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February 2016 • Volume 10, Number 1



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Often Stop Reading

Overcoming the Ten Biggest Obstacles to Creating

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The Florida Writer

What to Submit

Celebrations

Let's celebrate your writing successes together. Marking a milestone in your writing career? Members who have good news to share about their writing-related accomplishments should send announcements for publication.

- Write a one-paragraph announcement in third person
- Type "Celebrations" in the subject line of your submission email
- One entry per issue per person
- Maximum word count: 100

Paragraphs

We publish selected creative writing by members who respond to a prompt. Prose, poetry, and excerpts from larger works that can stand alone are all welcome.

- Type "Paragraphs" in the subject line of your submission email
- One entry per person per issue
- Maximum word count for prose: 700
- Maximum line count for poetry: 50

Prompt for the April 2016 issue: The title and inspiration for your piece is a familiar aphorism. Use one of these or choose another: a stitch in time saves nine; if it ain't broke don't fix it; clothes make the man (or woman); he (or she) who hesitates is lost; absence makes the heart grow fonder; out of sight, out of mind; no pain, no gain.

Prompt for the June 2016 issue: Start your piece with one of the following:

- "I never told anyone..."
- "I never told anyone, but I'll tell you..."

How to Submit

- Deadline for the April issue is 3/1/2016
- Deadline for the June issue is 5/1/2016
- Send all submissions in doc format as an email attachment. Please do not embed your submission's text within the email message.
- Include your name and contact information within the attachment
- You may include one headshot or a photo of the front cover of your book to accompany your entry, but it is not required. The image file must be high resolution, 300 ppi, jpg format, and sent as an attachment. Please don't send embedded images.
- To be eligible for publication, you must be a member of the Florida Writers Association
- Before hitting the "send" button, please double check to be sure your entry meets all the requirements and is as free of typos and other errors as possible
- Email your submission to tfw@floridawriters.net

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Editor's Notes

Who Should You Listen To?

Mary Ann de Stefano

Editor

There's no shortage of advice for writers. Much of it conflicts. Some of it is worth listening to and some of it is not. Who should you listen to?

Awhile back, I read a short story for a client. I told her that I thought that she had written past the true ending of the story.

"That's funny," she said. "My husband told me he wanted 'more' at the end."

I braced myself for the frustrated reaction of a writer who has received conflicting advice.

But then she said, "That just tells me there's a problem with the ending."

Smart cookie! She listened to both of us. She didn't automatically discard our advice, but she didn't automatically accept it, either. She processed it thoughtfully and eventually made her own decisions about what to do once she worked on a revision. (The short story eventually developed into a novella.)

Some types of advice send up red flags for me.

One is the pie-in-the-sky advice. This promises that if only you buy this workshop, book, software, or service you can have it all, quickly and easily, or that there are five steps to sure success!

The fact is, writing is a complex task. Writing may be easy, but writing well is difficult. Like learning to play a musical instrument, it takes years of instruction and practice. Writing never gets any easier no matter how much you know or publish—and there are no shortcuts. Listen to the pros, they will tell you this: the challenges inherent in the writing process never go away.

The other red flag for me is the "always" or "never" advice. In an online discussion, I saw someone rail against comma splices and say we should "never" use them, even after others talked about how they can be used to create rhythm and even after being shown many examples of their use in great literature.

Punctuation is a tool that serves the written word. We are not in service to punctuation. You are free to break the "rules." Just do it consciously for effect, not out of ignorance, and do it well.

So with all the advice out there, who should you listen to? Listen to yourself.

Access guidance from experienced writers and true professionals. Listen attentively, but don't immediately accept or automatically reject their advice. Filter it through your own experience.

Be aware of your strengths, your talents, and where you need to improve. There is no one right way of doing almost anything when it comes to either writing or marketing your work. Do what works for you.



Photo courtesy of Gratisography

Check your ego. Don't be so meek that you believe anything you hear, but don't be so arrogant that you close yourself off from feedback, trying something new, or learning.

Practice your craft. Discover and use what works for you—and your readers. Make your own decisions, find your own voice, and write your own book.

That's my advice, anyway. 🐾

Mary Ann de Stefano is the editor of *The Florida Writer* and *MAD's Monday Muse*. She is an independent editor with 30+ years experience in publishing and consulting. Besides working one-to-one with writers who are developing books, she organizes writing workshops and designs author websites. Mary Ann does business at MAD about Words, named as a play on her initials and love for writing. Visit madaboutwords.com





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Networking: fwanetwork.ning.com

Questions: ContactUs@floridawriters.net

NEWS IN BRIEF

Mark Your Calendar

February 1, 2016

Florida Writers Association Collection competition
Opens for submissions

February 27, 2016

3rd Annual The Write Stuff Mini-Conference
Flagler College, St. Augustine FL

March 12, 2016

Finding the Funny Bone Utilizing Humor in Writing
A webinar with Erik Deckers

April 30, 2016

Florida Writers Association Collection Competition
Closes to submissions

April 30, 2016

5th Annual Writers Nest Mini-Conference
Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs

May 1, 2016

I ♥ Books – Multi-Genre Book Signing Event
Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs

May 7, 2016

2nd Annual Day at the Bay Mini-Conference
Clarion Inn, Tampa FL

May 14, 2016

New Horizons in Science Fiction: Looking Back &
Moving Forward
A webinar with Charles A. Cornell & MJ Carlson

May 15, 2016

Royal Palm Literary Award Competition
Closes to submissions

June 25, 2016

4th Annual Nonfiction Mini-Conference
Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs

July 9, 2016

What Poetry Can Teach Us About Writing Flash
A webinar with J. Bradley

For more information visit floridawriters.net



President's Notes

What's New?

Chrissy Jackson
President

What's new around FWA? Everything new is centered around you, our members! Hopefully, all of those keyboards out there are smokin' because there are opportunities for you coming up.

The 2016 Royal Palm Literary Awards competition is open with online registration! Woohoo! Wait until you see how easy Elaine Senecal's online form has made it for you—and for those behind the scenes. This is definitely one time where technology has improved the lives of everyone involved in RPLA! Huge thank you to Elaine! If you're ready, check out the guidelines and form at floridawriters.net. Click the "Competitions and Awards" menu at the top of the page, then scroll down for the link to the Royal Palm Literary Award page.

Last year, we put the rubrics used to judge entries in the 2015 Royal Palm Literary Awards competition online for the first time. This year, we've done that again. We've tweaked the rubrics a bit, so if you want to see what the judges will be using to score your entry, just go to the FWA Network, then click on "Groups" to find the 2016 RPLA Rubrics" group where they're posted. Note: you must be a member of FWA Network in order to view these rubrics. If you are a member of FWA, then membership in the FWA Network—our exclusive social networking site—is free. Just visit fwanetwork.ning.com to sign up.

The submission period for *Florida Writers Association Collection, Volume 8: Hide and Seek* opens February 1, 2016. John Gilstrap, our Person of Renown, has chosen this theme. Make sure your short story is on theme, no more than 1,200 words, and submitted to the right email address. Details can be found on floridawriters.net. Click the "Competitions and Awards" menu at the top of the page, then scroll down to for the link to the Collections page.

We're holding four mini-conferences in 2016. Locations and dates are: Flagler College in St. Augustine on February 27; Tampa in May; and at Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs in both April and June. Our volunteer co-chairs are busy lining up faculty for these events as well as for the annual conference.

The 2016 Florida Writers Conference, to be held at Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs from the evening of Thursday, October 20 through noon on Sunday, October 23, will be our 15th annual event. Our theme this year is *Carpe Diem: Conquer the World, One Book at a Time!*

Want to know more about what happens behind the scenes at FWA? Want to be one of the decision makers who helps guide FWA into the future? Volunteer! Here are some opportunities for you to consider:

- FWA Network, our private social networking site, is looking for a new network manager. Please contact me if you are interested or have questions.
- Several regions of Florida have no Regional Director, but have active Writers Group Leaders. Contact the state liaison, Mary Lois Sanders, at mary.lois.sanders@att.net if you are interested or have questions.
- Several areas of Florida have members with no Writers Group Leaders, and we're also looking for Critique Group Leaders. Contact Mary Lois Sanders mary.lois.sanders@att.net if you are interested or have questions.
- The volunteer who answers "Contact Us" queries received through the website is on temporary leave, and we're looking for a replacement. Please contact me if you are interested or have questions.
- Want to be considered as a faculty member for a future webinar? Complete the application you can find at floridawriters.net under the "Conferences & Events" tab. ✍

At the age of three, **Chrissy Jackson** received a little red plastic-covered rocker and two books for Christmas. That was the beginning of her love affair with words. She joined FWA in 2004, was elected vice president in 2005, and became president in 2009. Email: chrissyj@floridawriters.net

At January's Board of Director's meeting, **Cheyenne Knopf** was elected President of the Florida Writers Association. Chrissy remains on the board as Director Emerita.



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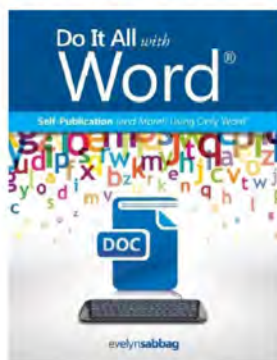
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the book, thereby giving the reader
an insight into their thoughts ..."*

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OPEN CALL for Short Stories and Poems

Florida Writers Association Collection Contests 2016

Submission period: January 1 through May 15, 2015

Person of Renown: John Gilstrap, NYT bestselling author of *Against All Odds*

Theme: Hide and Seek

Created for the purpose of providing Florida Writers Association members an annual opportunity to become published authors, the adult collection contest is in its eighth year and the youth collection contest is in its third year.

Our Person of Renown this year is John Gilstrap, the New York Times bestselling author of eight thrillers. His books include *Hostage Zero*, *No Mercy*, *Six Minutes to Freedom*, *Scott Free*, *Even Steven*, *At All Costs*, and *Nathan's Run*. His novels have been translated into more than 20 languages.

Gilstrap's choice for this year's theme is "Hide and Seek." He describes the theme in this way: "For everyone who has something (or someone) to hide, there's someone else out there that wants to find it."

Fiction, nonfiction, prose, and poetry are all accepted. Visit floridawriters.net/competitions-awards/collection/ for complete entry guidelines.

Don't forget, the Florida Writers Association's editing service is available to help you polish your entry. Make your work the best it can be. Information about "Editors Helping Writers" can be found here: floridawriters.net/membership/editing-service/.

Su Gerheim, author of the award-winning children's book series *Bayocor's Adventures*, and her poetry collection, *Sisters: A Catharsis through Poetry*, is the coordinator for both Florida Writers Association collection contests.



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Collective Wisdom: Best Advice from Writers Groups

Yikes! A Disrupter!

by Chris Coward

Okay, there you are at your writers group meeting. You're ready to commune with your colleagues. Everyone wants to make their work the best it can be.

Then that person walks in.

The disrupter.

Who are these folks? And what do you—as a group leader or participant—do about them? Over the years in various groups, I've seen a variety of disrupters, their effects ranging from benign to insidious.

- **The Talker.** Has to comment on everything, even if comments are repetitious or illogical.
- **The Distractor.** “Oh yes, I went skiing once, like your protagonist, and did you know I...”
- **The Center-of-Attention.** Acts as if the meeting is only about him or her. Tries to take over.
- **The Know-It-All.** The person with all the answers, closed to the opinions of others. Bent on channeling the flow of ideas in one direction, this person cannot effectively critique or be critiqued.
- **The Sadist.** Views other writers as competitors and takes enjoyment out of dismantling their work.

The list doesn't end here. Since writers group attendees come from the general population, there are other kinds of types as well. The good news is that truly toxic individuals are rare. The other good news is that no matter what kind of disrupter you may encounter, FWA is here to help.

So what can you do if a disrupter lands in your midst? Here are excerpted comments from experienced leaders, who wrote voluminously and enthusiastically on the topic.

If I have someone nattering on, I simply—and I hope nicely—interrupt the person and tell them we need to give everyone a chance to read and be critiqued, and we must move along. I also invite those people who want to sit and chat to stay after the meeting and discuss the finer points.

—Suzanna Harvill Crean, Leader,
Avon Park Wordsmiths,
established circa 2008

Provide clear rules that are enforced. Provide clear expectations that are enforced. Keep contributions within the boundaries that we a team agreed on. Treat members as teammates, respecting their opinions with open discussion and make decisions together as a group. Restate rules to a disruptive member and provide an ultimatum in a kind but effective tone. Provide an environment of compassion, kindness, and sincerity, and loyalty will follow.

—Claudia Caporale, former Leader,
Author's Round Table of Mount Dora,
established 2011

Disrupters usually start slowly, but once they have the podium, taking it away from them becomes a battle of wits. ... Disrupters know exactly what they're doing, and if the group leader doesn't take the floor back from them after a fair time, the disrupter will be emboldened and continue being abusive, making dislodging them even more difficult and uncomfortable. This is one time a group leader has to be a *group leader*.

—George Mindling, former Leader,
Sarasota Writers Group,
established circa 2005



As a psychologist for over 25 years, I know that the best efforts of group leaders may be undermined by disruptive members. Yet, they may be completely unaware of the stress they create. ... So how do you approach a disrupter? In as simple, direct, and respectful way as possible. Remind yourself that the disrupter, too, may have the needs of the group in mind and might have valuable feedback. A disrupter can become your greatest ally if enlisted to help you address the group's needs in a more balanced way. Others may also observe your efforts and shift their attention to being more helpful.

[If] the disrupter is still disrupting, it could be because he or she suffers from a diagnosable personality disorder. ... There are two particularly difficult personality disorders to deal with: Borderline Personality Disorder and Narcissistic Personality Disorder.

With either, even your best efforts could arouse their ire. Someone with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) is known for initially addressing others as if they are the greatest thing since angels. But as soon as angel does anything that BPD perceives as a slight, angel becomes devil incarnate. On the other hand, a person with a Narcissistic Personality is unable to see anyone or anything outside the lens of their own needs. Because often they are pretty smart, they may seem friendly at first so they can get what they need from you and others, but if anything appears to threaten their needs (to be recognized, complimented, sell their books, etc.), they feel wounded and go on the attack. Because both are mental disorders, logic does not relieve the pressure they feel.

—Nadine Vaughan (aka Vaughan.Williams),
Leader, Writers by the Sea, Amelia Island,
established January 2015

We have written guidelines which are emailed to every prospective attendee after they attend one meeting and express a desire to continue. Our guidelines are quite specific regarding acceptable behavior, including: 'If you're critiquing, please address comments to the story. The tendency to make comments like, "you forgot a comma right here," are too easily taken personally.

Our guidelines contain the following caveat: 'The Moderator's Unpleasant Duty: If, at any point, a member refuses to abide by the guidelines or becomes disruptive or abusive, he or she may be asked to leave. This is not up for a vote.'

—M.J. Carlson, Moderator,
Space Coast Fiction Writers,
established 2012

Okay. Back to where we began. You are at your writers group meeting, trying to make your work the best it can be ... when the disruptor walks in. If you're a concerned participant, speak up or confer privately with your group leader. If you're a leader, FWA has resources. You can start by posting a discussion in the private leaders' group page on the FWA Network. You will receive a response from writers group liaison Mary Lois Sanders and no doubt others as well. Our structure is in place to support you.

Groups do so much. May yours thrive, free from the ill effects of disrupters. ✨

Chris Coward is the co-leader of Oxford Writers critique group, chairperson for the 2016 Royal Palm Literary Awards competition, and past FWA president. She has ghostwritten for presidential appointees and CEOs, headed corporate marketing departments, edited national magazines,



and taught college English. She has an MA in English (concentration in professional writing and editing) from George Mason University and a BA in philosophy from the College of William and Mary. Stone Perfect, her debut novel about two nerds, a girl, and a sexy sociopath who square off in a perpendicular universe, is a 2012 first-place RPLA winner, science fiction.

The Big Reason **WHY** Agents and Editors Often Stop Reading

by Paula Munier

As a reader, a writer, and an agent, I read thousands of stories a year—or at least the opening pages of thousands of stories. And, all other things being equal, the reason I most often stop reading is a lack of narrative thrust.

Narrative thrust is the taut building of story, beat by beat, scene by scene, chapter by chapter, using the complexities of plot and character to propel the story forward in a dramatic arc that peaks at the climax. You must write each scene so that it leads logically to the next, as if you were connecting a model train, car by car, presenting story questions as you proceed down the track, pushing the action forward to its inevitable, if unpredictable, ending.

A lack of narrative thrust occurs when one scene does not logically lead to another.

You need to connect each scene, as readers need to know what the protagonist's motives are, and what he wants in every scene. Only then will they care about what happens next. Otherwise your story will read as a series of random scenes strung together—rather than as a compelling narrative.

Narrative thrust provides momentum for a story; it's the gas that fuels your story's engine. You can also think of it as the magnet that pulls the reader through the story. You know it when you experience it—just think of the last story that kept you up all night, the last novel you couldn't read fast enough and yet didn't want to end.

But recognizing narrative thrust as a reader and knowing how to create it as a writer are two very different things. So let's take a look at how you can enhance the narrative thrust of your story—and how you may be unwittingly sabotaging it.

The Art of the Story Question

When we talk about novels with narrative thrust, we're not just talking about the page-turners written by the Gillian Flynns and Harlan Cobens of the thriller world. The best novels in every genre boast a strong narrative thrust. Simply put, this means that the authors have mastered the art of the story question—the *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* questions readers ask themselves as they read, and keep reading.

Much to my family's annoyance, I've been obsessed with story questions since childhood. As a kid, I drove my father crazy asking a million questions as we watched his favorite shows on television. Why doesn't Matt Dillon shoot first (*Gunsmoke*)? Is Captain Kirk going to kill all those cute Tribbles (*Star Trek*)? Can Phelps really train a cat to be a spy (*Mission Impossible*)? Can I be Joey Heatherton when I grow up (*The Dean Martin Show*)? The Colonel, not one to appreciate the artistic temperament, would say in an authoritarian voice, "Watch and find out."

My compulsion to question every beat of a story worsened over time. Once I became a writer and an editor, this obsession became an occupational hazard that always threatened to ruin the viewing pleasure of my non-publishing friends and family. Yes, I'm the terrible person who leaned toward my companion watching *The*

Sixth Sense just a few minutes into the film and stage-whispered, "But he's dead, isn't he?" Even now, decades later, I still drive people crazy by asking questions while we watch a show together. Especially my non-writer partner, Michael, who, like my father, has a tendency to answer my ubiquitous questions with a sweet if somewhat terse, "Let's watch and find out, honey."

If you do this—aloud or silently—as you enjoy a story in any medium, congratulate yourself. Even if your friends and family hate you for it, it's a good thing. You're thinking like a writer, putting your writing self in the storyteller's place and asking yourself, "What would I do if I were writing this story?" Just as important, you're noticing the story questions in the narrative—and learning by osmosis how you can build them into your own narrative.

The most successful artists balance imagination with craft, creativity with logic. For a writer, this balance is critical because even the most original story told illogically will fail. When it comes to this delicate balance, narrative thrust is the canary in the coal mine. You need to build your original story in a sensible way, pulling your readers along clearly and cleanly with story questions that arise logically from your lucid and precise prose.

3 Levels of Story Questions

Story questions are posed at the *macro*, *meso*, and *micro* levels—and your job is to build them all into your prose.

The *macro* story question is the big question that drives the entire plot: Will Cinderella marry her prince? Will Dorothy make it home to Kansas? How will Sherlock Holmes solve the case?

The *meso* story questions drive each scene: Will Cinderella's stepmother let her go to the ball once she's finished her chores? Will Dorothy survive the cyclone? Will Dr. Watson move into 221B Baker Street with Sherlock Holmes?

And the *micro* questions are the questions scattered through the narrative at every opportunity—the more the better, as shown below, from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum:

The house whirled around two or three times and rose slowly through the air [**Where is the house going?**]. Dorothy felt as if she were going up in a balloon [**What will happen to Dorothy? Will she survive?**].



The north and south winds met where the house stood **[That can't be good, right?]**, and made it the exact center of the cyclone **[Is that good or bad?]**. In the middle of a cyclone the air is generally still, but the great pressure of the wind on every side of the house raised it up higher and higher, until it was at the very top of the cyclone **[How high is high? What will happen when the house falls?]**; and there it remained and was carried miles and miles away as easily as you could carry a feather **[What about Dorothy and Toto? What's happening to them? Will they be carried away like feathers, too? When will gravity win out?]**.

If you're thinking, *Give me a break, this example is very old. Times have changed, and the criteria are different now*—well, you're half right. This is an old example and times have changed and the criteria are different—they're even worse now, at least in terms of story questions. You need to start immediately with compelling story questions and keep 'em coming until The Very End, as *Wolf Hall* by Hilary Mantel does from the first word:

Felled, dazed, silent, he has fallen **[Who has fallen? Is he badly hurt or just scared? If so, of whom? Did he hit his head? Why is he dazed?]**; knocked full length on the cobbles of the yard **[Cobbles? Yard? Where is he?]**. His head turns sideways; his eyes are turned toward the gate **[What gate? To or from where?]**, as if someone might arrive to help him out **[Will someone arrive to help him? Who? Does he have no friends? No family?]**. One blow, properly placed, could kill him now **[Who's going to kill him? Whoever's talking to him? Who would want to? Why? What is he going to do? Just lie there and let it happen?]**.

Did you note all the story questions raised in just a few opening lines? That's narrative thrust. That's your competition. That's what you need to do, too.

Pacing

At its heart, the purpose of narrative thrust is to put the fear of the storytelling gods in your readers. Whether you are writing a horror story or a lighthearted romance, you are scaring your readers into turning the pages. Do your job right, and they'll want to see what happens next; they'll need to see what happens next. They'll feel compelled to keep reading, no matter how late the hour or how long the story.

The logical progression of your scenes, as well as the story questions that fuel the action in those scenes, are

responsible for scaring your readers silly. But just as important is pacing, the rate of your narrative thrust. Pacing is the gait of your storytelling—and a slow horse is a dead horse.

The very word *pacing* has become a touchstone in the industry today; if I had a dollar for every editor who complained publicly or privately about the so-called “pacing problems” plaguing today's submissions, I'd have a lot more dollars—and lot more deals. It's gotten to the point where many editors will refuse to review manuscripts based solely on word counts they deem too high. The rationale: If the story is that long, it must have “pacing problems.”

To make sure your pacing is on track, here are some dos and don'ts, all of which you ignore at your peril:

1. **DO** make something happen. The biggest issue in most stories is that not enough happens. There's no narrative thrust without action.
2. **DO** have your protagonist drive that action. The reader wants to identify with the hero, and through him experience the transformative journey that the story takes him on. When the hero is passive or inactive or a bystander to the proceedings, the reader's interest flags.
3. **DON'T** confuse foreshadowing with forecasting. Foreshadowing is a literary tool by which you use tone and style to create a mood or evoke a feeling, typically of foreboding. This helps create suspense. But when you come right out and tell the reader what (usually) bad thing is going to happen, you're forecasting—and eliminating any suspense that may otherwise have strengthened your narrative thrust.
4. **DON'T** break the fourth wall. This is often an excuse to tell the reader what's going to happen before it happens—thereby destroying any suspense you may be trying to build. This is the “If only I had known” device, which is hopelessly old-fashioned and, more often than not, just plain lame. As in: “If only I had known that by the end of the day/night/week/month/year, my career/ romance/life would be changed forever.” Again, you're depriving your readers of the element of surprise. Worse, you're taking them out of your story to do it.
5. **DO** raise the stakes for your heroine. Give her bigger and bigger obstacles to overcome as your story progresses; make those story questions increasingly challenging.
6. **DO** add a ticking clock if you can. Give your protagonist a hard-stop deadline—if he doesn't find the bomb by 2 p.m., it goes off; if she doesn't tell



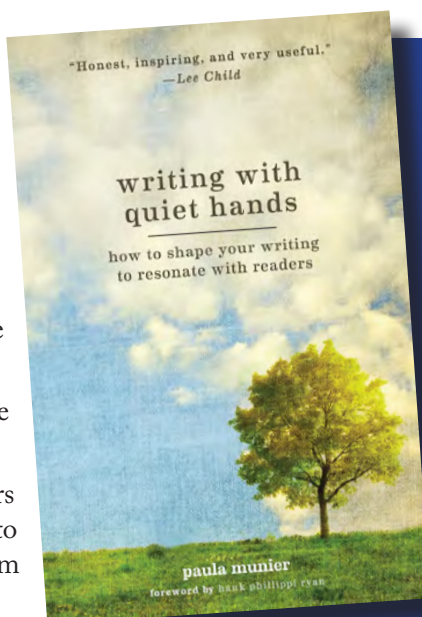
her mother to butt out of her life by Friday, she'll miss the chance to sail off into the sunset with her beloved on that weekend cruise to Catalina.

7. **DO** as the king of pacing, Lee Child, says: "Write the slow parts fast and the fast parts slow."
8. **DON'T** belabor your descriptions. Stick to the one telling detail. Don't describe your heroine's every feature; just tell us that she never leaves the house without mascara.
9. **DON'T** let your characters talk too much. Dialogue should not replace action.
10. **DO** aim, above all, for clarity. Whenever readers have to stop to think about what you're trying to say—or worse, reread it!—you risk losing them forever.

Pacing is the one element of craft I am very particular about as an agent. If the pacing is off, I won't shop the story. Period.

Excerpted from Paula Munier's *Writing with Quiet Hands*, recently released from Writer's Digest Books. Reprinted with permission.

Paula Munier is a senior literary agent and content strategist at Talcott Notch Literary Services. She began her career as a journalist and along the way added editor, acquisitions specialist, digital-content manager, and publishing executive to her repertoire. Paula has penned countless news stories, articles, essays, collateral, and blogs, as well as authored/co-authored more than a dozen books, including *Plot Perfect* from Writer's Digest Books.



In *Writing with Quiet Hands* (Writer's Digest Books, 2015), author and literary agent Paula Munier shows you how to hone your words into well-crafted stories and balance that purely creative work with the realities of the publishing world.

You'll learn how to develop a

distinct voice, write with style and substance, and engage your readers. You'll also explore the finer aspects of craft, refine your work, and boldly bridge the gap between published and unpublished. From drafting and revising to querying agents, Munier shares the secrets to writing artfully, and publishing bravely.

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—Hallie Ephron, New York Times best-selling author of *Night Night*, *Sleep Tight*

“Mostly when I think of pacing, I go back to Elmore Leonard, who explained it so perfectly by saying he just left out the boring parts. This suggests cutting to speed the pace, and that's what most of us end up having to do (kill your darlings, kill your darlings, even when it breaks your egocentric little scribbler's heart, kill your darlings).”

STEPHEN KING

On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft



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Born in Brooklyn, New York, Tricia Pimental is a member of SAG-AFTRA and a former Toastmaster. Her work has appeared in *International Living*; *A Janela*, the quarterly magazine of International Women in Portugal; and anthologies compiled by the Florida Writers Association and the National League of American Pen Women. Ms. Pimental resides near Lisbon, Portugal. Follow her on:

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How a Publisher Can Kill Your Success

by Penny Sansevieri

When it comes to publishing, thankfully you have more options than ever to get your book out there. By definition however, self-publishing means that you are your own publisher, whether or not you use an ISBN from a self-publishing house.

The reason I mention that is because you retain all control over the book, creative, digital and international. Some publishers, however, don't seem to agree with many of the standards that are out there and create systems that make it difficult for authors to sell books.

We've recently had an influx of authors who have gotten saddled with bad deals from publishers. Everything from not having access to or control of their e-books to being forced to buy marketing programs that not only don't move the needle but have also negatively impacted their books. Serious stuff!

If you aren't sure what to look for with regards to your publisher, here are a few things that are, in my view, musts for a book to be successful.

Pricing: You must always be able to control pricing. Bottom line. If your publisher is telling you that you need to price your book at X because of their print costs, that's one thing, but you should fully understand what their internal costs are before you make your decision. We had an author recently who was told by her publisher that she

had to price her e-book at \$20. In most cases a digital book will sell better than the print book, but at \$20, you'll be lucky to get one sale. You need to ask—before signing with a publisher—how pricing is determined. Even with companies like CreateSpace, they suggest a price to you and if you want to go lower than their suggested price, they'll tell you why that's a bad idea, but it's generally your choice if you want to limit your book profit. As I said, most publishers will offer guidance, but publishers who insist on a certain price or—even worse, set it for you—could really negatively impact your book's success.

Flexibility: If your publisher is creating your e-book file for you, it's always good to get a copy of it. You'll want to ask for it in different formats (ePub, Mobi) and if they won't release it to you, ask them why. We had an author who had an e-book that she had no access to. She could not gift the e-book file or give it away to reviewers (which would save her a lot of money since she wouldn't have to pay for shipping). She had her hands tied. They also didn't allow her to change her e-book pricing, which is a big part of a successful launch strategy. E-book price points, sales, and free days are fantastic ways to gain more traction for your book.

Publisher Discounts: Before you sign with a publisher, be sure to ask them how much author copies will cost you. Most reputable self-publishing companies have this outlined so there is no guessing, and those that don't have this at the ready are questionable.



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E-book Promotions: While to some degree this falls under the e-book pricing and flexibility, it's still worth mentioning that some publishers will not let you do discounts or freebie book promotions on Amazon. Trust me when I say you will want to do this, and ask them what their policy is, and again, get it in writing.

Amazon Listing: Who has access to your Amazon listing? Unless you're with a traditional publishing house you should have access to this, bottom line. Not having access to this listing can be really problematic if you're trying to update your book description with a blurb, or change it up somehow.

Marketing: First let me say that this isn't a sales pitch to hire us, but if you're going to outsource your marketing to anyone, critically consider the value of the marketing programs an indie publisher is offering you. Yes, some can be good, but many are not. We recently worked with an author who bought \$15,000 worth of social media marketing, which amounted to a few Facebook updates, a Twitter background, a few tweets, and that was about it. Don't fall for the hype; ask for details. The other thing we've seen is that lists of journalists and bloggers would get "blasted with your message." A promise to reach 250,000 journalists and 500 bloggers sounds

impressive, right? From that type of pitching, which is essentially just blind copying everyone on an email with no personalization or custom pitch, guess what kind of response they get? Yes, crickets.

Websites: Many publishers will offer to do websites for you, and while you can find great deals, you want to be sure that you can actually access these sites after they are done. Often the publisher retains all control over these sites and has to do all of your updates, so while the site itself may have only cost you \$300, the updates will cost you much more. We actually had an author who walked away from her site because the publisher never kept it up to date and never returned her calls. If you're going to take one of these offers, find out what their cost is for updates and what your access is to the website. You'll need access to the control panel at a minimum.

Much of the responsibility of finding a good publisher requires you, the author, to ask good questions. If you don't know or aren't sure, don't assume. Finding a good indie publisher can really help your book succeed, but finding a bad one could kill any chance for your book's success. After working so long on your book and putting so much energy and effort into it, why would you intentionally do something to kill it before it even had a chance to soar?

Penny C. Sansevieri, Founder and CEO Author Marketing Experts, Inc., is a bestselling author and internationally recognized book marketing and media relations expert. She is an adjunct professor teaching Self-Publishing for NYU. Her company is one of the leaders in the publishing industry and has developed some of the most innovative social media/internet book marketing campaigns. She is the author of 14 books, including *How to Sell Your Books by the Truckload on Amazon* and *Red Hot Internet Publicity*, which has been called the "leading guide to everything Internet." To learn more about Penny's books or her promotional services, you can visit her website at amarketingexpert.com.



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Overcoming the 10 Biggest Obstacles to Creating

by Leo Babauta

My son, who is officially an adult in a matter of days, is facing a small crisis: the project he's working on is not going well, and he's ready to give up not only on the project but the career he was excited about not too long ago.

Every day I struggle with the resistance to writing, and every day I lose the struggle—but then I beat the struggle.

I lose more often than I win, but I win every day. And that's what matters. Because we can't get rid of the resistance to create—whether that's creating art, starting a business, or writing. The resistance will always come up, and we have to learn how to overcome it, to work with it.

Do you face this resistance, and struggle with procrastination? Do you want to create daily, but face difficulty finding focus and fighting off distractions?

What stands in our way of the creation habit? Here, I'll share the main obstacles and what I do to overcome them.

1) Distractions. We all face the problem of distractions, and we all give in to them. The only way to overcome them is to clear them away with a clean sweep: turn off your phone, bookmark all your browser tabs, close it and all other programs, and open only the program you need for your creating. A blank text editor, a sketch pad, nothing else. Set a timer for five minutes, and just start. When the five minutes is up, congratulate yourself, let yourself be distracted, then set the timer again. You can work your way to more time with practice, but start with five minutes.

2) Fantasies about how easy and nice the creating will be. Creating is not easy. It's hard and messy. These fantasies get in the way, because when we face the reality, it never measures up to what we'd hoped. Instead, we need to recognize that our fantasies aren't real, turn to the reality, and be grateful to be here in this moment. It's hard and messy, but still great, and we should be thankful for the opportunity to create.

3) Fear of failure. Yes, putting ourselves out there is scary, and not being good at something is frightening as hell. But how do you ever get good if you don't try? You have to be not great, daily, for a long time. Unfortunately, that's not easy. So to get us through the not-great times, we have to have fun, embrace what comes, and allow ourselves to play. Write a crummy first draft, work on it some more until it's a bit better, get the help of someone who knows what they're doing, get feedback, and get better. And play around the whole time, like we did when we were kids. We didn't stop finger painting when we were kids because we might be crummy at it. We did it for the fun!

4) Discomfort with the difficulty/confusion. It's uncomfortable to do something that's confusing and filled with difficulty when we don't know for sure what we're doing. The only way I've learned to overcome this is to sit there as I'm feeling like quitting, and just feel the discomfort. Allow my mind to complain. Allow myself to want to quit, to feel sorry for myself. And just sit. I'll feel this discomfort, and realize it's not that bad. Then I can just write, even though I'm uncomfortable, and realize that I'll be okay.



5) Perfectionism. We want things to be great, so we nitpick and are unhappy with the results. It stops us from actually creating. So we need to smash through perfectionism, embrace crummy first drafts, and get into the habit of just putting imperfect stuff out there. I do this by not allowing myself to edit before I publish a blog post. I just publish, tweet it, then go back and edit. It's scary, but by forcing myself to put it out imperfectly, I don't worry about perfectionism anymore.

6) The urge to switch. As you're trying to write/create, you'll get the urge to switch to something else. Check email, check social media, check the news, clean the kitchen. The timer method (five minutes) helps to highlight this. Set the timer, don't let yourself switch to anything else until the timer is up. Just write one sentence, draw one line. Just start, then when you get the urge to switch, sit. Stay. Feel the urge. Let your mind complain. But don't give it anywhere to run. Then start again.

7) Interruptions. I write in a house full of kids. I just kindly tell them I need to write for an hour (or whatever), and plug in some headphones. Or I get out of the house and go somewhere with solitude.

8) Not enough time. We are all busy. Who has the time to focus for an hour or two? Well, forget about an hour. Just do it for 5 minutes. You have that much time. Cut out some distractions, some social media, some TV, some online reading, and you have an extra 5 minutes (or more). After awhile, find another 5 minutes. If it matters, you'll find a few minutes here and there, and put the creating first.

9) Being tired. It's impossible to focus and work hard when you're tired, right? Wrong! You can do it, if you really want to. You can go for a run if you're tired. You can carry a stranger to safety if their life is in danger, even if you're tired. You just need to really want it. So ask yourself this: why do

you want to create? Is to help others? To express yourself? To do something good for yourself or other people? How important is this intention to do good? Is it important enough to prioritize, to set aside time, to push through confusion and distractions? Is it important enough to push through tiredness? If not, just forget it.

10) Negative self-talk. We tell ourselves, "I can't do this," or "I'm terrible at this," or "I can do this later." This kind of self-talk, often unnoticed, can be defeating. So how do we counter it? By paying attention. Shine some light on it. Use the timer method, and when you want to quit and the timer is still going, force yourself to sit there. Listen to your negative talk, but don't believe it. Your mind will do anything to get out of this work, so don't heed its commands, but just sit there and hear the talk, like the complaints of little kids. Give your inner child some compassion, but don't give in to the complaints!

You're writing for a reason and that should be as important as saving the life of a loved one, or it's not worth doing. Ask yourself how much you want this, then take the steps you need to take—sweep away distractions, put on headphones, set a timer, sit through the urge to switch, push through the tiredness.

If it's important, you have it in you.

Leo Babauta is a simplicity blogger and author. His blog zenhabits.net has a million readers. He's a bestselling author of the books *focus*, *The Power of Less*, and *Zen to Done* and a husband, father of six children, and a vegan. He leads a simple life in San Francisco.



“Writer’s block is having too much time on your hands. If you have a limited amount of time to write, you just sit down and do it. You might not write well every day, but you can always edit a bad page. You can’t edit a blank page.”

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Authors Held Hostage: Your Second Book

by Anne Dalton, Esquire

It is a good idea to look at what lurks in the fine print of standard author contracts. This edition's lurker is the “option clause,” which gives the publisher the right (but not the obligation) to publish your next work. Some option clauses are relatively benign but most are not.

If your publisher operates primarily in historical fiction, for example, why give it an unrestricted option on whatever your next book may be? If you are starting a contemporary mystery series as your second book, your publisher may exercise the option on that work and then assign the rights to a third-party publisher under another fine print clause, the “assignment” clause, without your knowledge or consent. Solution: The publisher's rights under the option clause should be restricted to only your next book and only in that same series or genre. You should be free to enter into a contract with any publisher of your choice for all other types of works—fiction or nonfiction—that you create.

A second worrisome provision in some option clauses gives the publisher the right to publish your second book under the same terms and conditions as your first book. Authors generally do not have a great deal of negotiating power with their first book contract. If your first book is very successful, you will want to have a much different contract the second time around. Solution: The option clause should state that terms and conditions applicable to the second book are subject to future negotiation.

A third area of concern is the time frame for the publisher's decision whether or not to exercise the option. If no time frame is specified, the law will assume a reasonable time is intended by the publisher and you. Unfortunately, what constitutes “reasonable time” can be interpreted many different ways. Solution: Specify that the publisher has 30 days to exercise the option. If no decision is made within that time frame, the option is null and void.

A last provision to consider is how long the negotiation period should last, if the publisher does exercise the option. If you have been able to negotiate the above provisions into your option clause, but neglect to specify how long the publisher can take to negotiate the terms and conditions of your next publication, you may be out of luck. Solution: Specify that after exercising the option, the publisher has X days to reach an agreement with you regarding book two or the option is null and void.

There are other aspects of option clauses to consider, and we will be discussing them at a future FWA workshop!

Anne Dalton, Esquire, has provided business and personal legal services to creatives for 37 years. She is licensed in Florida, New York, and Pennsylvania. Her credentials can be viewed at daltonlegal.com. Contact Anne at adalton@daltonlegal.com.

Comments contained in this article are informational only and do not constitute legal advice.



PARAGRAPHS

A magazine within a magazine. A showcase for creative writing.

For this issue members were asked to write a piece inspired by a library and the people who inhabit it.

Sir Jake and the Dragon by Tyler Omoth

Sir Jake skidded to a stop when he saw the beast appear before him. So close! He had spent hours, days, weeks even scouring the catacombs of the mountain, searching for the magical treasures only he could use. If only he could get past the beast—the foul breathing dragon—the spells he carried could transport him anywhere in the world instantly. But first, he'd need to get past the beast.

"Stop, small human!" the beast hissed. Jake slammed his visor shut to ward off the noxious fumes. "If you wish to pass by and leave these catacombs, you must first hand over your gold!" The dragon slithered menacingly back and forth, blocking the only exit from the caves.

"Never!" Sir Jake said, "My gold is not for the taking. Not for the likes of you!"

"Then you must leave those treasures behind!" the dragon bellowed. A waft of dankness blasted past Jake, creeping through the vents in his helmet like eels to bite his nostrils and eyes.

Sir Jake reached for his longsword, but grasped only air where the handle should have been secured to his waist. It was gone, lost forever in the darkness behind him. "I fear nothing, much less an ancient beast as yourself!" he said, "You shall not touch my gold or my newfound riches. Do your worst."

With that, the beast took a step backwards, raising up to its full, impressive height. It observed Sir Jake calmly for a moment, one scaly eyebrow raised as if contemplating whether the gold from one measly human was worth the effort.

Without his sword, Sir Jake realized that his only chance was to make a break for it past the dragon. He tucked his newfound treasures underneath one arm and made his move for the cave entrance.

With a motion so fast, so precise, and so effective the dragon's claw shot out to grasp Sir Jake by the back of his

plate mail armor. It pulled him back, spun him around, and pressed him up against the cave wall.

This may be the end, he thought, but at least I went down fighting!

"Nice try, little one. Now give me my gold!" The beast stared at him with intense eyes through its large bifocals.

Bifocals? Since when did dragons need glasses?

"Your last books were two weeks late. The fee is 35 cents if you want to check out any more books today," the librarian said. The smell of stale coffee emanated from her mouth, making Jake's eyes water.

"Fine," he replied. At this point he was stripped of weapon and armor, but had one chance to retain his treasures by coughing up his gold. "Here's a quarter and ... that's all I have!"

"Are you certain?" The librarian raised her eyebrow once more.

"Yes." Jake pulled his pockets inside out to show his sincerity.

"Okay. That should do for now, but remember to bring these back on time!"

As Jake made his way out of the library door, he heard the librarian talk to her chuckling assistant. "It is always an adventure with that one! 'Ancient beast!' That's a new one."

Her assistant looked up from his cart of books. "Where do they get such vivid imaginations?"

The librarian flipped the quarter in the air, catching it smoothly in her hand and smiled.

Outside the door, Sir Jake found himself blinded by the sunshine. His knees buckled as he fought for balance on the deck of a pirate ship that danced on the waves of the South Pacific, trying to outrun the Royal Navy. 🦋

Tyler Omoth lives in Brandon FL.



On Being Bullied

by Andrew Parker

The reflection of the embracing couple in the stained-glass window shined brightly on the polished-maple table. John felt enveloped by their warmth. They were his surrogate parents. God only knew, the alcoholic hellions who'd conceived his embryo were hardly his parents. Adding to their abuse was Adam, his older sociopathic brother, who'd slapped, punched, pushed, kicked, insulted...

Enough!

Now seventeen, John still retreated to the ancient library he'd discovered after running away from fourth grade class. He loved everything about it, its towering beamed ceiling, pumpkin-colored, wide-board floor, and circular bookshelves. Hues beamed down from the stained-glass windows and soothed his aching heart as he read *The Little Prince*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Catcher in the Rye*, *Frankenstein*, *Tom Sawyer*, and many other adventures into the human condition.

Books freed him from his prison of abuse.

He checked his watch. 4:30. The library would close in a half hour, and he'd go home to join his cacophonous family of Tasmanian devils. They'd shout, gesticulate, and rip apart each other's souls.

"You're weak! ... stupid! ... pathetic!"

The horrible words echoed in his brain as he turned another page of *Donating Organs While Still Alive*. He paused at the chapter, "Risks of Donating a Kidney," which read, "Long-term risks include high blood pressure, copious protein in the urine, hernia, organ impairment or failure leading to dialysis, transplantation, and even death."

He lingered on the word death. Death. Even if he sacrificed his kidney, Adam would probably only live ten or fifteen more years. Why risk death to help someone who'd almost murdered him?

Bullies!

Why did they exist? Why did he have to lose his foot? For the first eleven years of John's life, Adam wasn't so bad. He often took him fishing. When only five, Adam even saved him from drowning in a lake. As the years passed, though, Adam got meaner. When John was eleven and Adam fourteen, he found Adam smoking crack with a gang of boys. John ran off, but later that day, Adam reassured him

he'd finished with the gang and invited John to join him for a motocross ride. John readily agreed and felt ecstatic as he followed his brother over the ups, downs, twists, and turns of the Oregon Trail.

Then Adam gunned it over a hill ... and disappeared.

John's heart sank as he hung briefly in midair and saw what lay ahead of him in the rocky ravine.

For a month, John lay comatose. He left the hospital in pain, depressed, and without a right foot. Adam's phony concern seared his scarred nerves. Soon as he could, he stole his father's gun and lay in wait inside his brother's closet. But when Adam walked in crying, he lost his nerve. Life was a complicated process. Not simple, much as he wished it was. Two weeks later, concerned neighbors broke into the garage and pulled John from a car full of carbon monoxide. He was fifteen.

Not until two years later did the bullying finally stop—when his drunken brother ran his motorcycle through a red light and t-boned the front of an SUV full of cheerleaders. They survived unscathed, but Adam broke his spine and destroyed his kidneys.

But bully he would if he still could.

But he couldn't. Adam lay in a hospital bed, paralyzed and on dialysis. When John stopped by with his family, Adam scowled. "I hope you're all happy," he said, "because now I have to die."

"Hello."

John looked up to see Aunt Betty set her walker aside and sit down across from him. He visited her at her home, and she visited him in the library. They comforted each other. She took his book and scanned it. At ninety-three, she still read a book a day and could quickly size one up. She slid it back. "Typical you." She paused to look at him, then said, "You needn't worry anymore. He's dead."

John never cried, merely got misty at times. But something buried deep inside swelled over, and he sobbed uncontrollably. ❧

Andrew Park lives in Sarasota FL.

PARAGRAPHS

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Neck Deep

by Dave Pearce

A yawn stretched my jaw. Dammit. How was I supposed to get any studying done if I couldn't stay awake?

The buzz of the library's fluorescent lights provided the only interruption to my solitude. The other students had ghosted away long ago, leaving me alone, crammed behind a small table. The nearest bookcase loomed over me, a tower of decaying cellulose. My study area was a small nook in the musty stacks, an oasis of privacy.

My stomach rumbled; I'd skipped dinner. But I couldn't quit now, not with my final exam in the morning.

The textbook's print swam under my gaze. I read a half-page and then blinked. Nothing absorbed. No comprehension.

Music would help me slog through the material, make sense of a semester's worth of economics. I reached for my backpack where I kept my phone and earbuds.

"There you are."

I nearly toppled out of my chair. My head jerked toward the familiar feminine voice.

"Dammit, Chrissy. Don't sneak up on me like that."

An eye roll. A moue of distaste on oxbow lips. She shrugged, her shoulders brushing up against sandy blond hair. Smart shoes whisked against the short nap of the carpet as she approached. "Hiya, John. Knew you'd be here studying for Professor Floyd's exam. Thought I'd join you. Maybe help."

I winced. My cousin could talk up a storm, a distraction I didn't need. "I don't want to waste your time. You're looking at a drowning man."

She sniffed. "I aced the class last semester. If you're too proud to accept a life preserver, I'll be on my way." She turned to leave.

My eyes widened. The rescue ship retreated toward the horizon, leaving me on the shore of the desert island. "Wait, wait!" I reached up and tugged on her sleeve. "Sorry. You were saying?"

She raised one eyebrow, staring me down, as if weighing my apology. She nodded, plunked her own backpack on the table, and sat opposite me. Zip. The pack opened, and she pulled out an orange three-ring binder. It plopped onto the table.

"My notes." She tapped the cover. "For the entire semester. Every class."

My hand twitched. I'd skipped several classes. I reached for my deliverance. Her eyes crinkled as she smiled, and she slid her work just out of reach.

A frown grew. Realization dawned. "I sense you're about to make an offer I can't refuse."

"You're not as dumb as you look, cuz. A professional procrastinator, but not without certain charms. I need a favor."

"Who do I have to kill?"

She laughed. "Oh, nothing so morbid. My sorority sister needs a date to the Winter Carnival."

Oh, shit. My rescue ship had turned into a Roman slave galley. My mind conjured the image of a centurion shackling me to the oars. "Who?"

"Mary Beth."

A queasy sensation slid through my gut. "The fat one with the mustache?"

Chrissy frowned. "She's got a great personality."

"She looks like she should be in a barbershop quartet."

"Stop it."

"Do I have to kiss her at the end of the night? 'Cause I'm gonna need a comb. Groom that thing out of the way."

Chrissy crossed her arms. "Glub, glub, glub. I'm watching you drown, sailor."

"Come on. You can't be serious. Ask another favor. Anything."

"Mary Beth's got a gay brother. He needs a date, too."

"Does he have a mustache?"

"Well—"

"Never mind. Forget it."

She opened the binder. Neat script, written in blue ink, leapt off the page. Tabs with headings drew my attention—Supply, Demand, Price Controls, Taxes. Pages and pages of everything I needed.

"It's too bad, really." She reached into the binder's side pocket. A faded printout—an old exam—navigated its way onto the table. "Sad to see you lose your scholarship because of poor grades."

My hand scrubbed through my hair. Desperate times called for desperate measures. "I'll take Mary Beth to Winter Carnival on one condition."

"Hmm?"

"Throw in a bottle of demon rum. A seaman needs a way to cope with an ugly date."

The orange life buoy slid across the table into my hands. "Deal." ❧

Dave Pearce lives in Bradenton FL.



1 My Favorite Place by Diane M. Boilard

In a small out of the way place, in the 1950s, students could only read school material. We weren't allowed to read other books, not even the newspaper. The library consisted of a small number of books held in a three by three-foot cubicle. The teachers held the key and they dispensed books only to the upper classmates.

My friend Aline's father brought books home for his daughter, much to the dismay of her teacher. She let me read her books. While I read, I dreamed about people and foreign places. Aline and I read in secret by flashlight under a blanket.

With time, the reading rules changed. Thank goodness. Teachers realized students read the newspaper and books at home.

In the 1960s, my family moved to the United States. At the high school, on orientation day, the English teacher guided the English class to the library. She said we could read any book. At the high school and the public library, I quickly learned how to use the card files and to match each book with its Dewey system of letters and numbers on the spine. Melvil Dewey developed the system in 1873 at the Amherst College Library.

A few years later, I entered the university. In the three-story library, I found a reader's dream—rows of shelves filled with books and racks covered with magazines, newspapers, and periodicals.

On the mezzanine floor, to the left of a set of double doors, I discovered a quiet area to do my research for term papers. I sat at a small dark brown wood table with a stack of books, lots of paper, and three by five cards for notes. The library became my favorite place to study.

On a particular day, the exit sign turned from red to green. I never noticed it change before. I walked toward the doors. My fingertips touched the cold metal. One door opened from the other side. The sound of many voices reached my ears. I thought it unusual for a library. Signs asking for quiet were posted everywhere.

A tall man, who sported a trimmed beard and mustache, welcomed me.

"Hello, Mr. Hemingway. *For Whom the Bell Tolls*," I said.

He let out a hearty laugh.

"Did you really write on the manual typewriter in your tree house office in Key West, Florida?"

"Yes, I did. Every word. Did you notice one of my manuscripts on the writing table?"

"Yes, I saw it. I want to say, I enjoy reading your books."

In the center of the room, a man dressed in white waved a hand, beckoning me to join him. He talked about *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

After his speech, I said to Mr. Samuel Clemens, "Someday I'd like to join you on a paddle wheeler steamboat down the Mississippi and hear more about your stories."

"It'll be my pleasure."

"Is Harriet Beecher Stowe here with you?"

"Yes, Ma'am. Did you see her house next to mine, in Hartford, Connecticut?"

"Yes. Many students register for your summer writing workshops at both of your homes."

"Ernest has a good writing program."

"Mr. Hemingway is quite popular for his writing seminars. And so are you as Mark Twain."

Someone behind me said, "It's Diane, isn't it?"

I turned to face him.

"I've been waiting for you," Mr. William Faulkner said.

"What a pleasant surprise. You know, when I visited your Southern style home in Oxford, Mississippi, I felt your presence everywhere. My friend Ruth painted a picture of your home for me."

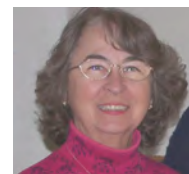
"We met on another occasion. Do you remember? It was on a bench not far from Oxford University."

"Ole Miss, I remember. Your statue looks exactly like you. I stared into your eyes. You inspired me to write—and I am."

When I opened my eyes, my head was resting on a stack of books by American writers. I realized I had fallen asleep and dreamed of these famous authors.

To read is to learn. What a joy! 🌸

Diane M. Boilard lives in Port Orange FL.



Celebrations!

Where we shine a spotlight on our members & cheer their accomplishments!

Award-winning author **Bria Burton** released *Little Angel Helper* in print on December 19, 2015. A 2015 RPLA Finalist in the Unpublished Novella category, *Little Angel Helper* originated from a writing prompt. The story is about siblings, sacrifice, special needs, and faith in things unseen. Available on Amazon. Bria's website: bria-burton.com



Dean Murphy wrote "Patient Zero" for *Florida Writers Association Collection, Volume 7: Revisions, Stories of Starting Over*, but the submission did not make the cut. The sci-fi tale details how an attorney, frozen in a cryonic chamber for three centuries, starts his life over as a miner on the distant planet, Qattara. Undaunted, Murphy submitted "Patient Zero" to Baen's Bar, where it was published. The lesson learned from this? Anything you write can be published; it just takes perseverance. Write on!

Described as funny romantic suspense, *Fantasy Man*, **Barbara Meyers's** sixth book with Samhain Publishing, releases February 2. Most women wouldn't see going into hiding as their first chance at real freedom, but Quinn Fontana is not most women. This free spirit has been kept bottled up for too long, and when she ends up in trouble, she seizes the opportunity to get exactly what—and who—she wants. Warning: Contains fantasy-come-true sex, get-it-out-of-their-system sex, angry-as-hell sex, and on-the-run sex. Also, accidental ferret-napping. Asthmatics are advised to load up on antihistamines before reading. Available everywhere. Buy links at barbarameyers.com.



Publishing Wizard **Molli Nickell** celebrates her first tutorial, "How to Write a Query Letter that Lands an Agent." Available at getpublishednow.biz, this 12-page tutorial includes a query-writing exercise (for critique group use) and a query letter template that demonstrates what to put where and why. With 35 years of experience in the book biz as a Time-Life editor, author, publisher, and acquisitions editor, Molli has helped hundreds of query-fatigued writers achieve their goals of agent/book contract/shelf space at Barnes & Noble. For every single one of them, success began with the query letter.

Do you have a writing-related accomplishment to celebrate with us?

Turn to page 2 of the magazine to learn how to submit your item for publication on these pages.

In Memoriam

James Weis, Colonel USA (Retired), member of FWA, passed away on January 5th after a short illness. He authored three books in a series called Not So Grim Folktales; was about to have *Death at Low Tide* (a murder mystery) published; and had just finished a YA manuscript called *The Unwelcome Gift*. He was a member of the Tuesday night Fiction Writers who meet at the Daytona B&N as well as a longtime member of The Ormond Writers League.



Are You Missing Out?

You've paid your dues, but are you taking full advantage of all membership in the Florida Writers Association (FWA) offers you? Or are you leaving benefits and opportunities on the table?

It's time to take inventory.

Check off all the FWA benefits you've enjoyed and highlight the ones you're planning to enjoy this year—again or for the very first time.

I stay informed about the craft and business of writing and the FWA programs that support them:

- ☐ I read *The Florida Writer (TFW)* magazine delivered to my email 6 times a year
- ☐ I read the *FWA eNews* delivered to my email 12 times a year
- ☐ I read FWA blog updates available on the FWA website or by email subscription

I take advantage of opportunities FWA provides to have my writing recognized and/or published:

- ☐ I enter the Royal Palm Literary Award Competition
- ☐ I enter the FWA Collection Competition
- ☐ I submit my creative writing in response to the prompts in TFW
- ☐ I submit to the *Creative Vine E-zine* (youth members only).

I take advantage of the opportunities FWA provides to promote and sell my books or services:

- ☐ I submit news of my writing-related accomplishments for publication in *TFW*
- ☐ I offer my books for sale in the conference bookstore
- ☐ I arrange to hold a book signing at the conference
- ☐ I'm an advertiser, exhibitor, or sponsor at the annual conference
- ☐ I take part in the multi-genre book signing event
- ☐ I advertise my books or services in *TFW*

I participate in FWA learning and networking opportunities to support my writing career:

- ☐ I take part in a local writers group or critique group
- ☐ I connect and converse with other members in the FWA Network (adult members only)
- ☐ I attend the annual conference
- ☐ I attend mini-conferences
- ☐ I attend webinars

I use my time, knowledge, and special skills to help other writers:

- ☐ I volunteer to present at FWA's conference, mini-conferences, or webinars
- ☐ I start and moderate discussions about writing-related topics in the FWA Network
- ☐ I volunteer for a committee, as a writers group leader, to help out at conferences, or in some other way to support the Florida Writers Association

Want to learn more about everything your membership in the Florida Writers Association offers you? Visit the website at floridawriters.net and explore. Can't find what you're looking for there and need more information? Use the contact form on the website to ask a question.





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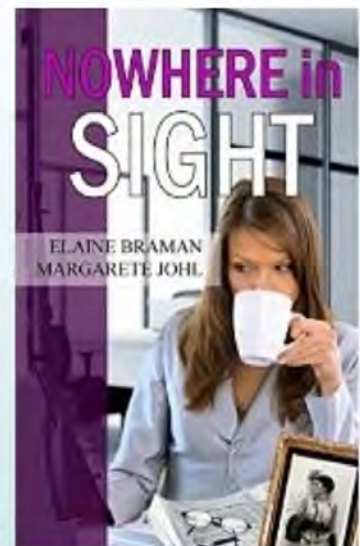
Elaine and Margarete have a unique writing collaboration. They share the passion for writing witty mysteries and thought provoking sci-fi

while plotting through heat waves and hot flashes under balmy palm trees, but they write together 3000 miles apart. Elaine lives in Florida and Margarete lives in California. They met one time by chance—mixed like paper and pen—and have been writing together for the past seven years.



"She's the scene setter—the voice in the narrative—the point-of-view of the protagonist—the twist in the plot and the killer of my babies." We are ...

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