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The Mid-Michigan Mirror

A Reflection of Romance



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Mission Statement

The purpose of the Mid-Michigan Chapter of Romance Writers of America® is to promote excellence in romantic fiction, to help writers become published and establish careers in their writing field, and to provide continuing support for writers within the romance publishing industry.

In This Issue:

- ♥ Front page Contents/Meeting Preview & Contact Info/Birthdays/Thanks
- ♥ Page 2 President's message
- ♥ Page 3 Recap of February Program/ Bio of March Speaker
- ♥ Page 6 Member News
- ♥ Page 9 Retreat reminder/ PAN/Author News
- ♥ Page 10 Tips to Save Time/ Find Time
- ♥ Page 12 Exercise: Hook, Line, or Sinker
- ♥ Page 13 Rejection after Rejection
- ♥ Page 16 Directions/ Policy/ Deadline
- ♥ Page 17 Officers/Chairs/Meetings
- ♥ Page 18 Conference/Online Workshops
- ♥ Page 19 Contests



Maris Soule

The next meeting of MMRWA is Saturday, March 19th, 2005 at Sam's Joint in Plainwell, MI

Our own Maris Soule, award winning author of 25 category romances will speak to us about Romantic Suspense. Ms. Soule has written for the Harlequin Temptation, Silhouette Romance, Silhouette Yours Truly and Bantam's Loveswept lines.

More on page 3

Directions to Sam's Joint on page 16



Happy March Birthdays

Juli Schuiteme 17 Pamela Trombley 22

Many thanks to the contributors to the March issue of Mid-Michigan Mirror



Non-members seeking information about Mid-Michigan, meetings, and joining our group may contact:

Dawn Bartley bartleyd@chartermi.net

Note from Wil's desk....



By Wil Emerson, President

The Ides of March are upon us. Beware, you might say. Especially if you've read the works of Shakespeare who added a twist to the meaning of 'ides' in his play *Julius Caesar*. He wrote that a soothsayer told Caesar, who was on his way to the Senate where he ultimately met his death, "Beware the ides of March." Caesar replies, "He is a dreamer, let us leave him. Pass."

Of course, we know that Caesar died on March 15th, 44 B.C.E. But was it the ides he needed to fear or his enemies? During that time, the 'ides' were dividing lines in the month. Some months were marked by the 13th and some by the 15th. The full moon designated the actual day. Historians believe that Caesar got his ides mixed up in March. January and February ides fell on the 13th. He avoided the Roman Senate on the 13th. Unfortunately, the plan was kill Caesar on the 15th. Caesar is reported to have actually said to the soothsayer, "the ides had already come."—Meaning the middle of the month had passed. Confusing the dates proved to be deadly for Caesar.

In the writing world, if we miss a date/deadline, it is unlikely it kill our career. But we shouldn't take unnecessary chance. There are several good reasons to try avoiding a deadline mishap.

So, how can a writer use the ides of each month to help fulfill the quest for staying on track and getting published? I ponder Caesar's confusion while a late winter blizzard frosts my office windows with heavy snow. It gives me the opportunity to reflect on how to improve my method of meeting monthly goals. Should I follow the ides of each month? First half write? Second half submit?

It does take a significant amount of time to get query letters and submission packages organized and written. I generally do them in spurts of energy and urgency. If I use the 'ides' as a guide, I can write and submit, write and submit in an orderly fashion. In twelve months, I'll have more queries out than Shakespeare's editor could ever imagine. Well...at least a few more than if I didn't have a timeline for submitting.

Many of you work on more than one project at a time. I, too, find that multi-tasking helps to keep the muse going. On a slow day, when the novel I need to finish isn't demanding my attention because my characters are only whispering to me, I turn to a short story whose characters shout loudly. "Beware," they say, "if you don't submit me today, I'll never be on the page of a magazine!"

I've listened intently to my internal soothsayer. Warned that a revision must be done, I get right on it. If a message comes that I shouldn't dally over my work-in-progress, I go to the last page and write in a frenzy. My plan of using blocks of time is working, but can I add another layer to it? If I write and submit according to the ides, I'll have an organized plan. First half of the month, let the multitasking method flow. Second half of the month, work on queries, submissions, and revisions after rejections. March, April, June and July, I'm going to see how much can be accomplished by dividing the month into manageable segments. Anyone out there want to give it a try?

With ten or twelve inches of snow on the ground, I've been careful about staying home on this blustery day. I didn't need a soothsayer's warning to keep me at my desk.

But I can't leave you without a warning, "Beware, if you don't write, you won't get published!"

Enjoy the rest of the month.

Cheers from Wil....and Mac, too, who can't go out because the snow is higher than his cute, floppy white ears.

Maris Soule continued from the front page

Maris Soule, was born and raised in California. Ms. Soule attended several campuses of the University of California, receiving her B.A. degree in art with a minor in mathematics and a secondary teaching credential. She was working on a masters degree in art history when she met her husband to be. In 1970, she and her husband moved to Michigan.

Ms. Soule taught high school and middle school for eight years before she started writing. Since then, she has taught at Kellogg Community College in Battle Creek, Climax-Scotts High School and Kalamazoo Valley Community College's Lifelong learning. She also travels to California often to handle her father's bookkeeping.

Ms. Soule has belonged to Romance Writers of America since 1984, helped start the Mid-Michigan RWA chapter, is a member of Sisters in Crime and Mystery Writers of America. She has been a RITA finalist twice, won the Write Touch: Readers' Award twice and has placed in several other national contests. She is listed in Who's Who in America and International Authors and Writers Who's Who. Her books have been translated in more than 18 languages and published in more than 24 countries.



At the February 19 MMRWA meeting, Vance Briceland, spoke to the chapter about the past, present, and future of the Young Adult market, the three contradictions of writing for the young adults, and finding your young adult voice. The following is a recap by Annette Briggs:

Young Adult Literature and How to Write for it

A program by Vance Briceland, aka Naomi Nash

Vance Briceland has been called an overnight success even though he'd been writing for sixteen years without selling anything until less than 2 years ago. "But I believe that persistence does pay off, and I can be a very persistent person," Mr. Briceland said.

You're So Cursed, the first book Mr. Briceland sold, was a romance for Smooch, Dorchester's Young Adult line. But, since that first sale, he's sold contracts for sixteen more novels. "One novel for every one of those bad years," he noted.

As Mr. Briceland told us, the Young Adult (age fifteen to eighteen) market was considered a dead market for a long time, especially during the eighties and early nineties. It was considered a niche market and dead because, at the time, publishers thought the kids are, after all, only thirteen to seventeen for four years. What's the use of writing for a market that's only got a span of four years? Then, in the late nineteen nineties, publishers began to look to the way magazines are published. There are magazines for almost every topic, published for those niche markets. Publishers began to realize the potential of that market.

Recap continued on page 4

Recap continued from page 3

You can see that young adult literature is being treated very differently these days just by wading into Barnes and Noble or Borders. The young adult category is a section unto itself. It's not part of the children's section anymore. It's decorated like the adult area and the readers do not have to share their shelves with little kids. Publishers are creating imprints of their own to cope with the demand for young adult literature. Smooch was created by Dorchester as a response. New American Library created a new young adult line last year.

There's a lot of room in young adult literature for writing what you want to write. You can write books that are heavy on the social realism. A lot of authors like to write edgy books. They've got sex and sexual situations, violence, racial tensions and all kinds of things that make it seem more adult than the standard fare. You can write sweet romances, fantasy, science fiction, junior chick lit, or adventure stories. Much of the market is for girls. The fact that girls are the main market is why young adult romances are in demand.

There are three contradictions to think about when writing for young adults. Remember that teens are walking contradictions. You have to perform certain balancing acts when writing for young adults. The contradictions are: Adulthood versus Youth, Self-sufficiency versus Dependence, and Confidence versus Uncertainty.

Adulthood versus Youth contradiction

What is the difference between writing for adults and young adults? Length of the story is one. Sophistication of vocabulary and swearing is another. They are getting physical maturity and emotional maturity, but at the same time they aren't emotionally mature enough. They don't have the experience that adults have. They are grappling with the issues of becoming adults in a world that is expecting them to act like adults. They're moving away from the narcissism of childhood. You have to remember this when you're writing for them.

A lot of the approach has to do with the language that you choose. So don't show off your fancy vocabulary just because you have one. For example, teens don't necessarily have the vocabulary of an adult. Swear words? We all know that kids [young adults] swear. If you're trying to be realistic in a book, you might have your kids swearing. You might also want to keep in mind that some publishers don't encourage it and some publishers don't want to see it. Know the market that you're writing for. In the young adult market just what they want along those lines is not always quite so certain. You have to think about how mature you're willing to make your content for young adults. When you're writing for teens, remember the intense emotions of teens experiencing life for the first time.

Never write down to your audience. Never be smug. Never be "adult." When you want to engage young people in your writing, you don't give them what you think is good for them, you give them what they want to hear. It's your job to make what you want to say be what they want to hear. It's a tricky balancing act. Don't get preachy. Make it come out in the plotline of your story or in the way that the characters engage each other.

Recap continued on page 5

Recap continued from page 4

An aside: Beware of pop culture references, but you don't have to limit yourself to only references to pop culture from the reader's lifetime. For example: teens know who the Beatles were even though they aren't of the current era.

Self-sufficiency versus Dependence

Every kid out there wants their own car, to get away from parents, to have their own friends. You wanted autonomy. You wanted to make your own decisions. Every kid out there wants that when they're a teen.

Kids (YA) want independence, but on some level they know they aren't emotionally and/or financially ready for this responsibility. This is one of those contradictions that you have to address when you're writing your book. You can build this conflict straight into the family structures. There can be young adults who do not have parents or are separated from parents. Or parents are far away or have to work outside the home for them to survive, or have run away. The parents might be dead, prisoners, in military, etc. Those young adults learn to become self-sufficient very quickly.

You can build the separation from parents into the character's personality. You can make the character too self-sufficient. Then she must learn to trust and rely on others. Independent characters must also learn trust and cooperation. They must rely on their own instincts and wit to determine who is trustworthy.

Beware of having mature and experienced characters step in and solve the problems and fix things. Let the young adult characters suffer make mistakes and learn how to handle the crises

Confidence versus Uncertainty.

Teens have self image issues. They're constantly asked what they're going to do with their lives. The pressure is on the teen for honing skills, getting a job, college, etc. Keep that in mind. Some teens may be over-confident, some will be miserable. Some are going to be a mixture of the two. The young adult may be looking good most of the time, but is worried about what will happen if she doesn't stay that way. She's afraid everybody is going to hate her. Both the protagonists and antagonists have human issues. There's always the "in group" that seems on top of it. There are the wall flowers and the underdogs. You can use this well defined group structure in your story to bring out the issues and discover coping strategies and solutions.

Beware of using stereotypes. Mix them up a bit. Make them unexpected so you don't get caught in clichés and become boring.

Recap continued on page 6

Recap continued from page 5

How to create your own voice.

You have to come up with your own strategies. Voice is elusive. It's what editors look for to add to their line. It can't be taught, but it can be developed.

One way you can develop it is to do research. First of all, watch some television. Watch some shows with teens in it made to appeal to the teen market. Watch *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Watch shows like *Freaks and Geeks* that shows how kids are talking. Watch reality shows, especially those marketed towards teens. You can get an idea of how kids are talking. Listen to the way they talk.

Adopt other strategies as well.

Can go into chat rooms and observe the chats of teens. I don't necessarily mean slang. That's a whole other issue in itself. Slang dates really quickly. Use it very sparingly. Use of it by your characters may turn out comical.

Briceland says he hopes to flatter his readers in two ways:

He first writes at a level slightly above his audience. He keeps in mind his typical audience is a fifteen or sixteen year old girl. Then he uses the vocabulary that an eighteen or nineteen year old girl might use. It's the kind of vocabulary that a fifteen or sixteen year old might be aspiring to. Most girls who read are very verbal and good at putting words together. He hopes that they want to be like his heroines--quick with words, clever, sometimes witty, very good at saying what they feel and saying it in a compound way.

At the same time, that he writes a little above his audience's verbal capabilities, he kind of writes a little bit below their emotional skills. His heroines sometimes make bad choices. Every teen does. Every heroine does in novels. He hopes he explains these choices in ways that makes the reader realize what's bad about them. So that the reader can say, "I'm too smart to do that." But the reader still wants to find out what happens. They may be two steps ahead of the heroine both emotionally and with what's going on in the story.



MEMBER NEWS

Dawn Bartley: More progress on my WIP and resolve to complete it by the end of June.

Holli Bertram: Working on a light paranormal.

Michelle Celmer: Desire out in May, *Bedroom Secrets*.

Lisa Childs Theeuwes: Set up a book signing at Barnes and Noble in Rivertown Mall in Grandville for March 26 from 2 to 4 p.m. for Gothic Eclipse, *The Substitute Sister*. Attending PASIC conference in New York in March.

Jodi Lozon: Almost finished with Blaze for Agent, finalized in Laurie's Bookbuyer's Best.

Dana Corbit Nussio: Working on book for Guideposts.

Member News continued on page 7

Member News continued from page 6

Wil Emerson: Romance requested by agent on Saturday night—rushed through dinner to get the package out. Short story being published in *Crimson Dagger*.

Melissa Ford Lucken: Working on requested revisions for two romances, waiting on SAT fiction proposal, marketing YA suspense series

Karen Holthof: Still working on getting an agent. I am in the process of cutting a scene in my single title romance before submitting my query letter to an agent.

Aileen Hyne: Book is going slowly, but it's going.

Tammy Kearly: Got requested revisions to an agent; working on WIP

Anne Marie King-Jakubiak: Sent out two partials, working on my current contemporary.

Shar Koenig: Latest release coming out in March.

Gail Martin: Once Upon A Time, which includes my novel, *Better To See You*, has been reissued by Barbour Publishing for Walmart with a new cover and title, *Fairy-Tale Brides*. Michigan, four novels in one volume all set in Michigan has gone into a second printing. Tell Me Of Love, an anthology of short novels for new readers, has been published with Gail's story, *Something Old, Something New*. Gail was chosen by readers of Barbour's Heartsong Presents as one of the top ten favorite authors of the year and her novel, *Out On A Limb* is among the top ten favorite novels. Loving Tenderness has been approved and Loving Promises, fifth book in the Loving series, is a March release. Gail is working on the last of her seven contracted books, a single title called *Secret Places*. Gail participated in a week long question and answer chat on Steeple Hill's website and a Happy Anniversary this last week. In April, Gail is in charge of two panels on Writing Inspirational Fiction at the Romantic Times Convention in St. Louis, MO. Currently Gail is teaching a four week class on Writing Inspirational for the Low Country chapter of RWA. At an RWA Conference in Denver Gail is participating in two workshops, one in conjunction with Patience Smith on Common Writing Problems and she is serving on a panel of inspirational fiction authors on Writing Real for the CBA Marketplace. Gail has entered her four romances in: the RITA, National Reader's Choice, Holt Medallion, Award of Excellence, Golden Quill, Book Seller's Best, Inspirational Romance Reader's Choice, More Than Magic, and her romantic suspense in MRSRWA (mystery, romance, suspense). In May Gail is teaching a workshop in London England for the Association of Fiction Writers.

Lana Miersen: mentoring a new writer of children's picture books; filled in for publicity committee in February; got notice in Lansing State Journal; working on retreat publicity and website updates; polishing partial to send to Shannon Godwin.

Maris Soule: Being rejected by several agents, am working on revisions of a book I finished four years ago, and working on third mystery.

Sincere condolences to **Chris Allen-Riley** on the recent loss of her grandfather.



Member News continued on page 8

Member News continued from page 7

The MMRWA board would like to announce a change in the Publicity Chair position. Beginning in March, **Jackie Braun** will be serving as Publicity Chair. Jackie comes to the position with many years of journalism background. We hope everyone will welcome Jackie to the team and provide her with good news about the chapter and enthusiastic support. Our thanks go to **Julie Schuitema** who held the position for two years and we wish her well in her writing career. Thanks to all, Cheers, Wil

Welcome to a New Member**Catherine Mc Clain**

Writing has always been a source of pleasure for me. Everywhere I go, all that I see gets stored away in my mind with a conscious thought as to how it could be developed into a story, what title would be perfect or what a perfect setting this place would be for a story.

I've been doing this for as long as I can remember, and writing stories since elementary school. Actually perfecting and submitting stories is only something I've done a couple of times when my kids were small—no luck though!

Then in early August, something clicked and I began writing in earnest. I started a story at that time, completed eleven chapters, pretty much the whole story, and am now in the first re-write stage. It's been very exciting and I can't wait to get home from work each evening to do some more writing. My poor family hasn't seen much of me the last three months, but they know I'm working on this and are very supportive of my efforts. I'm having a blast!

Some history: grew up in the Kalamazoo area (Comstock to be specific), attended college at CMU where I met my husband Paul. We have two grown children, Colin who married a couple of years ago (Jenny) and our daughter Katie who is graduating from WMU in December. She is planning to continue her education in Los Angeles at a screenwriting school...yes, writing does run in the family! Maybe it has been her vision that motivated me?

I currently work for the state at the Michigan Department of Education as an assistant director's secretary. Past jobs include: church secretary, attorney's secretary, secretary at an electrical engineering firm that specialized in investigating fire causes. I also maintained the evidence storage unit where all sorts of items were cataloged and stored for evidence in trials. My training in college was for cartography and I worked for many years as a drafter at an engineering and surveying firm, and at a MichCon tracing gas mains around the western part of the state.

Growing up, we had a family business now in its third generation, in the greenhouse industry with both a wholesale and a retail shop. I've also worked as a camp counselor, exercise instructor, grocery store clerk, Mary Kay consultant, clothing store sales, and horseback riding instructor. Very eclectic to say the least!

I look forward to developing my writing skills and pursuing a long dream of becoming a published author. I want my kids and grandkids to be able to say, "Yeah, that's my mom—what a gal she was!"



Approaching April Birthdays: Pat Lazarus 2, Arlene Hodapp 18, and Dickee Six 28

Author News

The MMRWA board would like to announce a change in the Publicity Chair position. Beginning in March, **Jackie Braun** will be serving as Publicity Chair. Jackie comes to the position with many years of journalism background. We hope everyone will welcome Jackie to the team and provide her with good news about the chapter and enthusiastic support. Our thanks go to **Julie Schuitema** who held the position for two years and we wish her well in her writing career. Thanks to all, Cheers, Wil

Congratulations to **Jen Armintrout** for her first sale (to Luna) and the three book contract.

Wil Emerson's short story *Dog Gone* is being published by Crimson Dagger in April. 'It was love at first sight for Kevin and Jennifer. When they added Tobler, a chocolate lab to their family, they never imagined the lovable dog would bring an end to their marriage.'

Coming out in 2005 is **Sharolett Koenig**'s *Ink On Her Nose* - A classic locked-room whodunit with a modern "reality TV show" twist.

Gail Martin's short story, Salsburg Sunrise, is included in the anthology, *What The Wind Picked Up*, created by novelists of Chilibris. It is available in March. with 100% of the royalties going to the charity, Samaritan's Purse. Appearing in hardcover and large print editions published by Thorndike, are two of Gail's novellas from *From Italy With Love*, including *An Open Door*.



The Deadline to register for the Retreat From Harsh Reality is March 26. Any questions please contact: Pam Trombley at: (231) 526-2153 or pamtrombley@charternet

Kathleen Nance, award-winning author and one of our very own members, has graciously donated her services to read and critique AN ENTIRE MANUSCRIPT!!! This fabulous offering will be auctioned off in one of our baskets at Retreat and you must be a Retreat attendee to have a chance at it. Don't miss out! No where else can you get an evaluation like this! Check out her website at <http://www.kathleennance.com> .

Tips to Save Time/ Find Time for Writing

By Lisa Cardle

I hear a lot of talk about goal setting for writers. Simple concept really. State what you hope to accomplish, then set about doing it. But what about those of you who've discovered that reality and writer's goals often collide, that there aren't enough hours in the day to accomplish what you want to do and what you have to do.

1) BUDGET YOUR TIME

There are only 24 hours in a day. Use them wisely. Think about it. Do you really need to sit through that 'Friends' rerun? You've seen it once, right? Wouldn't your time be better served writing?

But I can't write yet, you say. The kids are still awake.

As a nurse with twenty years helping families in crisis, let me assure you that it will not scar your children for life to see you struggle to achieve your dreams. In fact, it may do them a world of good to know that sometimes you have to work for what you want.

But my kids are too young to survive an hour unsupervised.

Fine, set them up with toys or a puzzle book and let them work at your feet while you write. Or use the time to zip through mail, pay bills, or make dinners that can be frozen and reheated later when you are writing. Let the little ones help. They can measure or pour and will enjoy the sense of importance that comes from accomplishing a task. (As an added bonus, picky eaters are often willing to taste food they've helped prepare.)

2) KEEP A TIME LOG

Jot down how you spend your free time, lunch hours, evenings, weekends. How much time do you spend running errands? Is it possible to plan your day more effectively and run those errands on the way to or from work? Or could you set aside three hours on a Saturday to get it all done then?

What about time spent on the phone? You can complete many 'mindless' tasks while carrying on a conversation. Invest in a cordless phone and free yourself up to throw in a load of laundry, iron, dust, or make dinner while you chat.

Tips continued on page 11

Tips continued from page 10

How about e-mail? Have you ever logged on for "a second" and three hours later marvel at where the time has gone? Try these tricks:

A) Set a time limit.

B) Train your friends not to forward jokes/junk.

C) Use the "daily digest" and "no mail" settings on your loops. "Daily digest" sends 24 hours worth of posts at one time. "No mail" holds all mail, but still allows access to posts through the groups archives.

3) SCHEDULE TIME TO WRITE

Are you one of those people who feel an item is only important if it's on the calendar? Then make an appointment with your muse. When you're scheduling times for soccer practice, doctor's visits, etc., don't forget to plug in an hour or so for writing. And stick to it. Don't let others persuade you to ignore it. Would you miss an orthodontist appointment you've had scheduled for six months? Then why skip the one thing that can help you achieve your dream? Remember, you can't get published if you don't find time to write.

4) BE REALISTIC

Don't set a goal of 20 pages a day, if you only average a page an hour--or if you have an outside job that requires you to work 12+ hours a day or if you have to ferry the kids from place to place on a Saturday.

Instead, steal snippets of time to pre-write. Plan an upcoming scene. Determine your character's goals, why he wants them, and what's keeping him from them. Understanding your characters will help the writing go that much smoother when it comes time for your "writing appointment."

5) ORGANIZE YOUR LIFE

How much time do you waste looking for notes, research books, writing material? Or the checkbook/calculator when paying bills?

Organize your life so you don't waste time looking for items necessary to get the job done. (A Rubbermaid tub or two make great catch-alls for mail, grocery flyers, school papers, magazines, etc. They're easily portable, so you can review/sort/clip coupons while watching TV with the family or waiting in the car to pick up the kids.)

6) PRIORITIZE

Anyone can dust, vacuum, or do laundry. But, only you can write your book. Enlist family members to help with everyday chores. It may take a few attempts, but even a two-year old can learn to tidy his room or empty bathroom wastebaskets. It will save you time, and it will also help the child feel like a productive member of the family. (A handy guideline: one weekly chore per age of child.)

In the unlikely event that you have more children than chores, break chores down. Clean your room = put toys away, make bed, put clothes in hamper, and dust shelves.

Tips continued on page 12

Tips continued from page 11

A five year old can do any of the above as well as empty small wastebaskets, set or clear the table, make toast, monitor pet's food/water dish, fold laundry (especially socks, towels, washcloths, even his own play clothes. Face it--who cares if his shirt is wrinkled? It'll be covered in mud as soon as he sets foot out the door anyway.)

7) REWARD YOURSELF

We all need time to ourselves, the occasional mental-health break, and time to replenish our creative wells. This is true. But if you want to be a writer, if you want to create characters that will live on the page and not just in your head, then you'll schedule your "me" time after you've reached your pre-set page count or time limit.

So, go on, peruse that magazine--after you've reached your goal. Tape that TV show and watch it later--after you've reached your goal. Read that new bestseller--after you've reached your goal. Critique a friend's chapter--AFTER you've reached your goal.

Are you sensing a trend?

The editor is not a mind-reader. He/she can't buy the book if it's not down on paper. You can have the greatest, most compelling story, but if it's buried in the recesses of your brain, no one but your friends on the psychic hotline are going to know.

So make time to write. You're worth it.
Good luck and Happy Writing, Lisa Cardle, RN

In her non-writing life, Lisa Cardle is a 20 year veteran of intensive care nursing, currently specializing in Neonatal ICU. She uses these time tested strategies in her own struggle to balance work, rest, and writing. An RWA PRO member and MMRWA member Lisa is hard at work on her fourth manuscript, a paranormal contemporary pitting a hard-core pragmatist who doesn't believe in the supernatural against a 3000 year-old Guardian of Nature... Boy, is she in for an attitude adjustment.



March entries for the column: Hook, Line or Sinker

By Wil Emerson

Let's have some fun. How would you rate these openings? Send your comments to the editor at brainchilde@websurfers.biz with "Hook, Line or Sinker" in the subject line or discuss with your fellow members at the March meeting.

Hook, Line or Sinker Hook, Line or Sinker continued on page 13

Hook, Line or Sinker Hook, Line or Sinker continued from page 12

1. For only the second time in her life, Miss Jane Mayhew found herself facing a naked man.

At least she presumed he was naked beneath the rumpled sheets. Entwined with a giggling blonde in the four-poster bed, he turned toward the doorway with more irritation than abashment.

2. My last marriage was made in heaven. The musical accompaniment was provided by Gabriel, and angels were so happy that ten thousand of them danced on the head of a pin. It was the marriage to end all my marriages.

3. She was not ready to go home, and not ready to face anybody, neither the five-year-old nor the infant, not prepared to answer the telephone or speak a civil word, after what had just happened during this past hour. Never had Sally Grey felt so wretched, so small, as if she had physically shrunk, as she sat huddled behind the wheel of the car and fled the city.

4. Cynthia DuPont had only one question to ask. It didn't matter what his response would be. Plans were set in motion. She looked into Brad's steel grey eyes, took a deep breath to calm her nerves and said more slowly than intended, "Why are there two one-way tickets in your briefcase?" She thrust the airline ticket holder on the coffee table and dashed toward the open front door.



The following article first appeared in the February 2005 issue of Words From The Heart, From The Heart Romance Writers newsletter. USED WITH PERMISSION

Rejection after Rejection after Rejection

By Terry Spear

How do you handle that first rejection and then all the others that follow after that? Sometimes, champagne, chocolate, and a good cry help, but I'd be a blurry-eyed, six-hundred pound, alcoholic at that rate.

So what else works? How do you hold your head up high and send that rejected, maybe revised, manuscript back out there? And how do you get the courage to write another manuscript and another one that may only have the same success as the first?

Perseverance is the key.

Think of a ship's captain battling the enemy. His motto: Don't give up the ship. And we shouldn't either...not if we feel as he does. Our cause is worthy. Right? Our writing is worthy. Correct? We want to be heard. So we persevere.

Rejection continued on page 14

Rejection continued from page 13

Rarely does anyone get published the first time they submit a manuscript. Sure it happens...but rarely. So we have to expect rejection. Write the best we can, perfect our craft, but accept that not all of our work will be lavishly praised by editors clamoring to get their greedy hands on it.

So if drowning our sorrows with alcohol, chocolate, and tears doesn't work, what else is there? Get back in the saddle just like a cowboy does who's thrown from his horse. Dust off those chaps or manuscripts and get back in the saddle. Research the market, find another place to send that manuscript and shoot it out there again. In the meantime, get to work on another manuscript, which should have been started after the last one was finished. Polish it up and send it out. It's easier to handle a rejection when you still have queries for other manuscripts out there.

What about a support group? Your husband, kids, parents, goldfish don't understand you? Join a writer's group or several. I have lots of critique partners and belong to a number of writing groups. When I feel down, I let some of them know. And guess what? They understand. They've been there, done that. But what's best is they remind me of all the other famous authors who got rejected and rejected and rejected, too.

So what was their key to success? Did they quit? Did they give up the ship?

They persevered.

Form letter rejections are the worst. You haven't any idea why they didn't like this great story you pitched to them. I found out after the fact that one publisher didn't like espionage stories. Now if I'd found this obscure news before I sent my manuscript, I'd have saved myself a form letter rejection. Form letter rejections make you guess at why your story didn't fit for them.

Then comes the self-doubting. My writing is so lousy all they can do is send me a form letter rejection. It doesn't matter that the letter states you're receiving it because there are so many submissions that's all they can manage, or heaven forbid, close the door to unagented submissions. You just know your work is unloved.

There's not a whole lot you can do about form letter rejections except keep them in a file so you don't pitch the same story to the same editor by mistake and get another one of those form letter rejections.

What about the personalized rejection? Now this is much better. Someone has taken the time to actually read your work and let you know why it doesn't work for them. You can write or call the editor and ask if they'd like to see revisions based on their suggestions. They can say no, and thereby you receive another rejection, deepening the wound, or they can say yes and you revise your heart out. Again, you're faced with the possibility of another rejection. Is it worth it? Sure. What if by some slim chance the revisions work and now in that editor's eye, your work is saleable? You've got a contract.

Rejection continued on page 15

Rejection continued from page 14

Again, perseverance is the key.

It's not to say there are days when the rejections just seem to pile up and take their toll on your sanity. One day, I received a request for a full. For three days after that, I received rejections for other manuscripts. But that one request for a full made all the difference in the world to me. I could handle the rejections for a while. But the big blow came when the two fulls I had at one office both came back rejected from an editor who says she liked my writing style. So if I can't get published by an editor who likes my writing, how can I get published by editors who won't even bother to look at my writing?

Perseverance.

Keep writing, revising, and submitting. Get back up in that saddle and keep on riding. Shove those doubts out of the gray matter, think positively, research a different line, but whatever you do, keep sending those great works of art in and one of these days that SASE won't be returned. You'll get "The Call" instead.

FTHRW member Terry Spear is the author of KILLING THE BLOODLUST, Mar 2005, Triskelion Press, w/a Terry Spear, GHOSTLY LIAISONS, Oct 2005 & THE VAMPIRE.IN MY DREAMS, Oct 2006, young adult paranormals, Medallion Press, Inc, w/a Terry Lee Wilde, "Finding Romance on a Night so Foul," short story, Jan 2005, True Romance, "The Civil Air Patrol," short story, Sep 2005, Listen Magazine, and "Sports for the Sports Disinclined," short story, Mar 2006, Listen Magazine

USEFUL SITES

Get info on agents and editors

Preditors and Editors <http://www.sfwaworld.com/prededitors/>
<http://www.sfwaworld.com/beware/>

Get the best start for your story

First Three Pages

<http://www.fictionwriters.com/tips-novel-writing.html>

Elmore Leonard's Rules for Writing are brief and pertinent.

<http://www.hodrw.com/elmorerulesforwriting.htm>

Directions to Sam's Joint
675 N. 10th Street
Plainwell, MI 49080
Phone number: 269-685-8235

From the North (Grand Rapids): Follow US-131 South. Take the 106th Avenue ext, Exit 50. Turn Left onto 106th Avenue; go 0.6 miles. Turn left onto 10th Street/CR-A45; go 0.3 miles. Sam's Joint is across the road from a small airfield.

From the Northeast (Lansing): Follow I-96 to Lansing Road South exit, Exit 98A. Merge onto Lansing Road; go 2.5 miles. Merge onto I-69 S via the ramp on the Left toward Fort Wayne; go 31.5 miles. Merge onto I-94 W via Exit 38 toward Chicago; go 34.5 miles. Merge onto US-131 N (toward Grand Rapids) via Exit 74B; follow US-131 for 12 miles. Take the M-89 E exit, Exit 49A toward Plainwell; go 0.3 miles. Turn Right onto MI-89 E/Allegan; go 0.7 miles. Turn Left onto N Main/CR-A45. Follow CR-A45 for 1.8 miles. Sam's joint is on the right hand side of the road, across the road from a small airfield.

From the Southeast (Detroit/Jackson/Kalamazoo) or the Southwest (Benton arbor/Coloma): Follow I-94 to US-131 N (toward Grand Rapids), Exit 74B; follow US-131 for 12 miles. Take the M-89 E exit, Exit 49A toward Plainwell; go 0.3 miles. Turn Right onto MI-89 E/Allegan; go 0.7 miles. Turn Left onto N Main/CR-A45. Follow CR-A45 for 1.8 miles. Sam's joint is on the right hand side of the road, across the road from a small airfield.

The Mirror is in need of “how to” articles, reviews of writing books and writing related websites, member bios and photographs, member book news and activities. Please send all contributions for the March the Mirror to: brainchilde@websurfers.biz If you do not have access to e-mail, please send by regular mail to Annette Briggs, Box 374, Three Rivers, MI 49093. DEADLINE TO BE INCLUDED IN THE APRIL 2005 MIRROR is MARCH 20. Guidelines are available at the above address or e-address.

Mid-Michigan Mirror's policy is to offer our original MMRWA articles to other RWA chapters and loops to use with all credits given unless the author specifies restrictions. The Mirror staff reserves the right to edit submissions for such things as typos, punctuation, grammar, size requirements, content with author's approval, etc. in the rare case that it is needed.

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President: Wil Emerson Wilwriter@yahoo.com

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Website Liaison: Lana Mieresen j.l.miersen@cablespeed.com

Web mistress: Michelle Crean mecrean@crean.com

We do not have a PAN representative at this time. Please see a board member to volunteer.

MMRWA 2005 Meetings

Unless otherwise noted, meetings are held the third Saturday of each month on a rotating basis at area restaurants and meeting centers. The usual meeting agenda is as follows:

11:30 a.m., lunch (optional)

1:00 p.m. (approximate time), program/speaker 2:00 p.m. (approximate time), business meeting.

March 19: Sam's Joint in Plainfield; Maris Soule will speak on "Romantic Suspense."

April 22 - 24: Retreat From Harsh Reality; St. Ives Resort in Stanwood, MI. Elizabeth Grayson, Bestselling Historical Author, will be the guest speaker. For more information, schedule and registration form click [here](#).

May 21: Jackson; Tentative program "Some Like It Hot," the Trend toward erotica and the more sensual romance.

June 18: Grand Rapids; Roseanne Bittner on "Staying The Course," staying on top during industry turmoil and change.

July: No meeting due to RWA Nationals in Reno, Nevada.

August 20: Lansing; Gail Martin will speak on "Shoring Up The Sagging Middle".

September 17: TBA

October 15: TBA

November 19: TBA

December 10: Location TBA; End of Year Recap and Holiday Party

One Day Conference in Lansing, Michigan:

A Rally of Writers Saturday, April 16, 2005

Our 2005 keynote speaker: Beverly Jenkins, author of 12 African-American romance novels. Bev has won three Waldenbooks Best Seller Awards, two Career Achievement Awards from Romantic Times Magazine, and a Golden Pen Award from the Black Writers Guild. Named one of the Top 50 African-American Writers of the 20th Century by AABLC in 1999, Bev's work covers adult romance, historic fiction, young adult including Belle and the Beau and Josephine and the Soldier, and now contemporary suspense in The Edge of Midnight (HarperCollins 2004).

Other presenters include:

Lev Raphael on "Writing, Research & Reality"; Steven Harper Piziks on science fiction and fantasy; Rachael Perry on short story; Hugh Culik on "Building Characters"; Shutta Crum on pictures and young adult; Jane Briggs-Bunting on multi-media reporting; Dennis Hinrichsen on poetry; Ron St. Germain on photography; Thora Kate Wease on humorous essays, columns and short stories; Jef Mallett, creator of the syndicated comic strip "Frazz"; Dedria Humphries on creative nonfiction; Jan Corey Arnett on self-publication.

Rally of Writers continued on page 18

Rally of Writers continued from page 17

Also: Martha Bates, acquisitions editor for the MSU Press, returns for a session;

Added attractions:

Two editors panels!

Karen Hill and Laurie Fundikian, editors at Thomson Gale, one of Michigan's largest publishers;
Local editors Barb White, Tom Campbell and Steve Horton.

For more information or if you'd like to be on our mailing list, make your request to info@arallyofwriters.com

ONLINE WORKSHOPS

By Judi Fadeley

Here are some upcoming online workshops from sister RWA chapters. To save space, we're listing a minimum of information. If you're interested in a particular workshop, follow up with the contact address given. These are very low cost nuts and bolts offerings, running about \$10-30 per workshop. In most cases, registration can be done online with a PayPal account. USED WITH PERMISSION

Celtic Hearts Romance Writers:
"I Dinna Ken," March 7 - 11
"Ancient Celtic Archetypes for Today's Celtic Woman,"
April 2005
CONTACT INFO:
<http://www.celtichearts.org/CHA/course/category.php?>

Earthly Charms:
"Freelance Writing: Selling What You Write," March
2005
"Developing and Discovering Your Author Brand,"
April 2005
"The Selling Synopsis," May 2005
CONTACT INFO: <http://www.earthlycharms.com>

Online Workshops continued on page 19

Hearts Through History Romance Writers:

"Query Letters," April 4 - 17

"Self Promotion," April 1- 30

CONTACT INFO: <http://www.heartsthroughhistory.com>

Low Country RWA:

CONTACT INFO: <http://lowcountryrwa.com>

"Gothics! How to Write the Hot New Genre the Editors (and Readers) are Buying," March 2005

"Defeat Self-Defeating Behaviors," April 2005

"Writing Sex and Sexual Tension," May 2005

"Elvis, James Dean, and You:

13 Ways to Make Your Dialogue Cool,"

June 2005

STAR Writers Workshops:

"Cashing the Reality Check," April 2005

"Putting Emotion in Your Writing," June 2005

"Theme: Your Story's Heart and Soul," August 2005

"Cross-Genre Fiction," October 2005

CONTACT INFO: <http://members.aol.com/starrwa>

Kiss of Death Chapter, College of Felony and Intrigue:

"A Typical Day in the ER," March 2005

"Science Against Crimes," April 2005

"Cops, Robbers, and the Fights They Get Into," May 2005

CONTACT INFO:

<http://www.rwamysterysuspense.org/coffin.html>

RWA Online:

"Dialogue That Works," March 7-11 2005

"Two Part Suspense Writing: Character and Plot," July 11-15

"Real People Live Here," September 12-16, 2005

"Investigating Your Writer's Toolbox,"

November 7-11, 2005

CONTACT INFO:

<http://www.rwaonlinechapter.org/Campus.html>

Contests

Compiled by Donna Caubarreaux....USED WITH PERMISSION

9th Annual Dixie First Chapter Contest

Magnolia State Romance Writers

Received by March 15, 2005

First Chapter up to 25 pages max.

<http://www.members.tripod.com/MSRW-Jackson/>

The Writer's Weekend Writing Contest

Postmarked by March 15, 2005

First chapter or up to the first 25 pages of your manuscript.

- A 2 page, single-spaced synopsis.

- A query letter.

<http://www.writersweekend.com/contest.htm>

Noble Theme

American Christian Fiction Writers

Postmarked by March 31, 2005

First 25 pages.

<http://www.americanchristianfictionwriters.com/nobletheme.shtml>

Fool for Love

Virginia Romance Writers

Received by April 1, 2005

First chapter/prologue of your manuscript,

not to exceed 20 pages and an optional,

unjudged synopsis of no more than 5 pages.

<http://www.virginiaromancewriters.com/Contests/ffl.html>

TARA

Tampa Area Romance Authors

Received by April 10, 2005

First chapter up to 20 pages.

<http://tara.writerspace.com/firstimpress.htm>

"We Dare You"

Saskatchewan Romance Writers

Postmarked by June 1, 2005

First twelve pages of your manuscript.

www.saskromancewriters.4t.com

Fire & Ice Contest

Chicago-North RWA

Received by April 1, 2005

First Chapter up to 25 pages.

<http://www.chicagonorthrwa.org/contest.htm>

Barclay Gold (Published)

Lake Country Romance Writers

Postmarked by March 31, 2005

Copyright of 2004.

<http://www.lcrw.org/rulesgold.html>

Contests continued on page 20

Contests continued from page 19

The Daphne du Maurier Award (Published)

Kiss of Death Chapter
Received by March 15, 2005
Copyright date of 2004
www.rwamysterysuspense.org

The Daphne du Maurier Award for Unpublished

Kiss of Death Chapter
Received by March 15, 2005
First fifteen (15) pages of manuscript PLUS five (5) copies of a o
[www.rwamysterysuspense](http://www.rwamysterysuspense.org)

Haunted Hearts

Gothic Romance Writers
Receipt Deadline: March 20, 2005
First Chapter up to 25 pages; + one page synopsis
<http://www.gothrom.org/>

Madcap Award for Published authors

Heart and Scroll RWA
Received by April 1, 2005
2004 copyright
http://www.heartandscroll.com/contest_Madcap.htm

Love At First Sight

2005 Oklahoma Centennial Book Festival
Postmark deadline April, 10, 2005
A maximum of ten (10) double-spaced manuscript pages
describing the first encounter between the hero and heroine,
plus a one-page setup.
<http://www.oklahomacentennialbookfestival.com/specialprog.asp>

2005 Texas Gold Romance Award For Published Authors

Sponsor: RWA-East Texas Chapter
Deadline: April 15, 2005
Enter: novels written by RWA Region 5 authors/residents

or novels set predominantly in Texas, with an original
2004 copyright.

<http://home.earthlink.net/~ralsobrook/texgold.htm>

Contests continued on page 20

Contests continued from page 19

Orange Rose for Published Writers

Orange County Chapter RWA
Received by May 1, 2005
2004 release date
<http://www.occrwa.com/contesttwo.htm>

Touched by Love Contest

Faith, Hope and Love Chapter
Received by April 1, 2005
Synopsis (ten double spaced pages max) and the
beginning of an unpublished manuscript. Max of 50
pages total.
<http://www.faithhopelove-rwa.org/contests.htm>

Orange Rose Contest

Orange County Chapter RWA
Received by April 9, 2005
Synopsis and beginning of novel not to exceed 55
pages
<http://www.occrwa.com/contest.htm>

1st Annual Summer Sizzle Contest

Sponsor: Ohio Valley RWA
Deadline: April 9, 2005
Enter: 12 pages max. of sexual tension (with an
optional, unjudged 1
pg setup) that moves the relationship to the next level.
http://www.ovrwa.com/contest/summer_sizzle/

Foot in the Door Contest

LARA Los Angeles Romance Authors
Deadline: April 15th, 2005
Enter: Query letter and Synopsis
<http://www.losangelesromanceauthors.com>

Golden Synopsis

Maine RWA
Deadline: May 1, 2005
Enter: Synopsis (Maximum 12 pages)
<http://www.geocities.com/mainerwa/>

**The Scarlet (unpublished and published)
Writer's Weekend**

Deadline: March 15, 2005
First chapter up to 25 pages; A 2 page, single-spaced
synopsis; A query letter.
www.WritersWeekend.com

Jasmine Contest

Lowcountry Romance Writers
Postmark Deadline: May 2, 2005
Up to first 45 pages + synopsis up to 5 pages
<http://www.lowcountryrwa.com/jasmine.htm>

Contests continued on page 21

Contests continued from page 20

Ignite the Flame

Central Ohio Fiction Writers

Postmark by May 7, 2005

Your hero and heroine's first meeting (up to 15 pages).

<http://www.cofw.org/contest.htm>

Original Golden Opportunity Contest

Toronto Romance Writers

Postmark Deadline: May 17th, 2005

First chapter and synopsis up to 30 pages.

<http://www.torontoromancewriters.com/goldenop.html>

Royal Ascot

The Beau Monde Chapter

Postmarked by April 1, 2005

Beginning and synopsis not to exceed 30 pages.

<http://www.thebeaumonde.com/royalascot/>

The Scarlet (unpublished and published)

Writer's Weekend

Deadline: March 15, 2005

First chapter up to 25 pages; A 2 page, single-spaced synopsis; A query letter.

www.WritersWeekend.com

The Shelia

Valley Forge Romance Writers

Postmarked by April 1, 2005

Synopsis (up to 7 pages) and beginning of manuscript

not to exceed 35 pages total for synopsis and manuscript pages.

<http://www.vfrw.com/contest.htm>

Donna Caubarreaux is a member of Coeur de Louisiane, Scriptscene Chapter, NOLA Stars, Heart of Louisiana, Kiss of Death, and ChickLitWriters of RWA. She received a RWA Service Award in 1997. She sponsors several writing lists. <http://www.geocities.com/donnacaubarreaux/Main.html>