with her and her happiness, her goals, mean to him. This follows his disclosure of a vulnerability he's never admitted to anyone—the reason he's afraid of passion; why he's been looking for a nice, safe, stable relationship. To Zara, those two key points mean more than any declaration of love. He has shown he means it; hopefully the reader, like Zara, will believe they belong together, that they have earned their happy-ever-after. ♥♥♥

From Bronwyn Jameson's workshop presented to the Melbourne Romance Writers Group, Feb 2005.

Bestselling and award-winning author Bronwyn Jameson grew up on an Australian farm where she developed a lifelong love of animals and the written word. In July 2001 Silhouette Desire published *In Bed With The Boss's Daughter*. Since then Bronwyn has continued to write take-to-bed romance for Desire, winning contests such as The Aspen Gold, The Write Touch Readers' Award and the Anne Bonney Readers' Choice. In 2006 she was a triple RITA finalist with her *Princes of the Outback* trilogy and a nominee for the Romantic Times Series Storyteller of the Year. You can visit Bronwyn at her website www.bronwynjameson.com

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Heroes and Heroines: Sixteen Master Archetypes—Tami D Cowden, Caro LaFever, Sue Vidars ISBN 1580650244

From Lust to Love—Tami Cowden, Caro LaFever

RWA Conference Tape RW7-61

(Cool Eyed Women...cont from page 11)

least, of his dealings with Honoria. He also learns that Honoria is not a gutless woman who is willing to be dictated to and he's going to have to make some major adjustments if he wants her to even consider becoming his wife. Which, of course, he does.

So here are the five things my heroes seem to have in common:

- He is physically strong, intelligent, competent, independent, and has a sense of humour.
- He knows what he wants and he goes after it, in every area of his life.
- He walks more on the dark side than the light, at least at the beginning of his relationship with the heroine.
- He places the heroine and her needs above his, maybe not at first, but as the relationship progresses.

- He is an intensely sexual person, but he never uses his physical strength to force the heroine to submit to him sexually against her will. He will, however, actively encourage her to discover her own sexuality, and assist her in every way he can.

Your Exercise: Working from your character synopses, write down the five elements of personality your favourite heroes have in common.

Now, as I said a little earlier, I learned something unexpected as I was doing this exercise. I learned that, while I evaluate my favourite heroine on the basis of *who she is* and *how I can identify with her in some aspect of her personality*, I evaluate the hero on *his honesty in terms of his motivation towards the heroine* and *how he makes me feel*.

The question I'm now asking myself—and I'll put it in here too, in case it's

helpful to someone else—is: How would my writing/story-telling improve if I focused not only on who the heroine is, but also on *how she makes me feel*?

These commonalities of hero and heroine are vital ingredients in the "magic formula" we're going to blend so you can write your next book with even more passion. ♥♥♥

Gracie O'Neil—one quarter of *Heart To Heart's* current editorial team—writes Romantic Suspense and Young Adult novels, and will analyse anything into a paper bag. Or a plastic bucket. Or a lidded box. Any sort of container, really. She struggles with a tendency to CDO (an alphabetised form of OCD) and loves to help other writers hone their gift. One day she hopes to be multi-published, an international sex symbol, obscenely rich, and way more famous than Nora Roberts. In the meantime she lives a real life in an imaginary world—which is a whole lot more fun than the other way round.

You'll find more helpful advice for writers at her blog:

www.romanceshewrote.com

RWNZ News Around the Regions

Keeping in touch with each other.

AUCKLAND

We started this meeting with a formal thank you and gift to Frances Housden as the outgoing convener. Barbara Clendon gave us valuable insight and information regarding historicals. Our speaker was Karen Whittaker who gave us helpful handouts and illumination in the use of social media for our promotion as writers. A good discussion followed and we shared information on our goals and progress.

Karina Bliss will be our speaker next month. We can look forward to another inspiring meeting on Saturday 1st October at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion from 12.30 to 3.00pm as usual. ♥♥♥

CENTRAL NORTH C2C

Firstly, thank-you Helen for hosting our September meeting. It was a wonderful time full of sharing; information on some unusual topics, ideas, books given away, lots of laughs, meeting new and enthused writers. We welcomed new member Carmen Seed—whom I'm fairly sure wasn't scared off after meeting us—and welcomed back Netta Newbound who came away re-inspired (as we all did).

Helen had an off-the-cuff writing exercise which proved entertaining in the "Aloud reads" which saw each writer doing it their way—and from their genre preference, funnily enough. Nicki Davidson gave an overview of the annual RWNZ conference and her experience as a first-timer (she is totally sold on it). "Best time ever!" Jeanne shared her conference first-timer experience of what a cold read was and then her 'pitch' excitement, and the request for a partial. YAHOO! Jeanne's advice? "Go to the conference. As a new writer it's the best thing you can do for yourself." So start saving for next year, ladies!

Our next meeting is on Saturday 8th October, 12.00 midday, at Elise Penning's home in Hamilton. I'll email directions closer to the date. Thanks to Tyree Connor who has offered to do a workshop for Elise. There may be homework required for this one, but I'll let you know. ♥♥♥

HAWKES BAY

If anyone would like to join the Hawke's Bay Group please contact Ginny at ginny.suckling@xtra.co.nz. ♥♥♥

WELLINGTON

Eleven of us from the Wellington/Kapiti branch had a lively September meeting—and we welcomed Shirley Meggett from Auckland who was holidaying close by. Giovanna Lee returned after attending three conferences in a row. There was plenty of discussion about our Auckland conference, and news of pitches and requests. Work read out included the start of Shirley's new historical, a love scene by Meryl, and part of Kris's request from Lucy Gilmour.

Next meeting is 1.00pm, Saturday 1st October at Meryl's. Because people are submitting work after conference we thought bringing along a two-page synopsis would be excellent practice—but anything to share will be good. ♥♥♥

OTAGO

Due to work, family, and Rugby World Cup demands (full houses of keen fans) we did not meet in September. But we are all writing. We next meet on 8th October at Rosalie's home. Our theme for this month is 'Writing from the Heart.' The plan is to reconnect with our impulse to write love stories, and to share our personal memories of Sandra Hyatt. Please contact Viv for more details. ♥♥♥

(Dialogue 101... continued from page 5)

Now have a conversation—you might not want to do this in the coffee shop—with your hero. How does he talk to you? How well do you know him?

2. Four people—an army officer, a teenage girl, an old lady, your hero—are standing in a queue at the bank when they witness a hold-up. You are the police officer taking statements. What do they remember seeing? How would each one respond to the police officer? And how do they say it? ♥♥♥

With her childhood spent in a house full

of books, Rachel's love of reading came early—and once she started school a love of writing quickly followed. She joined RWNZ in 2007 and has been active on both the Executive and Conference Committee. A finalist in numerous RWNZ competitions, Rachel says these have helped her hone her craft. Currently she is part of the *Heart To Heart* editorial team. This article began as a workshop presentation to the Wellington RWNZ chapter.

**A hero is no braver than an ordinary man,
but he is braver five minutes longer.**

Ralph Waldo Emerson



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**First, find out what your hero wants,
then just follow him!**

Ray Bradbury

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

20 Questions to Improve Your Dialogue

Writer and blogger **Paulo Campos** gives some hints to help your dialogue come up smelling of roses.



One of the biggest let-downs as a reader is weak dialogue in a story successful in every other way. I think, "People do not talk this way," over and over. I read *The Stand* a few months ago. I enjoyed it so much I burned through its 1,500 (or so) pages in about a week. But most of the dialogue stank.

Most of the characters have the same vocabulary and syntax. That's despite their being from different social and economic classes, education levels, and regions of the country. Part of what's interesting about the book is the different points of view the characters have. The way they expressed them didn't fit.

Lots of novels, possibly most, have dialogue that comes across as inauthentic for a number of reasons. Most novels with great plots would benefit from better dialogue.

1. How can your characters' vocabulary reflect their social, educational, regional background that you have explained to the reader or simply know on your own?
2. Does your use of dialect and patois make sense? (Mark Twain's did. But for every Twain there are legions of writers whose use of dialect is less readable than *Finnegans Wake*. Ask your test readers!)
3. How does it sound read out loud?
4. Do your characters' speech rhythms seem realistic?
5. If so: is your attempt to make your characters' speech rhythm seem realistic so successful that it obscures what they're saying, who's

speaking, and takes the reader out of the story? (There's a balance between this issue and the previous question that messes writers up all the time).

6. Can you trim clichés, slang and expletives?
7. Are your dialogue tags clear, repetitive, or underused?
8. Does the dialogue sequence add anything (exposition, character development, etc) to the story?
9. Could you break up information from this scene into others; is this scene an information dump?
10. Did your first draft of the dialogue sequence stray from what you intended that scene to accomplish?
11. How present should your narrator be during the scene?
12. What might each participant in that conversation want in the story?
13. How might their role in the conversation support what they want?
14. What kind of body language might they have?
15. How does their body language re-enforce or contradict what they say?
16. What can they notice about the setting they're in? (A great, often overlooked, aspect of dialogue is that your narrator's still around, and your characters can do more than talk).
17. How do their thoughts contrast or contradict their words?
18. What might others have said about

them before the conversation?

19. What might they say about other characters during the conversation?
20. What might be said later about this conversation?

Here's an idea based on those last three questions: next time you're watching a television drama, pay extra attention to the "previously on..." intro. It often shows a sequence of dialogue scenes that set up the events (conversations and action) about to take place in the episode you're going to watch.

Less action-oriented shows like *Mad Men*, *Six Feet Under*, and (going way back) *I, Claudius* can show examples of how important dialogue scenes are.

Paulo Campos is a writer who lives in New York. He was a recipient of Glimmer Train's "Best Start" competition in November 2009. His short fiction has appeared in *THEMA* and the inaugural issue of *The Incongruous Quarterly*. He blogs about fiction and co-hosts a weekly comedy and current events podcast. You'll find both at: www.yingleangle.com.

... heroines are not perfect women, and thus have both flaws and virtues. The good traits explain why audiences empathize with her; the bad traits explain why she has a story.

Cowden, La Fever, and Viders
(The Complete Writer's Guide to Heroes and Heroines)

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