

MAGAZINE

URBAN LITERARY

FROM BEHIND

THE DESK OF A

POET

ART OF STORYTELLING

AMBIANCE BOOKS

VALENTINES DAY CON-

TEST STORIES

CREATIVITY STARTS

HERE

BESTSELLING AUTHOR USES HUSBAND

AS COVER MODEL

URBAN LITERARY MAGAZINE

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WRITING PROMPTS

**BESTSELLING AUTHOR USES HUSBAND
AS COVER MODEL**

GAY FICTION

POEMS

NEW RELEASES

THE ART OF STORYTELLING

FROM THE DESK OF A POET

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POETRY CONTEST—MARCH

CHILDRENS STORY CONTEST—APRIL

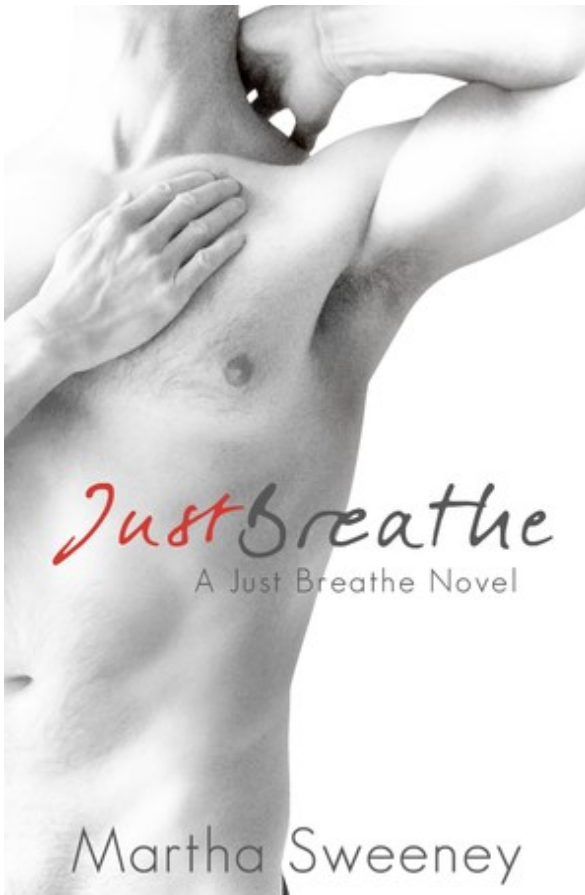
MEMOIR WRITING CONTEST— MAY

EDITORIAL NEEDS

CREATIVITY STARTS HERE

MARCH MADNESS

Amazon Best-Selling Author Uses Husband as Book Cover Model



Amazon Best-Selling author Martha Sweeney has taken a unique and completely opposite position on the current trend of the tatted and bearded bad boys with not only the male character of her first trilogy, but also with the male cover model featured on her third book of the *Just Breathe* series. Martha used two different stock photos of a female for the first two books, *Breathe In* and *Breathe Out*, but knew she wanted, and perhaps needed, to have a male model for the third book, *Just Breathe*, which was released February 16, 2016.

With Joe Covelli, the male love interest for Emma Peterson in the *Just Breathe* series, Martha had a particular body type in mind to represent a billionaire book boyfriend who is clean shaven, bares not a single tattoo, but is in great physical shape. With the traits and qualities beyond that of wealth, Joe Covelli is quiet, intelligent, funny and sexy, minus the bad boy attitude and overly developed physique.

After two months of searching for the perfect model, Martha realized that he was right in front of her — her husband. Thomas Sweeney, indie author of *The Harem*, had already been engaged in a very strict workout and diet regimen and had experienced great success. When Martha inquired, Thomas decided to increase his routines over a specific period of time to meet Martha's deadlines and give her time to find another model if needed.

Martha Sweeney is happy to share her husband this way with readers and fans because her relationship with her husband was part of the inspiration for

the series, and Martha feels strongly that Thomas is her Joe Covelli. The series was written to inspire women to build healthy, lasting relationships. The decision to use her husband on *Just Breathe* has paid off and, perhaps, started a new trend. The *Just Breathe* series is available on Amazon, Kindle, Barnes & Nobles, Nook, GooglePlay, Kobo, Books A Million and several other major book retailers online. You can purchase autographed copies of the trilogy directly through Martha's website, www.marthasweeney.com.

Where to Find Martha

Connect with Martha online.

www.marthasweeney.com

Facebook:

@AuthorMarthaSweeney

Twitter:

@MSweeney_Author

@MarthaSweeneyAuthor



Creativity Starts Here

By Thomas Sweeney

As most artists, authors are continually seeking their muse for inspiration. Where does inspiration come from? What can you do to keep the ideas flowing? What can you do when you can't think of anything? Hopefully, this article will give you some insight for these questions and more.

Inspiration is a magical flash of genius that often seems miraculous or mystical, but actually, it's anything but ephemeral. Inspiration is simple recognition of the beauty surrounding us everyday. To be inspired, all you have to do is look around you. Life is far more amazing than many would care to admit.



Even the struggles and tragedies can be inspiring if for no other reason than to steer clear.

Where does inspiration come from?

It comes from you. Your life is extremely interesting to me because it's not mine. Reality television and online videos prove this true everyday. There are a myriad of influences that can assist in shaping your personal inspiring moment like mass media, family, friends, work, authority figures, history, school, religion and much more. Even the ether plays a significant role in human inspiration according to Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein, but that will be discussed another time.

How do you keep the ideas flowing?

Keep doing and learning interesting things. Avoid behavioral ruts like the plague. Exercise to keep the blood flowing; literally. Get good quality rest at night. Maintain a positive attitude towards life. When life is fun and exciting, you can't help but get more great ideas than you could ever hope to accomplish in one lifetime. Treat the skill of being inspired like physical exercise; the more you use those muscles, the stronger they become.

What can you do when you can't think of anything?

Become more physical. Become more passionate. Become more excited about life. The exhilaration of these states can help break through self-imposed mental barriers. They are definitely self-imposed. The ideas are out there waiting for you to grab them. You just have to get out of your own way. A quick trick to try when struggling for a great idea is to keep your head still and roll your eyes in both directions slowly. This helps break the mind out of the "think" stage and activates all four quadrants of the brain.

This article is just scratching the very surface of the amount of information that can be shared on inspiration, its origin, and how to acquire it successfully. The skill of creative inspiration is a life-long journey, so be patient with yourself. Practice daily and watch your ability steadily grow. Just remember to have fun along the way, and write it all down. I'd love to read about it.

Thomas Sweeney is the author of *The Harem*, a founder of the World Wealth Network, and musician who had a hit song reach #1 on MP3.com, beating out Blink 182 and Alanis Morissette. You can connect with Thomas via his website, www.theharembook.com.



Joe Cosentino on Gay Fiction

Editorial Services:

Editing - \$0.015 per word (if editing single pages only)

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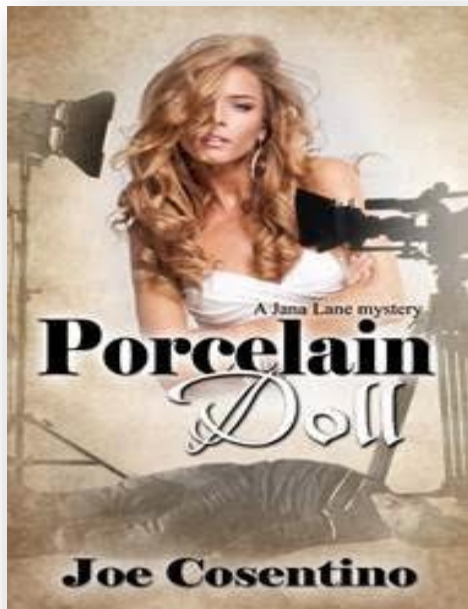
Article Writing Service - \$10.00 USD per article (500 & above words)

Ghost Writing services - \$2.00 per page.

Please, contact us at: urbanliteraryagency@gmail.com for any editing services.

Readers and reviewers have responded very positively to both my (straight) Jana Lane mysteries (The Wild Rose Press) and my (gay) Nicky and Noah mysteries (Lethe Press). I have actually found it easier to market the gay mysteries, however, since there are a number of web sites and online magazines that focus solely on that genre. For example, DRAMA QUEEN (the first Nicky and Noah mystery) won Best Mystery Novel, Best Crime Novel, Best Contemporary Novel, and Best Humorous Novel in Divine Magazines' Readers' Poll of 2015. I can be reviewed and/or interviewed on five web sites and feel confident that readers of gay fiction know about the new release. There are countless publicity outlets for straight fiction, which can be overwhelming, so a book can get lost. I also find the readers of gay fiction (mainly straight women ironically) are more loyal than readers of straight fiction, and they will read all my books. Thankfully both of my series are mysteries, and there is a loyal readership for that genre, whether gay or straight.





Synopsis:

Is art imitating life in 1982? Jana Lane, ex-child star, is doing a comeback film about murder. When a crew member is killed on the set, it looks like Jana could be next. Thickening the plot is Jana's breathtakingly handsome and muscular leading man, Jason Apollo, whose boyish, southern charms have aroused Jana's interest on screen and off. Will Jana and Jason stop the murderer before the final reel, or end up on the cutting room floor in this fast-paced whodunit with a shocking ending?

Rating: 5 stars

Review:

Porcelain Doll by Joe Cosentino is the second part, to his bestselling series. Jana Lane was a child movie star and now, is doing another movie. When things look and feel normal, that's when they start to slip. Someone ends up dead and then the threats against Jana begin...Murder, mystery, and suspense are high inside of this brilliant masterpiece by Joe Cosentino. He always knows exactly what his readers want and how to deliver it. Every page fills the readers with intrigue...soon all the pages are turned and readers find themselves finished. Edge of your seat mystery that lures readers instantly. **Porcelain Doll** is a must read for readers worldwide. Once you read it, you can't put it down. Overall, I highly recommend Joe Cosentino's novel to all. He has a way, with luring not one but many of his novels. I can't wait to read the next exciting adventure after this one.

It could be lights out for college theatre professor Nicky Abbondanza. With dead bodybuilders popping up on campus, Nicky, and his favorite colleague/life partner Noah Oliver, must use their drama skills to figure out who is taking down pumped up musclemen in the Physical Education building before it is curtain down for Nicky and Noah. Complicating matters is a visit from Noah's parents from Wisconsin, and Nicky's suspicion that Noah may be hiding more than a cut, smooth body. You will be applauding and shouting Bravo for Joe Cosentino's fast-paced, side-splittingly funny, edge-of-your-seat entertaining second novel in this delightful series. Curtain up and weights up!

Praise for DRAMA QUEEN, the first Nicky and Noah mystery by Joe Cosentino from Lethe Press:

"Without doubt the funniest book I have read this year, maybe ever" "brilliant" Three Books Over the Rainbow

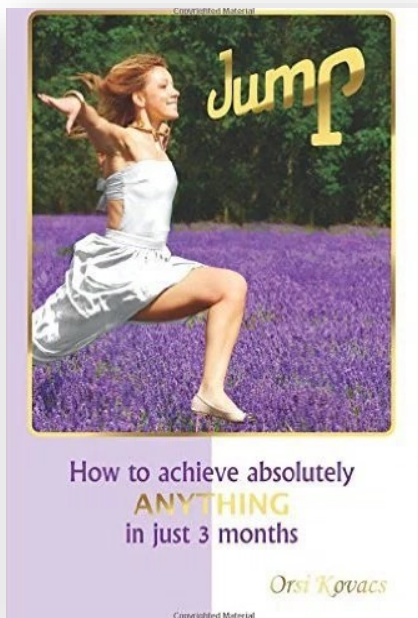
"I cannot stop laughing. Drama Queen is Hardy Boys-meets-Murder She Wrote-meets-Midsummer Murders, with a side of parodic, farcical, satire." "Who-dunits don't come more who-dunnit than this." Boy Meets Boy Reviews

"I'm hoping that this is just the start for Nicky and Noah. If Jessica Fletcher could have so many murderers in Cabot Cove, why shouldn't the same hold true for Tree Meadow College?" Scattered Thoughts and Rogue Words Reviews

"This fast-paced, hilariously funny, entertaining novel will have you on the edge of your seat as you try to figure out who-dun-it!" Joyfully Jay

"a murder mystery, a comedic romp, an investigative caper, and a love story all rolled up into one nifty little novel" The Novel Approach





Synopsis:

In this book, Orsi invites you on a journey where she says goodbye to her 9 to 5 job and jumps into the unknown. All she knows is that she can't fail. Not because she is a super woman, but because she realizes that failing is never trying. She decides to get out of her comfort zone, and follow her heart.

Her project is to write a self-help book within just 90 days, while she simultaneously coaches 3 people with 3 very different obstacles they wish to overcome and shares their case studies with us using various coaching techniques. During this period, in the hope of finding Mr. Right, Orsi is back to dating and even after her various heartbreaks, she pulls herself together and doesn't give up until she finally finds love. Orsi introduces a diet that has changed her whole life for the better and last but not least, she shares some excellent ideas and techniques on how to manage our finances and how to start moving towards achieving financial freedom with a little help from the "Law of Attraction". With her book, Orsi encourages all of us to dare to jump, be smart and believe that the Universe will help us along the way to achieve anything we want in just 3 months.

Don't worry if you are not sure of what your first steps should be, Orsi will support you in reaching your full potential and be that amazing person who you always wanted to be.

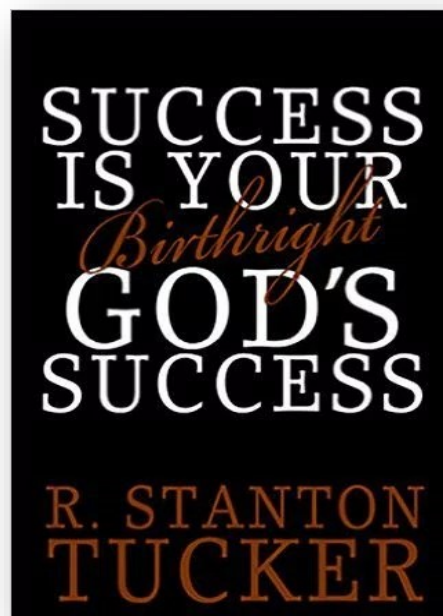
Rating: 5 stars

Review:

Jump by Orsi Kovacs is a sensational hit from page one. Readers will automatically be drawn deeper into this exciting book. Readers can almost sense and feel what the author has master-

fully penned. The writing is well-developed and creates an air of suspense. One that will keep readers turning the pages to find out what happens next.

Jump is a self-journey that readers will take and follow along as the writer shows her readers what happens. From working a job that no longer interested her to turning in her resignation and feeling the fear of what next is one that propels readers forward into the world of life's changes. Some times we find that we are better suited for other things. Things we may not have noticed until we take that one daring leap like Orsi Kovacs did. This was definitely the most inspiring tale of a real woman and real life decisions that shaped her future. I have found this book as a guide that gently takes me through the process and steps of redefining me and my life's purpose. The possibility of failing is a fear all face. But getting the courage to embrace the unknown is a defeat for the strong and successful. Overall, I highly recommend this well-written book to all.



Synopsis:

Life resembles a roller coaster. It has suspense, intrigue, smooth moments, hairpin turns, sudden twists, plummets, loopy loops, near misses, excitement, and anticipation. Life consists of countless moments. Moments that make us smile, experience tingling sensations, laugh until we can hardly breathe, and leave us speechless with wonder and admiration. As beautiful as those moments are, our memoirs hone in and linger on the moments that leave us in tears, wincing, grinding our teeth, and asking for Divine Intervention. It is that part of life's roller coaster that makes you want to get off, wonder why, and feel psychologically

queasy. Questions like “What do I do? Where do I go from here? How will I bounce back or can I bounce back?” surface.

This book offers hope, love, and lessons to cope with those not so great moments and the people who instigate and perpetuate them, including ourselves, using the biblical Joseph Story as a platform. Why the Joseph Story? His story mirrors our own. He too experienced life’s roller coaster. Joseph’s story is not just a testament to resilience, but one of faith in and reliance on God.

Success Is Your Birthright: God’s Success:

- Offers a spiritual awakening
- Builds confidence
- Prods introspection and growth
- Encourages during difficult times
- Challenges misconceptions
- Opens a closed heart and hands
- Demonstrates love, hope, selflessness, and forgiveness

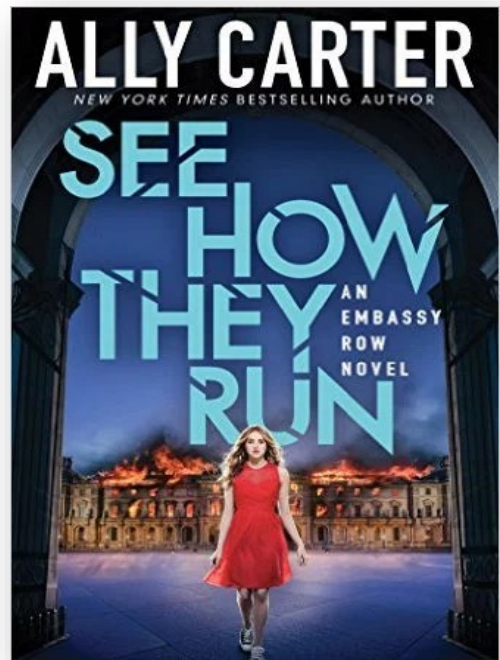
Success Is Your Birthright: God’s Success is a captivating appraisal, making it hard to put down. We discover life’s beauty and the confidence to bounce back from life’s unpredictable moments.

Rating: 5 stars

Review:

Success Is Your Birthright (God’s Success) by R. Stanton Tucker is the first book I have read by this amazing and most talented writer. He brings a book that is not just inspiring to read but one that will leave an imprint upon his readers forever. Success is a loose term that can be described by both an individual's and society in different ways. Yet, this beautifully told guide leads readers onto a journey in exploring what really matters and what they are doing now versus what they should be doing with their lives. Success is defined as not letting life’s many curves balls throw us off from achieving our dreams. That meaning we should try our very best to be the best we can be. If we can do that then no matter what, we will be successful and successful in God’s eyes too.

This is not a biblical guide telling you to give up your sins and pray, but it does have some very wise sayings from the Bible throughout to lure reader’s into a long moment of wondering what they are doing and what they will do next. Each chapter is realistically well-written in a way that allows readers to follow a self-journey of hope, love, and a confidence that they would not normally find. R. Stanton Tucker’s book takes not only our minds but our hearts and very souls deep into this rollercoaster ride that will keep readers coming back from time to time. I have found this to be a great read, and I highly recommend it to all.



Synopsis:

Digging up lost secrets is always dangerous. For the past three years, Grace Blakely has been desperate to find out the truth about her mother’s murder. She thought it would bring her peace. She thought it would lead her to answers. She thought she could put the past to rest. But the truth has only made her a target.

And the past? The only way to put the past to rest is for Grace to kill it once and for all.

On Embassy Row, power can make you a victor or a victim; love can turn you into a fool or a fugitive; and family can lead you forward or bury you deep. Trust is a luxury. Death is a very real threat. And a girl like Grace must be very careful about which secrets she brings to light.

My Rating: 4 stars

My Review:

Ally Carter is one of my favorite YA authors. As a teen and young adult, I have read every book of hers. My all time favorite was the Gallagher Girl series. When, I first heard of Ally’s new series, *Embassy Row*, my heart was thumping with excitement to get my hands on her new novels. *See How They Run*, is well-written and the characters are indeed well-developed. I would not have expected any less from this talented best-selling writer. Ally Carter has brought back a world of secrets to share once more with her readers from everywhere.

Readers can explore a deeper inside view of how politics, glamour, and family life all come hand-in-hand within this exciting read. See How They Run will take readers on one magnificent heart-pounding thrill ride.

See How They Run is book two in the Embassy Row series by Ally Carter. Here, readers get to meet a whole new line of characters. The main character, Grace, and her world is quite similar to the Gallagher Girls world of spies yet holds a lot more action and edge of your scenes. Readers will find the ending just as surprising as Grace did. Ally Carter definitely knows how to leave her audience hanging and waiting for the next great adventure. Although, I didn't quite feel the same deep connection with Grace as I did with Ally's famous Gallagher Girl, I still enjoyed following this new series of hers. This novel, unlike any of Ally's previous books, holds a little of everything. Action, suspense, and a cloud of mystery all masterfully created for everyone's entertainment. Readers will never know what will happen next as they follow Grace on her journey. Overall, I highly recommend this read to all.

Synopsis:

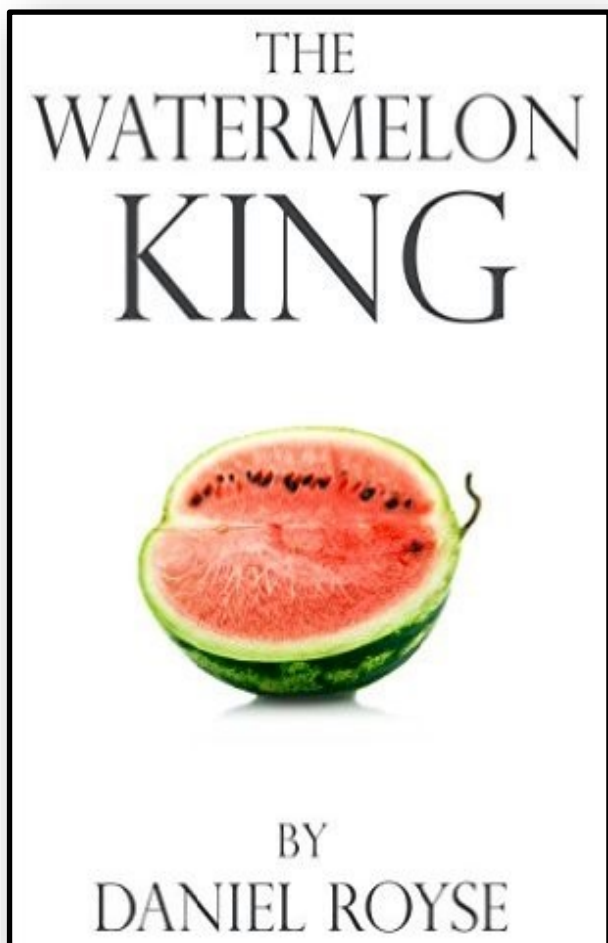
After being laid off from his job at a prestigious consulting firm, Dean decides to embark on a journey across East Africa with his younger brother. Unknowingly, they travel into bandit territory where a medical emergency forces them to choose between their safety and their health.

Inspired by true events, The Watermelon King follows the journey of two brothers as they backpack across one of East Africa's most inhospitable regions. As they endure endless days of difficult travel, a series of short stories written by their father begins to uncover their inherent desire for adventure and their connection to the past. Along the way, they begin to understand the beauty and frustration of life in Africa.

Rating: 5 stars

Review:

The Watermelon King by Daniel Royse is a must read for readers everywhere. Traveling to another continent, finding an adventure of a lifetime, and a little bit of an education read is one that will inspire many readers. This novel will take readers, where many can't go themselves. It leaves readers with suspense, intrigue, and a passion, to travel. Decisions...can leave major impacts. Dean definitely finds that out as his journey continues. Readers will see the scenes as though they were watching a movie, on screen. Daniel Royse talent for writing is one that will take readers anywhere...he wants. The well-developed yet exciting plot will keep readers turning the pages. Then, there's Dean's grandfather whose has left him letters that will have readers falling in love with this spectacular read. I read this entire novel in one sitting. Readers will be happy that they picked this book. The Watermelon King is not just a fictional travel read but a little bit of a memoir too. It's amazing how this novel can wrap its readers deep into the heart of the story. Overall, I highly recommend Daniel Royse's novel, The Watermelon King, to all.



Author Q&A with Kirsty Ferguson

Q: Can you tell us what your novel is about?

A: Brief rundown - Little Girl Dead is about a mother's search for justice after her 16 year old daughter Cassie is murdered. She will stop at nothing to uncover the truth even if it brings her troubled past back into her present.

Q: Which of your characters were the hardest to create?

A: Hardest characters to write - I found Lila the easiest character to write as I'm a mum myself and could easily put myself into her shoes. Dan and Peter were the hardest, I really had to dig into their characters and find out what makes them tick.

Q: In three words, how would you describe your novel?

A: Three words to describe - mystery, murder, mayhem.

Q: What tips can you share with other writers?

A: Tips - Write every day. Even if it's a little bit or you do some research, persevere, it's going to get tough writing your book, and read, authors should read to escape and immerse themselves in someone else's reality.

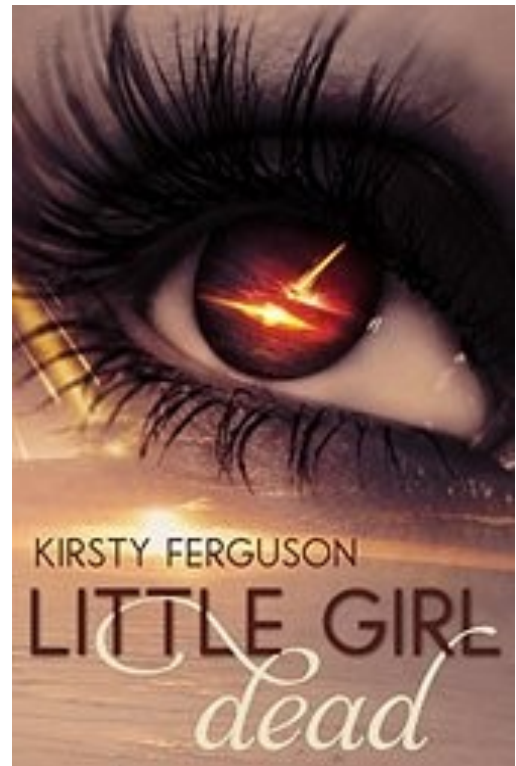
Q: Can you share with us readers what your future plans are?

A: Future plans - I am currently working on the sequel to Little Girl Dead which will be out 13 April 2016.

Q: Where can readers connect with you?

A: Connection - www.authorkirstyferguson.com,

Twitter: @danesha24



Synopsis:

Daughter, friend, classmate, victim.

The gruesome murder of sixteen year old Cassie Grace will leave you haunted, clamoring for justice and asking 'Who killed Cassie Grace?'

Lila Grace's sense of justice knows no bounds. She will stop at nothing to find out who killed her daughter. Is her dark past as a member of a religious cult the reason for her murder or is the man she once called friend?

Lila and Detective Dan Williams work closely on the case to piece together the details of Cassie's murder while fighting their growing attraction to each other.

Will their relationship bring them closer to the killer and each other or will it tear them apart?

As her life comes to a standstill, a piece of Lila's past will find her. How will Lila cope with the arrival of a person from her past and will it prove their innocence or expose them as the killer?

Author Q&A with Mikki Smith

Me: Can you share with us readers, what your novel, Dark Secrets is about?

MS: Misty's family, hid a dark secret from her. Until the coven came to claim what they believe belongs to them. Their chosen ones, to lead the coven to become the most powerful. It was written long ago the twins Misty and Bob who they separated at birth are to reign together as one to keep the bloodline pure.

When Misty refuses to stand with them, hell will break loose. She watched in horror as her first love Robbie was savagely beaten, mutilated and skinned while the coven celebrated. Unbeknownst to Misty she had the power within herself to save her friends.

Me: Which were your hardest characters to create and which were your easiest?

MS: My hardest was Bob and Detective Norris, my easiest was Misty

Me: What three words would you use to describe your novel?

MS: Thriller/Suspense/occult

Me: What advice do you have for other writers?

MS: Take yourself inside your story, allow your readers to see what you see, Don't give up.

Me: Can you share with us readers, what your future plans are if any?

MS: I am writing a Dark Secret's series with my sister in-law, I have thought about writing a book on Vet's let them tell their story in their words and giving half the proceeds to either wounded warriors or to put toward apartments to get our vet's off the streets. Then I have been working on one that is more challenging for me titled (For the love of Johnny) about child abuse in the sixties and seventies and suicide and a rare disease.

Me: Where can readers find you?

MS: I'm on twitter tweeting all the time about Dark Secret's, I'm also on face-book as well.



Synopsis:

Misty's family, hid a dark secret from her. Until the coven came to claim what they believe belongs to them. Their chosen ones, to lead the coven to become the most powerful. It is written the twins who they separated at birth are to reign together as one to keep the bloodline pure. When Misty refuses to stand with them, hell will break loose.

Author Interview with Greg Bauder

I am always glad to hear feedback on my work.

Me: Can you briefly tell us readers what your debut novel, *Split Coffee*, is about?

GB: SPILT COFFEE is about three aging schizoaffective men who live vicariously for the love of the beautiful, young, Filipino nurse who looks after them. The hero, Glen, believes that she has fallen for him but later learns that her love is just a delusion he is suffering from.

Me: Who were your hardest characters to create and which ones were your easiest?

GB: The hardest character to create was the hero, Glen, and the easiest was Virer, the Filipino nurse. Glen's character was often in psychosis which was very difficult to portray realistically. Virer was based on a nurse I knew and much of her dialogue was taken from our interaction.

Me: What are three words you would use to describe your novel?

GB: Gripping, psychological, thriller.

Me: What are your three tips that you would give to other writers?

GB: Read great writers, practice your craft, write from the heart.

Me: What are your future plans for novels, if any, that you can share with us readers?

GB: I have just completed a new novel, HEAVEN OR BUST. also, I wrote a children's novella earlier this year.

Me: Where can readers connect with you and find your work online?

GB: Readers can find my work online at Amazon.com. My email is: gbauder@shaw.ca



Review:

Split Coffee by Greg Bauder is a highly unique and interesting read. Three older men who attach their attention onto their beautiful nurse. Greg's fictional world is definitely laced with a lot of humor, surprise, and gives readers a refreshing read in the world of fiction. This is the first novel I have read by this talented new writer, and I definitely look forward to reading more of his future works. For those who want an adventure and something different to read, then I highly recommend reading *Split Coffee*.

Author Interview with CK McKenzie



Me: Can you briefly tell us readers what your debut novel, *The Legendary Haunting of Quentin Wallis*, is about?

CK: It's a Halloween love story so it's a little bit romantic and a little bit spooky and there's some swash-buckling adventure and quirky dark humor thrown in for good measure. Quentin has just one last Halloween to either find true love and break the curse he's been living under or he'll lose everything, including his life. Of course nothing goes to plan thanks to the motley crew of family, hired assassins and some murderous ghosts.

It was inspired by some of my favorite books and movies, and it's a complete indulgence of everything that I love about that particular holiday. My hope of course is that other people will love it too.

Me: Who were your hardest characters to create and which ones were your easiest?

CK: Quentin was definitely the hardest to create. He's the hero but he's also the one who's living under the curse. Usually it's the girl that has to be saved by the dashing knight so Quentin goes against the standard character type in a number of ways. He's more cerebral than muscular, he doesn't consider himself to be a natural hero and his bravery comes as a reaction to his circumstances. It was a hard line to walk to capture that without making him seem too reactionary or too much of a victim. I wanted him to still have some bite, some drive, because without it he couldn't propel the

story forward. He also needed to be a good match for Nell, the heroine, who is also facing some challenges of her own. She was just as difficult.

The easiest characters to write were either Old Tom the lighthouse keeper, who wasn't even in the book until about the fifth draft, or the ghosts. It was just so much fun to create the pantheon of crazed, homicidal, suicidal, maniacal spirits that are Quentin's ancestors. Not all of them made it into the book, which in some ways is heart wrenching, but I'm thinking some of them might deserve stories of their own.

Me: What are three words you would use to describe your novel?

CK: Romantic Spooky Fun

Me: What are your three tips that you would give to other writers?

CK: Writing and publishing that writing is a very personal journey so there is plenty of advice I could offer but I suppose it would break down to this.

1. **Cultivate patience** - Time is your friend. Writing takes time and good writing takes even more time. It is after all, essentially, a process of rewriting, editing and polishing as much as you can. There are also times when you need to put a manuscript in a drawer and walk away from it so that you give yourself and the story some breathing space. It's something I do quite often when writing film scripts and it always yields positive results. You can then return to the story with fresh eyes and see the things you need to work on clearly.
2. **Don't be afraid of failure** - I wrote my first book at eighteen. It was awful, and I mean completely appalling. I cringe every time I think of it. But through the process I learned so much. It gave me a manuscript of over 100,000 words so I knew I had the ability to sustain a work to the end. I knew I could actually finish a book and that gave me confidence. I had developed the habit of writing every day, but most of all I stepped closer to understanding who I was as a writer, and what I wanted to write. The success was in the process not the result. I ended up burning the manuscript and as soon as I'd doused the flames I sat back down at my desk and I started the next book.

3. Trust your instincts and write what you love.

You may or may not not have mass appeal but it's far better to write with passion than write what you think people want, or what you think will make you rich, than end up with something that is written to a formula and vacant of emotion. Writing can often be a very lonely experience and you'll also need that passion to see you through. And readers are smart, they can tell when a writer is holding back or is less than a 100% committed

Me: What are your future plans for novels, if any, that you can share with us readers?

CK: I always have plans more books as I'm always working on more than one thing at a time. I need variety in my work, both in content and format. It's why I write films as well as books.

Quentin Wallis was originally intended to stand alone but I've been totally bewitched. I have so much material that I just couldn't fit in that there will have to be a sequel. Maybe even two. I'll also be releasing the audio book soon which is very exciting.

As for books unrelated to QW there's a manuscript that I want to return to. I wrote it a few years ago but it's been sitting in a proverbial drawer since then. It's inspired by the savage grace of the Film Noir movies of the 30's and 40's and has a fabulously strong heroine. It's a toss up as to whether that or 'Death is a Drag', which is a very adult murder mystery set around a cabaret/drag club, will be looked at first.

Me: Where can readers connect with you and find your work online?

CK: My website ckmckenzie.net has the most comprehensive list of my work if people want to have a look at what else I've done. 'The Legendary Haunting of Quentin Wallis' has its own Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/The-Legendary-Haunting-of-Quentin-Wallis-911014655656680/>) but you'll also find me on Twitter (@CKMcTweet) and a few other

places. All the links are on my website. I love it when people connect and get in touch so please drop by and say Hi sometime.



Book Links:

Amazon US:

<http://www.amazon.com/Legendary-Haunting-Quentin-Wallis/dp/1518836003/>

Amazon UK:

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Legendary-Haunting-Quentin-Wallis/dp/1518836003/>

Barnes & Noble & Nook:

<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-legendary-haunting-of-quentin-wallis-ck-mckenzie/1122921218?ean=9781518836008>

Kobo:

<https://store.kobobooks.com/en-us/ebook/the-legendary-haunting-of-quentin-wallis>

Author Interview Questions with Rachel Van Dyken



Me: Can you briefly tell us readers what your novel, *Rip*, is about?

RVD: *Rip* is about a famous doctor who actually does dirty work for the Russian mafia, he has a very precise skill set. As a surgeon he's remarkable with his hands, but he also knows how to hypnotize people. The story begins with Mya a woman from his past seeking his help with her masters thesis, and he sees it as a chance to right a wrong, only she sees it as a prison.

Me: Who were your hardest characters to create and which ones were the easiest?

RVD: Mya was actually the most difficult, because I knew everything that was going on, but she didn't, so keeping her in the dark and keeping her reactions real was semi difficult for me. Nikolai's characters was the most fun because I felt like I was really able to let go and let him be dark, which is how I wanted him to come across.

Me: What are three words you would use to describe your novel?

RVD: Dark, Edgy, Romantic

Me: What are your three tips that you would give to other writers?

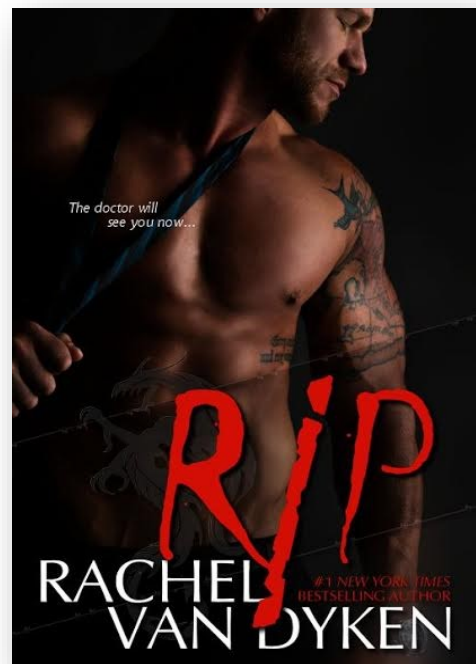
RVD: Keep writing! Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Don't give up.

Me: What are your future plans for novels, if any, that you can share with us readers?

RVD: I have 8 more books releasing in the next ten months which is sort of crazy! I also have all my books planned out through 2017, I have three new series I'm really excited to launch.

Me: Where can readers connect with you and find your work online?

RVD: I'm ALWAYS on Facebook, if they want to join my fan group I'm in there around 3-6 times a day Rachel's New Rocking Readers, they can also find me on Instagram @RachVD



Book Purchase Links:

Rip

iBooks: <http://apple.co/1h12TD1>

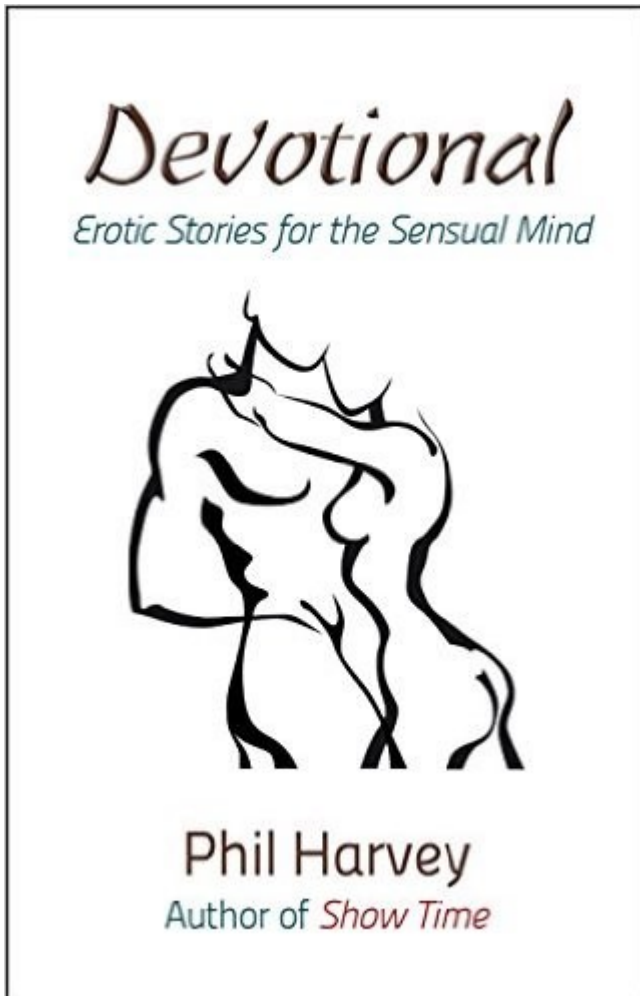
Amazon: <http://amzn.to/1HXkZwu>

Nook: <http://bit.ly/1MV66H5>

Rating: 5 stars

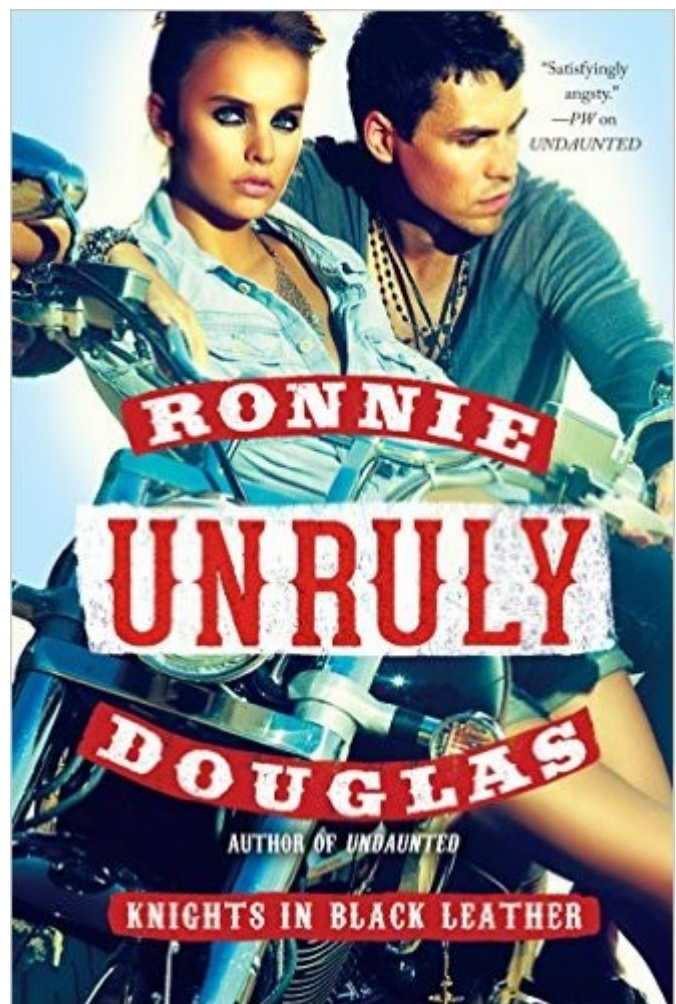
Review:

Phil Harvey's latest work, *Devotional*, is indeed an intriguing yet highly sensual read. Readers, such as adults, will enjoy reading this collection of fascinating stories. Each story has its own particular lure that will entice readers. I found this short masterpiece to be interesting, worldly and challenging in some ways. A well-written collection of fiction that will bring readers back every time. I enjoyed reading these and look forward to Phil Harvey's next brilliant piece. Overall, I highly recommend this to those eighteen and above.



Synopsis:

Award-winning author Phil Harvey is the president of Adam & Eve, one of the world's leading suppliers of sex toys, adult films, and condoms. Because a substantial amount of "the sex factory's" profits finance family planning worldwide, Mother Jones dubbed Harvey a "hard-core philanthropist." This collection from one of the most influential figures in the sex industry thrills readers with budding innocence, freeing adventures, and dangerous erotic games. The collection includes *Bait and Switch*, a tale of swapping that won the *Antietam Review's* literary award.



Synopsis:

The second novel in Ronnie Douglas' sexy Southern Wolves motorcycle club series—reminiscent of Kristen Ashley and Jay Crownover—tells the story of an aspiring fashion designer and a biker who discover a desire that knows no limits.

When the daughter of one of the Southern Wolves gets a flat in the middle of a thunderstorm, there's only one thing to do—strip down to her underwear and get a little muddy. But when Alamo, the sexy biker shows up to rescue Ellen yet again, things are bound to get a whole lot dirtier.

Between the trouble he left behind and club rules, Alamo knows he needs to stay clear of Ellen. He's not looking for a woman or complications—even when that woman is everything a man could want. Unfortunately, Ellen isn't playing by anyone's rules but her own these days and a Southern woman who's been raised by Wolves is awfully hard to deny.

So when they give in to their raging attraction, both get much more than they bargained for.

Rating: 5 stars

Review:

Unruly by Ronnie Douglas is hot, exciting, and packs a whole lot of trouble. A young woman soon finds herself attracted to an irresistible man. A man that completely unravels her like she does to him. Rules mean nothing to Ellen. She has her own that she creates...leaving one man falling for her harder than he wants ever intended. Alamo is a man with a past.

The kind of past that can bring in trouble faster than a blink of an eye. He doesn't want to start any kind of relationship that would endanger the woman he's grown in love with...yet somehow the past makes its way to us no matter how hard we try to avoid it.

When the time comes, can Alamo and Ellen survive it all?

Ronnie Douglas has created an entertaining romance that packs not only with heat but with adventure. Two characters with their own stuff to handle and then somehow fate brings them together. But it takes a lot more than a fire hot attraction to beat all the odds. Tough, dark and edgy is exactly what readers get when reading this well-developed novel. *Unruly* is the first novel I have read by Ronnie Douglas, and I look forward to reading more by her in the future. Ronnie Douglas has a talent for creating believable characters that will forever lure readers to their world. Danger, romance, and suspense all hang in the air. I enjoyed reading this stunning well-written piece. Overall, I highly recommend it to readers worldwide.



Synopsis:

In this insightful and compelling story from book club favorite Susan Mallery, three close friends test the boundaries of how much a woman can give before she has nothing left .

After five years as a stay-at-home mom, Gabby Schaefer can't wait to return to work. Oh, to use the bathroom in peace! No twins clamoring at the door, no husband barging in, no stepdaughter throwing a tantrum. But when her plans are derailed by some shocking news and her husband's crushing expectations, Gabby must fight for the right to have a life of her own.

Getting pregnant is easy for Hayley Batchelor. Staying pregnant is the hard part. Her husband is worried about the expensive fertility treatments and frantic about the threat to her health. But to Hayley, a woman who was born to be a mom should risk everything to fulfill her destiny—no matter how high the cost. Nicole Lord is still shell-shocked by a divorce that wasn't as painful as it should've been. Other than the son they share, her ex-husband left barely a ripple in her life. A great new guy tempts her to believe maybe the second time's the charm...but how can she trust herself to recognize true love?

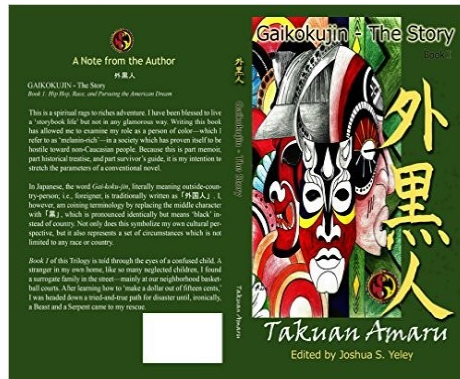
As their bonds of friendship deepen against the beautiful backdrop of Mischief Bay, Gabby, Hayley and Nicole will rely on good food, good wine and especially each other to navigate life's toughest changes.

Rating: 5 stars

Review:

The Friends We Keep by Susan Mallery is heart melting and addictive. Every single novel of hers lures readers in like a moth to a flame. Readers can't avoid an irresistible story and that's exactly what *The Friends We Keep* is. Emotionally readers can easily attach themselves to Susan Mallery's characters. Especially to Gabby and her step-daughter. Teen pregnancy is hard to deal with and when the young father leaves everything about the young step-daughter's life seems to crash. At first, we can feel and understand Gabby's angry at first and then, later, on it blooms into something else. Family life is the strongest theme, within this novel. Friendships that we keep is another strong theme that readers

love. When life comes crumbling downward...our friends are there to pick us back up. When life comes crumbling downward...our friends are there to pick us back up. I felt my heart tug with sympathy, understanding, and love as the plot moved forward. A steady paced read that reader's won't be able to release anything soon. Susan Mallery is a talented writer by all means. She never disappoints her readers. It's incredible at how every novel she writes ...she takes a piece of us readers with her. The characters will have you crying, laughing, and falling in love. The plot will keep you up all night long reading until the book is finished. The plot is juicy with trouble, drama, and sacrifices that have to be made. *The Friends We Keep* is just another brilliantly well-written story that all readers must add to their collection. Susan Mallery has done it again in creating another heart-pounding loveable read that readers won't be forgetting. Overall, I highly recommend this romantic sweet story to readers everywhere.



Synopsis:

外黒人 is a spiritual rag, to riches adventure. I have been blessed to live a ‘storybook life’ but not in any glamorous way. Writing this book has allowed me to examine my role as a person of color—which I refer to as ‘melanin-rich’—in a society which has proven itself to be hostile toward non-Caucasian people. Because this is part memoir, part historical treatise, and part survivor’s guide, it is my intention to stretch the parameters of a conventional novel.

In Japanese, the word Gai-koku-jin, literally meaning outside-country-person; i.e. the foreigner, is traditionally written as 「外国人」. I, however, am coining terminology by replacing the middle character with 「黒」, which is pronounced identically but means ‘black’ instead of country. Not only does this symbolize my own cultural perspective, but it also repre-

sents a set of circumstances which is not limited to any race or country.

Book 1 of this trilogy is told through the eyes of a confused child. A stranger in my own home, like so many neglected children, I found a surrogate family in the street—mainly at our neighborhood basketball courts. After learning how to ‘make a dollar out of fifteen cents,’ I was headed down a tried-and-true path for disaster until, ironically, a Beast and a Serpent came to my rescue.

Rating: 5 stars

Review:

Gaikokujin-The Story by Takuan Amarn is one powerfully yet captivating story. A novel like this is a must read. Takuan Amarn gives his readers a story rich in culture, history, and philosophy. His characters give readers a show not tell, version of life and how society operates. Society doesn't always operate in a way to benefit all people. Those of color and gender were mistreated in ways none of us can expect. That and the issues of poverty didn't help these groups much either.

Gaikokujin - The Story is told by the Taknan Amarn's point of view. His fictional world allows readers to see a side of the world most of us choose to ignore. Society's norms take control of us like the Devil having complete control over what we say or do. Readers will follow a survivor's journey through these troubling times. A refreshing and symbolic novel that readers will enjoy reading. I look forward to reading more by this talented writer and highly recommend his novel to readers world-wide. *Gaikokujin - The Story* is the story readers won't want to miss. Absolutely inspiring...and suspenseful.

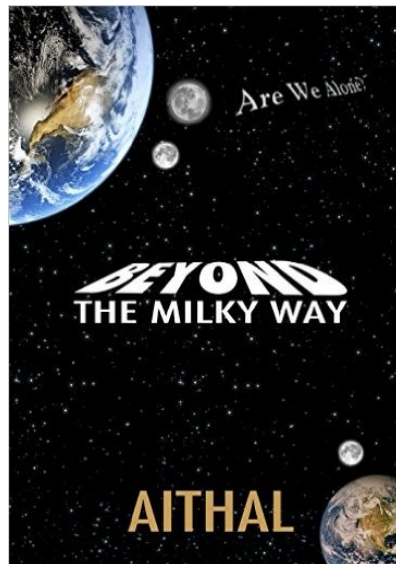
Synopsis:

Are we alone?

Three astronauts go to space in search of a planet that probably has water—one of the basic elements for humanity to survive. Do they find it? What else do they find? They encounter something—something strange—beyond their wildest imaginations, and their mission-to-explore becomes a mission-to-survive.

They experience something that makes them question their beliefs.

All the things they had taken for granted, everything they had seen



and learned, don't seem to apply any longer.

Something happens along the way that makes them yearn to come back to Earth. After all, home is where the heart is.

This is not just another science fiction. Rather, it will make you question your own beliefs—may they be scientific, religious, political, or something else.

In the first installment of The Galaxy Series, find out about the strange world they discover.

Rating: 5 stars

Review:

Beyond the Milky Way by Aithal is a stunning masterpiece. Readers will love this novel. It begins with an adventure that will leave readers questioning everything they know. *Beyond the Milky Way* is not a science fiction fantasy novel but one that instantly pulls readers in from the first page until the last. Readers won't be released from this creative yet brilliantly well-written story until they reach the ending. Three brave individuals dare to go on a mission that no other has been on before. Now, they are tested and their understanding, as well as their feelings, will have forever changed by the time they reach home if they do get back.

Aithal has woven a thought-provoking novel. One that readers will be remembering for a long time. The good news is that he has more novels after this one to satisfy the thirst for more adventure. Readers will be awed and speechless as they keep turning the pages. This is indeed one action and a thrill ride that readers won't want to miss. Overall, I highly recommend reading, *Beyond the Milky Way*, to readers everywhere.



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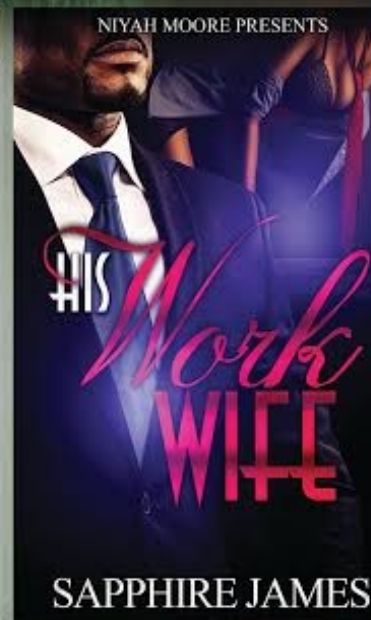
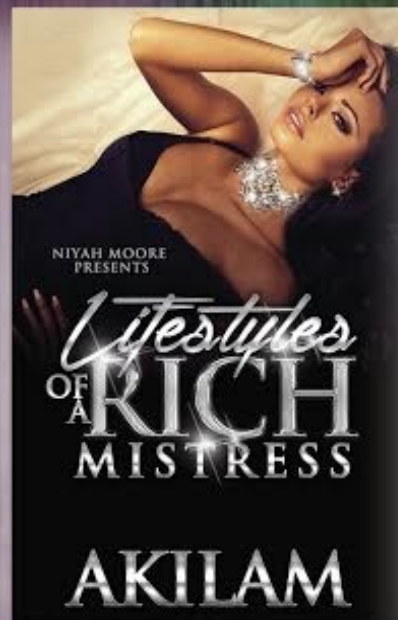
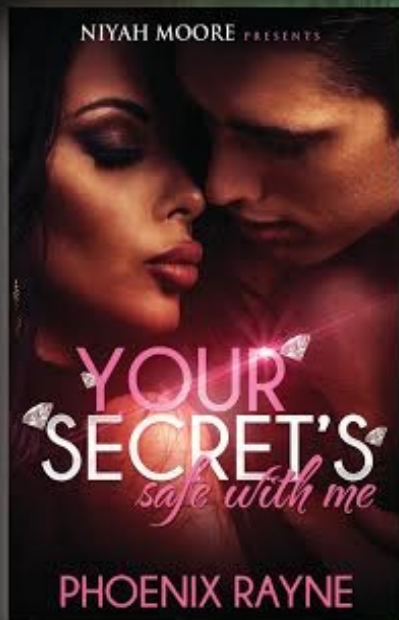


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Thunderstorm Synopsis:



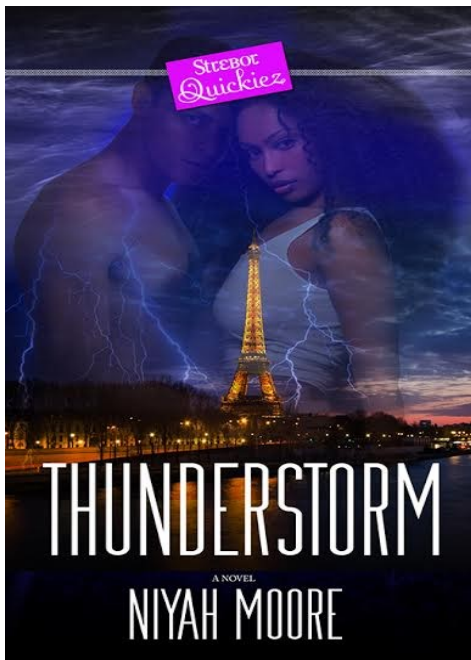
Niyah Moore

My Book Thunderstorm is releasing March 29, 2016

The Ultimate Niyah Moore Collection is Available Now! Get ten books for one price on Amazon.

www.niyahmoore.com

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter: @NiyahMoore



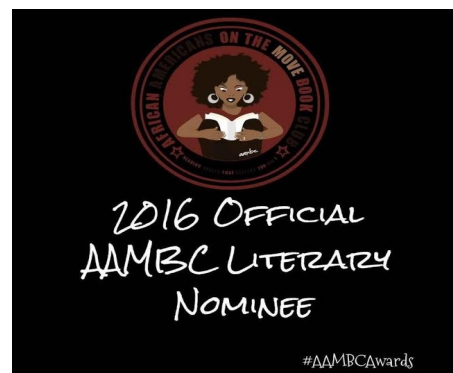
Vampires explore their inhibitions in the Red Light District in this enticingly erotic sequel to *Pigalle Palace*.

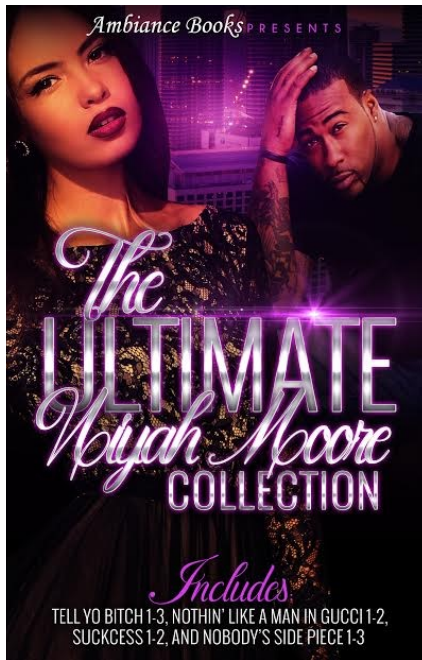
Now that Rain is the King of Pigalle Palace, Claude Parish, the new leader of the Ravens, wants to overthrow him and free the Red Light District from restrictions. Rain, disgusted by the Ravens' ruthless predilection for hunting and killing humans, must devise a plan to stop them.

Without Club Vaisseau to run, Azura is bored. She ignores her brother's orders to stay away and lands herself in a dangerous position when irresistible Claude wants her to himself. Will she be able to escape?

Legend cannot ignore the call of a vampire who invades his sleep night after night. Tempted by their growing connection, he sets out on a journey to discover who she is and why she haunts him all the way from the Caribbean.

Ulysses has grown into a man, and his insatiable desire for sex and beautiful women is getting wilder. Just when he plans to turn the Château into his personal love den, Rain brings his antics to a halt, reminding Ulysses that one day he, too, will be King. But when Ulysses travels to Paris to find a female mortal who has piqued his interest, he discovers his powerful potential far exceeds becoming King. Fueled by desire for his latest intriguing conquest, will he forsake the kingdom?





Niyah Moore

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Facebook, Instagram, Twitter: @NiyahMoore

Get ten Amazon Urban Bestsellers for one price!

#1 Amazon Urban Bestseller TELL YO BITCH SERIES

Three women have one thing in common, Rocko Prince Cooper, and aren't too thrilled once they find out about one another. Troi, Heather, and Mai have to make critical choices that will change the rest of their lives. Heather and Mai already have his children, one boy and one girl. Troi has discovered that she, too, is expecting. Though she is the only one wearing the ring, she feels she's in the worst position by being the third baby

mama. Just when things seem as if it can't get any worse, more of Rocko's secrets start unraveling.

What these women don't know is that while they're fighting each other, Rocko is in his own trouble with some old running buddies. Ever since the Greg Young murder, everyone has been pointing the finger at Rocko. Trying to stay out of prison, he tries to keep his women out of harm's way, as well. Only, his way starts making things much worse. The one thing everybody wants from Rocko is for him to be honest and tell the truth.

#3 Amazon Urban / Romance Bestseller SUCKCESS SERIES

Silas Ali, Mechad Williams, and Sergio Stefani enjoy living in the lap of luxury. They surround themselves with plenty of beautiful women in this erotic tale. Once Silas discovers his girlfriend is married with a child, he vows to never love again until he meets sexy R&B singing sensation, Stace Brooks. Regardless of Stace's reputation for sleeping with everybody in the industry, he falls in love with her anyway. Tabloid rumors threaten to ruin their short-lived romance. As a rebound, he dives head first into a marriage with Jade, who seems to be more like an obsessed fan.

Mechad's relationship with his college girlfriend, Tanya, is under pressure because she wants to get married, but he's not ready. When her ex-boyfriend comes to town and spends the time Mechad can't make, he ends up sleeping with his gorgeous secretary.

Sergio is a divorced single father, making millions. He is proud of being apart of his own Mile High Club, expending women the way he does money. That is until a curvy stewardess, Blair, makes him throw

down his player card for good. But, her gold-digging ways and scandals are exploited by his ex-wife who is still madly in love with him.

#1 Amazon Urban Bestseller NOBODY'S SIDE PIECE SERIES

Mylah is so in love with Romello that she never expects him to cheat on her. Regardless of what the streets say, she trusts him. She ain't nobody's side piece and he would be crazy to mess up what they got going. Romello is so concerned with taking over the whole TL region, that he doesn't realize just how much Mylah is onto his every move. Not only does she find a way to get revenge on him for cheating, but she hits him with another fatal surprise. Sleeping with the enemy has never been so sweet.

#15 Amazon Urban Bestseller NOTHIN' LIKE A MAN IN GUCCI SERIES

Soraya is tired of the dating scene, finding love in the club just isn't going to cut it anymore and her roommate, Kaeja, is tired of hearing her complain. Soraya decides to find love online since she read that thousands of women end up finding true love online, but the fact that others doesn't, scares her. Just when Soraya thinks that spending hours online looking for Mr. Right is a complete waste of time, she finds LoyalMan90's profile. Looking at his hazel eyes in his pictures makes her fall for him instantly. One single message changes her life.

While she hopes that his profile isn't a 'Catfish situation', she happens to see him at a concert at the House of Blues in West Hollywood dressed down in Gucci. After she introduces herself to Kyree, she finds him to be charming, funny, and their

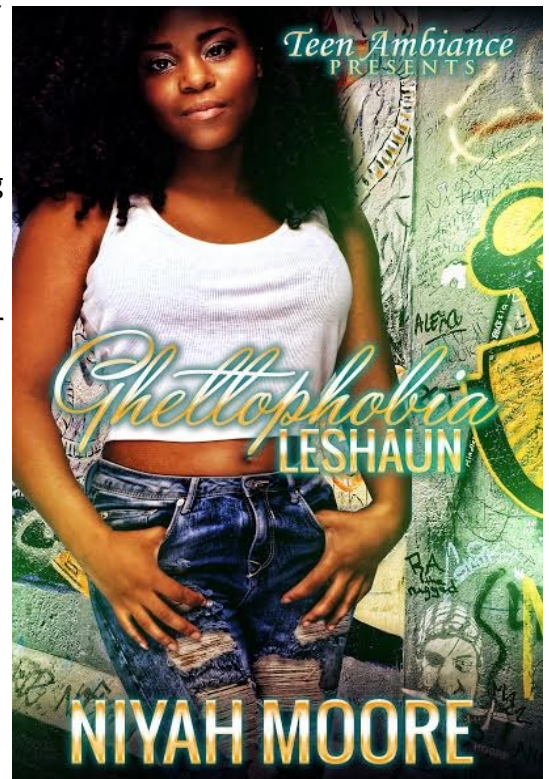


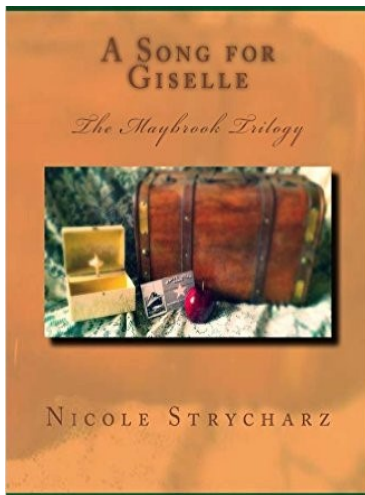
Teen Ambiance

First book to release is Ghetto-phobia!

Synopsis:

Lashaun is a sassy and intelligent tenth-grade girl in Queens who lives in the projects with hopes of not becoming a product of her environment. She wants to be a famous R & B singer so bad to escape from the street-corner life her best friend, Bree, and family seems content with. While Lashaun doesn't care about boys, her bestie is hot as a firecracker, loves money, and always looking to get it poppin'. While Bree is fascinated with the drug dealer lifestyle their brothers live, Lashaun detests it. She doesn't want to be caught up in the life that surrounds her even though it's tempting. Just when she's used to her daily routines, seventeen-year-old Davion comes into the picture and changes everything. Since she's never had a boyfriend before, she's not sure how to act, but he's not the average cutie from around the way. He has goals, dreams, and aspirations. With him, she not only realizes that she's feeling him, but she also finds that he can actually help make her dreams come true.





Synopsis:

Giselle Johnson is a performer at one of the most famed cabarets in Paris, The Moulin Rouge. Grief drove her from her home in Maybrook, Pennsylvania years ago but now dark secrets from her recent past are driving her home again. Giselle never plans too far ahead due to life's constant way of changing. However, coincidence defies the odds when she is thrown into the path of a handsome stranger again and again and planning becomes her only means of getting home. The first-class ticket she purchased for the RMS Titanic was supposed to be the ship of dreams meant to carry her home to what is left of her family. But it soon becomes her ship of nightmares that only this new stranger can wake her from. Her troubles are far from over when she finally makes it to Maybrook. Her brother-in-law August, is skeptical and not at

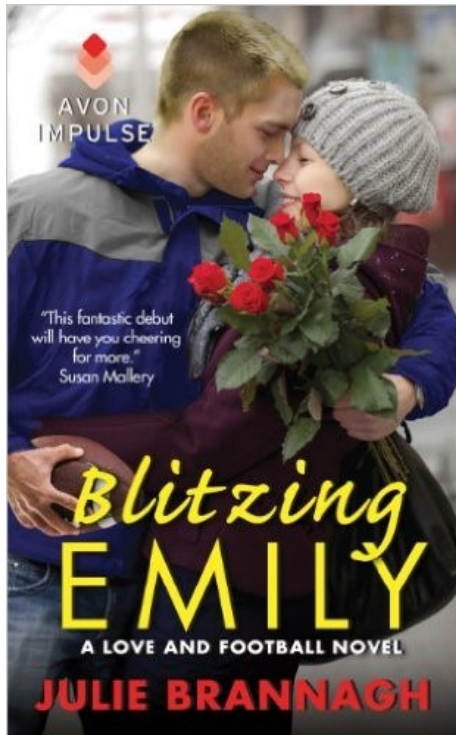
all trusting and the town's inability to warm up to her slightly rebellious and unconventional spirit makes staying seem almost impossible. All the while she is falling for her stranger more and more every day but both of their pasts could be their biggest obstetrical yet.

Phillip Fisher had all going well for him. He had a booming career in Germany, women, wealth and now he is coming home to New York after five years away to start a new chapter of greatness. His parents are to the brim with pride over his new opportunity to work closer to home and perhaps settle but Phillip's rogue heart is impossible to satisfy with domestic, cookie cutter like women. He finds himself enthralled with a lovely unknown lady that seems determined to avoid his charms. Until they find themselves in the middle of the same tragic disaster on their voyage home but when Phillip takes a hit to the head that leaves him without a memory he follows his heart's desire to be loyal to the showgirl that is now far from a stranger.

Rating: 5 stars

Review:

A Song for Giselle by Nicole Strycharz is indeed a must read for all. This romance novel will leave readers laughing, falling in love, and held in suspense...Page after page, readers are intrigued. The events feel like moments suspended in time that we get to relive. One man's determination to go after the one woman who doesn't want him is hilarious. She quickly leaves him and before they both know it...are brought face-to-face multiple times as their journeys unfold. Fate has a way of showing us what we can't realize...sometimes love is staring us in the face. Inside *A Song for Giselle*, two characters from opposite ends of the social ladder are thrust together. Both have their own struggles and life's curveballs tossed their way...yet somehow these two individuals find each other again and again. I absolutely loved how Nicole Strycharz brilliantly weaves their lives so close together... Neither one is perfect...Both have dark pasts...secrets even. We all know secrets don't stay hidden long. . She's now my new favorite. Anyone who is a fan of historical events and romance will want to read this. Overall, this is a story reader will love and won't place down until every page has been read.



Synopsis:

All's fair in Love and Football . . .

Emily Hamilton doesn't trust men. She's much more comfortable playing the romantic lead in front of a packed house onstage than in her own life. So when NFL star and alluring ladies' man Brandon McKenna acts as her personal white knight, she has no illusions that he'll stick around. However, a misunderstanding with the press throws them together in a fake engagement that yields unexpected (and breathtaking) benefits.

Every time Brandon calls her "Sugar," Emily almost believes he's playing for keeps—not just to

score. Can she let down her defenses and get her own happily ever after?

Rating: 5 stars

Review:

Blitzing Emily by Julie Brannagh is incredible. A sexy hot romantic read. Inside this story, Julie Brannagh has brought together two unlikely characters, a disaster that brings them into each other's lives...and a chemistry that is undeniable...

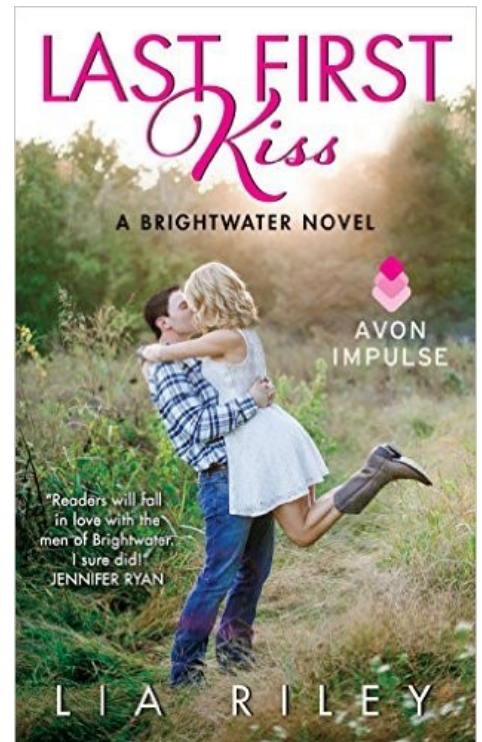
At first, neither character wanted what happened to them...but then somehow it benefited them in a way and not too long afterward they begin to fall deep.

A football star who is anything but the typical jock and a woman who redefines confidence. Both characters will leave readers breathlessly in love. The plot is fantastic.

Steady-paced and well-developed. Julie Brannagh's talent is worth reading every word on every page.

Blitzing Emily is a romance novel that I highly recommend to readers everywhere. The drama, heat, and love is powerfully written by an amazing writer. I look forward

to reading more of Julie Brannagh's novel in the future.



Synopsis:

A kiss is just the beginning...

Pinterest Perfect. Or so Annie Carson's life appears on her popular blog. Reality is ... messier. Especially when it lands her back in one-cow town Brightwater, California, and back in the path of the gorgeous six-foot-four reason she left. Sawyer Kane may fill out those Wranglers, but she won't be distracted from her task. Annie just needs the summer to spruce up and sell her family's farm so she and her young son can start a new life in the big city.

Simple, easy, perfect. Sawyer has always regretted letting the first girl he loved slip away. He won't make the same mistake twice, but can he convince beautiful, wary Annie to trust her heart again when she's been given every reason not to? And as a single kiss turns to so much more, can Annie give up her idea of perfect for a forever that's blissfully real?

Rating: 5 stars

Review:

Last First Kiss by Lia Riley is hot, sugar sweet and super messy. Readers will fall in love with the characters instantly. The plot itself wraps its way onto readers hearts and never let's go.

Lia Riley's hot steamy romance is one that should be read over and over again. It's hard not to love everything about this brilliantly well-written story. Emotional attachments are messy especially when it's the reason one woman left her hometown and never came back until now... *Last First Kiss* is enticing...the sparks are hotter than coals on a fiery grill. One man let his only love slip away...but now that she's back, he's going to work on keeping her

forever. But can he convince her to stay? Readers will be laughing throughout this entertaining read and never put it down. Once you read Lia Riley's latest romance, you can't stop until you have read every last page. Overall, I highly recommend this sexy read to readers everywhere.

MARCH MADNESS CONTEST

In March, we will be hosting a March Madness Free Writing Contest.

1st round - will consist of writers doing a flash fiction piece (500-1,000 words).

2nd round - will consist of writers doing a short story (2 pages).

3rd round - will consist of writers doing a short memoir (2 pages).

4th round - will consist of writers doing a fiction (inspirational) piece (2 pages).

Winner of the last round will be declared the **Best Writer of 2016**. Each contestant will win a digital seal for each round they make it to...

All writings will be featured inside of the Urban Lit Magazine.

Digital seals, ratings, and feedback will be given to every writer who makes each round. All writers will be featured in the March Issue. If interested in signing up, please email us at: urbanlitmagazine@gmail.com.

Thank you!

POETRY CONTEST

Also, in March, we will be hosting a free poetry contest. There will be 3 rounds of writing involved. Each round will consist of poets writing a different kind of poem on a specific topic.

Winners for each round will receive a digital seal, a rating, and feedback.

All poetry from each round will be featured inside of the Urban Lit Magazine.

If you are interested in signing up, please email us at: urbanlitmagazine@gmail.com

CHILDREN'S CONTEST

In April, we will be hosting a Children's Writing Contest.

1st round—consist of writers writing a 3 page funny children's story. Writers will have 6 days to write and submit their pieces in to be judged. Judges will then choose the top 5 to move onto the next round.

2nd round— consist of writers writing an adventure children's story. Writers will have 3 days to write and submit their pieces in to be judged. Judges will then choose the top 3 writers to move onto the next round.

3rd round— consist of writers writing an educational children's story. Writers will have 24 hours to turn in their pieces to be judged. Judges will then choose the final winner.

Each contestant will receive free publication of their writing inside of our magazine issue for a one time publication as well as a digital seal for each round they made it to. The winner will have an interview featured as well as the winning digital seal for the Children's Fiction Writing Contest 2016.

If you are interested in signing up, please email us at: urbanlitmagazine@gmail.com.

MEMOIR WRITING CONTEST

In May, we will be hosting a Memoir Writing Contest.

In this contest, writers will be required to write a five page memoir. Writers will have 1 week to write and submit their memoir to be judged. Judges will then choose the winning memoir.

The winning memoir will be featured inside of our issue along with the author's interview. Winner will receive a digital seal for Best Memoir 2016.

If interested in signing up for the contest, please email: urbanlitmagazine@gmail.com.



MY HEART IS IN YOUR HANDS

By Paul Fitzgerald

I don't know when George changed. For that matter, I don't know when I changed and stopped loving him.

When we first met I was no older than thirteen years of age. He was a year older than me but we found ourselves in the same class because he was held back a year. He was brooding and troubled and gorgeous. And I wanted him more than I had ever wanted anything before.

It took two years before George even noticed me. But when he finally did I simply melted away in his arms and allowed him to take me, body and soul. It was like a dream come true for those first few months we were dating. Even at the tender age of fifteen as I lay beside him in bed I knew that this was going to be the man I would spend the rest of my days with. I had only really started living when he came into my life and the prospect of a life without him just did not seem like a life worth living. That was about seven years ago. Although seven years may as well be a hundred where foolish youth is concerned.

I can remember the first time he hit me but, oddly enough, I cannot remember for the life of me what had happened prior to it. I think that we were arguing. I think I may have started it. I know that once it happened and the shock and disbelief had faded away I sat and cried in the bathroom. I wept not because it hurt, but because I blamed myself for it. Somehow his act of violence and aggression towards me was my fault. I was too needy. I was too demanding of his openness and affection. I knew what he was like, but I still pushed him and now look at what I had made him do.

Of course he apologized soon after for his outburst once his rage had worn off. And I could not help but turn to mush once more at the sight of his entirely

broken spirit and lethargic demeanor. I held him close to my bosom as he wept and profusely swore that this would never happen again. In return, I gave him every comfort and assurance I knew how to that I believed him and I was not going anywhere.

The next time he hit me was a few months later when he had been suffering from a deep depression that scared me. I feared not for myself, but for George and what he may do to himself. I tried my best to cheer him up by offering him treats, levity, and any sort of sexual favors that tickled his fancy. After he'd hit me several times and demanded I leave him alone and stop looking at him with such pity he stepped away before returning in the same, depressed state he had before. The apologies came once more, this time accompanied by promises to get help. I assured him as any dutiful significant other would. But I was wary now of how his promises were fleeting.

It may sound odd for me to say, but it was not the physical violence that ever bothered me. I could honestly live with the beatings, slaps, and physical outbursts of anger. It was the things he would say that cut me the deepest. And it was the fact that such fury at all existed within him towards me when I only loved him more than anything.

I moved in with George the summer after graduation. We moved into an apartment that his father had sublet to us. And the prospect of living with George still elated me. Rather than fearing living alone with him I was truly looking forward to beginning a life spent together despite the turbulence that was now familiar to our relationship. I thought of it as a fresh start.

On the third week of moving in George's paranoia started. He became suddenly very possessive of me. Every man who looked at me became a potential lover of mine in his eyes right down to the little gay guy I worked with at the supermarket. And before I

knew it, it became too much to argue with him about it and I found myself confessing to affairs I'd never had just so that he would stop yelling "slut" at me and being so hurtful in his accusations of my supposed betrayal to him.

"I don't want to live without you," he said to me as he knelt down next to me after the worst beating he had ever given. "I can't live without you... But when you do these things you give me no other choice. You are mine...And that's all there is to it."

I ended up quitting my job at the supermarket and taking a job that I could do from home over the telephone. The money was better, but more importantly I didn't have to hide my bruises or worry about George thinking I was sleeping with some guy at work when I was at home all day by my lonesome. I just never left the house and hoped that things would become easier. But they never did.

When George enrolled in the army I didn't really know how to react. I did not know if I was supposed to object due to concern for him or be giddy with excitement for him. I chose the latter reaction because I remembered how he had always talked about signing up and being a real he-man all around. Thankfully, this was the reaction he had wanted.

"We begin training in three weeks," George said.

"We?" I inquired, all of a sudden nervous I'd find myself signed up as well.

"Yeah," he replied. "Dennis and I signed up together."

I always liked Dennis. He was really ever the only one of George's friends that I approved of, although I never dared let on to George I felt this way. Dennis was also the only one of George's friends who had consistently been mature and kind to me.

George and Dennis went off to boot camp for a few months. And for the first few weeks I remained isolated within our apartment. I was deeply depressed and

found myself unable to get out of bed most days. I don't think it was the isolation or the fact that George was gone that had me feeling so emotionally distraught. Instead it was the fact that George was gone and I didn't miss him that had me plagued with guilt and a complete and utter sense of being lost. George was all I'd ever envisioned in my future. I had laid all my hopes and dreams upon him since I was fifteen years old. I had no back up plans. And now here I was, stuck in a life with him I could no longer handle.

It was about the third week they were gone that I received the first letter from Dennis. It was a kind and sweet letter that brought tender warmth to me that I don't think I had ever felt from George before. And it wasn't that within that first letter there was anything of the romantic persuasion said rather it was just the kindness and caring of someone who was interested in me; in being a friend to me and of comfort to me. That was something I had never really gotten from George. I had always been George's friend; I don't know that he was ever mine.

As the weeks passed it seemed that every other day I was receiving a letter from Dennis. Soon I found myself looking forward to receiving each new letter. The sense of happiness and peace to my mundane existence that came with those letters was accompanied by a sense of guilt, however. George was always so fearful of me becoming infatuated in somebody else. And now, here I was, falling in love with his best friend; the same best friend he had enrolled with and been friends with since he was no more than six.

As much as I wanted to write back to Dennis and tell him that we could never be more than friends, I couldn't. I would look around that depressing apartment and in every corner I would see a fight George and I had had or another place where I had crawled to the safety of the bathroom after a fierce beating.

I thought of how unbearable my life with George had become and how badly he had treated me. And because of this I could not tell Dennis to stay away. Besides, I wasn't even sure if the sweetness that Dennis was showing to me in those letters reflected anything in the realm of romantic love. I had only ever known George's way of showing affection and indeed any kindness from another man was foreign to me.

In all Dennis sent me forty-eight letters before the end of boot camp rolled around. In that time I had enough time to think about exactly what I was going to do when George and Dennis returned. The answer came so easily for me. The fact of the matter was I didn't know if I was even going to end up romantically involved with Dennis or that he even wanted to. I didn't know what I felt or what the future held for me. The only thing I was sure of was that the future I now desired could not be one spent with George. I deserved better. I needed better. And so when he returned, I would leave him.

I had my bags all packed up when he arrived home and a taxi already on its way. I hoped that Dennis would perhaps be with him to make my leaving easier by being able to handle George. I had withdrawn the money which was mine from our joint account and thought that perhaps I would book a room in a motel just outside of town at least until I had gotten everything I needed to in order.

George entered through the front door and I heard him close the door behind him. He stood in silence for what felt like hours before I could hear the slow clunking sound of his army boots against the wood floor. He rounded the corner with his hands behind his back, smirking at me in the darkness of the hallway.

"Hi sweetheart," he said flatly.

My mouth went dry and I felt my arms begin to shake with anticipation and dread. I had prepared myself to leave him and convinced myself it was best. But now

that he stood in front of me again I felt a flood of old feelings for him rise up within me and the prospect of just how much bigger and physically stronger he was than I was became, once again, a shattering reality.

He walked slowly towards me, keeping his hands behind his back. As his face came into view by the lamplight of the lamp lit beside me I could see that there was something utterly unfamiliar about him. It was in his expression. He still looked like George, it was true. But there was a vacancy in his expression that gave me an odd chill all over my body as if I had seen a ghost. For a moment I thought it must just have been that he was tired and that the labors of boot camp had worn him out. It must have been grueling after all.

"George," I began, "I have something to t-"

"I've got something for you," he said, a devilous glimmer in his eye that gave me pause.

His left hand slowly came out from behind his back and his hand reached out in front of him in my direction. A crumpled piece of paper was clasped between his fingertips.

"W-What's that?" I asked with an uncontrollable quiver in my voice.

His smirk began to grow into an almost cartoonish grin of delight which I had never seen from George before. And he simply waved the piece of paper slowly back and forth in front of him.

I stood up from my seat, suddenly feeling lightheaded. I steadied myself and swallowed up all the courage I could and made my way swiftly towards him and swiped the paper from his hand. As I folded out the creases of the crumpled paper I could see that it was a letter inscribed to me. I began to read it when George spoke up.

"Read it out loud," he sternly demanded.

I swallowed and began to read it aloud.

“Sweetheart,” I read, “I will be coming home this coming week and think it is time that I was honest with you.”

I recognized the handwriting; it was Dennis’s. I looked up from the letter to George whose grin was now replaced by an intense gaze that seemed to burn through me and into the wall behind me.

“Go on!” he suddenly hollered.

“I love you,” I continued. “I’ve always loved you since the first time George introduced us. I would have offered my love to you then but you were only interested in George. But George is not good enough for you. He doesn’t treat you as you should be treated or as I would treat you. If you choose to love me who I suspect you do, I will offer you the entire world. My heart is in your hands. With love, Dennis.”

As I looked up George slowly took his right hand out from behind his back and outstretched it towards me. In this hand was a small, cardboard box with a ratty ribbon tied on top.

“G-George,” I stammered, trying to calm his anger I suspected must have been rising and explain things rationally to him.

“This is for you,” he calmly spoke.

I stared at the box, unsure what was in it but terrified to find out.

“Take it,” George said.

I didn’t flinch.

“Take it!” he screamed angrily.

I reached out and quickly took the box. As I did I realized that the bottom of the box was very damp and almost coming apart.

“Open it, sweetheart,” George snarled with sarcasm.

With my hands shaking I began to undo the ratty ribbon. When I finally did I found myself unable

to actually open the lid of the box.

“W-what...What is t-this?” I said through the tremors of fright that now shook throughout my entire body.

George walked slowly towards me and circled me so that he was now behind me. He reached one arm around me and grasped me tightly at the waste. I could feel his hot breathe against my ear as his leaned in close and began to whisper.

“Well,” he whispered, “It’s exactly what Dennis promised you, sweetheart; his heart is in your hands.”

WRITING PROMPTS

A man is driving at night, when suddenly something hits his car and veers it off the road. Having hit his head he loses unconsciousness. Next thing he knows there’s a huge wolf laying beside him on a bed. Darkness once more takes him out. When he wakes up again, there is a woman setting the fire in the fireplace. Who was she and how did he get here?

Lia was out partying with her high school friends, when a rocket of gun shots goes off. Everyone is screaming and Lia is bleeding. Darkness comes...but before she falls into it, an unmasked man watches as she dies...his face will forever be stuck in her mind, if only she had survived...

Two weeks later...Lia wakes up in a hospital. FBI are guarding her room and her parents and two agents question her. They nab her memory of the unmasked man...before any of them know it... gun shots go off and it’s the start of Deja vu all over again.. But wil she and her family stay alive? Or die?

Author Interview with Darick Spears

Me: What inspired you to write, Sex Tells?

To be honest, one day I was sitting around and I was really horny. So, I began fantasizing about episodes in my life. I began to write a story, and by the end of the week I had about 5 chapters. What really inspired me, was when I let one of my lady friends read it. An hour after giving it to her, she was asking me for more chapters. That's when I got to thinking that maybe I was on to something. So, I decided to write a full book, and self-publish it. Now, I'm here to share it with the world, and hope they have the same reaction everyone has had so far after reading it. They all ask for the next book.

Me: When you say your book is semi-autobiographical do you mean part of it is a memoir and part of it is made up?

Yes this book is definitely a piece of my memoir. I can't make up stories about other people's lives. I feel like I have been through so much, that my own story is the most interesting. A lot of people live vicariously through others, and I have taken on the burden of speaking for others in my situations.

Me: What was the hardest part in writing this book of yours?

The toughest part was keeping myself from getting horny (lol). I mean when you dive deep into your own mind, life, and past situations; sometimes you find yourself back in the room when things took place. Also, when things get to flowing, you have to make sure you gather all the info, make it cohesive, and change names. In the streets, I was always taught, that dropping names is like snitching. So, when I write about my life experiences. I give other characters different names. Also, I was raised in the church and am still a strong Christ follower. But in the church a lot of our "true stories" are not told. I have no shame about mines. The first time I ever got a hand job was as a teenager in the basement of a church. I mean it is more stories that happen in the church than in the streets. This is what makes my writings and music so special and different, because I'm not telling you a story of a thug, a pimp, or drug dealer. Rather I'm telling the story of a man of God who goes through trials and tribulations, while trying to walk a straight path. I say "A man of God," because I try to walk a righteous path, not a devilish one. But the slips and falls are always near.

Me: What other books have you written before this one?

I have a book that was released in May of 2015. It is called The Diary of a Stay-At-Home Dad: My Journal Behind Bars. It was an Amazon Best Seller. And it was also auto-biographical. It deals with myself as a father, raising my 3 daughters. Also, included is my struggle dealing with my oldest daughter, who is Autistic. It dives into the everyday struggles of a father who wants nothing but the best for his girls. Back in the day, it was the women who stayed at home raising the children. On the contrary, now many men are the one's who are raising the kids at home, and I think it's refreshing to hear a man's perspective.

Me: What is your advice to other writers, who follow suit in writing similar semi-autobiographies like yours?

My advice to other writers, is to create your own style of writing, and not be afraid to really show yourself in your book. The things you try to hide, can be something that can help other folks in their walks. Don't glorify your wrongs, but don't be afraid to tell it like it is. Be yourself, believe in yourself, and you can not go wrong.

Me: In the end of your book you have mentioned another book, part 2 coming out soon. Can you share with us readers what this new book will be about and when to expect its release?

Yes I have already began the Sequel to Sex Tells. This is not just a story about Sex. It is my experiences with Sex and Spirituality. We have this flesh that wants to be pleased, and the spiritual part of us must be nourished by our religious following. But sometimes it becomes a problem when we find ourselves pleasing the flesh. I fell into so many laps, and beds; which almost had me losing my own life over serious drama. I escaped a lot of dangerous situations, and God allowed me to tell my stories, to not get my own glory; but to give him the glory for his grace and his forgiveness. I really want to people to feel me in this book. It is like opening a graphic rap album, that describes the conditions of the real world, with a dosage of advice and spirituality. My goals in the future is to turn this book into a TV show, and then a movie. Sex Tells 2: Pandora Box, will be full of sex, violence, redemption, and much more.

Me: How did you come about writing books? Was it always your intention to become a writer?

I have always found writing as a form of therapy. Coming from the ghetto, it was always uncommon for a person just to walk around the block telling you how they truly felt inside. So, at a young age I carried around a notebook and put my thoughts in between the lines. First, it was all poetry. I was known as "the poet." Then, when I turned 18, one of my girlfriends told me that my poetry was very similar to raps. So, I began writing raps and songs. This then transformed into a music career, which I speak of in my book Sex Tells, and with that comes a lot of things. I then, had so many stories and thoughts that I found it fun to write stories that eventually turned into my own self-published books, which were selling well on the underground level. I never had an intention to become a writer, it just was something that came natural to me.

Me: Where can readers connect with you online and find your work?

Readers can connect with me through my website www.daricksbooks.com

Also , readers can find me at:

facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/darickbooks/>

twitter: @onlinedds

instagram: @artistdds

My music website: www.darickspears.com

Author Interview

with

Nicole Strycharz

ULM: What can you tell us about your series that includes your latest novel, *A Song for Giselle*?

NS: The *Maybrook Trilogy* is set in the early 20th century. I wrote this series because I LOVE the Edwardian era and I don't think there are enough romance books set in the period! It's centered on the couple from the first book but is made up of three different love affairs that all link back to the little town of Maybrook, Pennsylvania. The whole series was actually contrived by my mother and I on a ride home from shopping. I asked her, "What if I do a short story for Valentine's Day? What would you like, or request if you could? Like a writing challenge." And she got really excited and said, "I want an Edwardian Valentine's book!"

The main character August from the first book, 'A Valentine for August,' was actually based off one of my closest friend and his son. I threw them back in time to 1912 and what should have been a short became the first book in the trilogy.

ULM: Which of your characters from, *A Song for Giselle*, would you love to meet in person, if the character was real?

NS: Phillip! I loved writing Phillip. I would want to hang out with him and his three-some of friends; Ralf and Max.

ULM: Which movie stars would you choose to play the leading roles of Giselle, Phillip, Phillip's butler, and Phillip's mom?

NS: So Phillip was always Joseph Morgan from "The Originals," if he could master an

American accent; he was literally my muse! Giselle I imagine to look something like Jennifer Lawrence with dark curly hair. Her attitude would be perfect. Anthony Hopkins can be Stevens, Phillip's Butler because I LOVE him and Phillip's mother would be Julie Andrews!

UML: What are the three words that come to mind when thinking of your novel, *A Song for Giselle*?

NS: Love's Never Coincidence.

ULM: Can you share with us readers what the other two novels are called and what they are about?

NS: 'A Valentine for August,' is the first book and begins with Abigail Everett and August Black who've been sweethearts for years. But when her politically ambitious, cruel father separates them their love takes the ultimate test...time. After nine years of being apart Abigail finds herself back in her hometown Maybrook where people, places and things have changed. Especially her August.

Book two, 'A Passion for Henrietta,' is about Henrietta Dexter attempting to move on after the break off of her engagement. She chooses to leave little Maybrook to venture to Washington D.C. with her handsome lawyer cousin Ralf. She finds out on the train that he is actually not her blood relative and struggles with the scandal of falling for him. Meanwhile in an attempt to better her spoiled character ends up in the middle of one of his cases, surrounding a popular jewelry shop. Her troubles only multiply as Ralf's best friend the charming; Dr. Maximus Carter becomes her new suitor.

ULM: I have noticed that you have recently announced about a new novel that will be released soon. Can you tell us when, where, and briefly share with us

readers what the novel is about?

NS: My new standalone novel 'Meadow Creek' will be released on February 29th. It will be available in Paperback and eBook in the Amazon store.

The book is my very first modern romance and is about a sassy but classy business woman from New York, who moves herself and her young son to a property in Oklahoma.

Her husband died in Iraq a year before but she has yet to tell their boy in an effort to protect him.

Life on Meadow Creek collides her with Joseph Two Blood. A farm hand that had his eye on the land for its richly cultured location. Even though the two of them butt heads as he tries to run her off the territory, he's also fascinated by her resilience. The book explores stereotyping and labels and just how pointless both things are. Especially when it comes to love.

ULM: How would you describe your journey as a new author? What advice would you give to other writers?

NS: Failure, defeat, high hopes, let downs and then light at the end of the tunnel. I've wanted to do this since I was old enough to hold a pen but it's been a bumpy ride. My first book, 'The Duke of Golden Shire; King of Hearts,' was lying in a heap under my bed for years due to so many obstacles.

Now seeing the fruits of the labor I'm so glad I didn't give all the way up. If writing is your calling then nothing else is going to feel right. If you have voices in your head when you are alone or trying to function daily, they aren't going to stop till you write what they say, how they say it.

My advice to other writers is the advice my mother gave me. Find other writers! For the love of God find more of your kind and build yourself a world of people who

understand you. Readers take more time to find and you have to be patient but a unit of writers can do anything. My writer friends are my soul mates. I learn from them, I offer my knowledge back and I work with them. Don't ever believe you are competing with other writers. It's not a race. The sky is beautiful because there are millions of stars lighting it up, not one.

ULM: Where can readers find you and your books online?

NS: Readers can find all my works on Amazon in paperback and eBook:

http://www.amazon.com/Nicole-Strycharz/e/B00U1DN44K/ref=dp_byline_cont_book_1

<http://nicolesbooks.wix.com/authorpage>

<https://twitter.com/asag4jupiter>

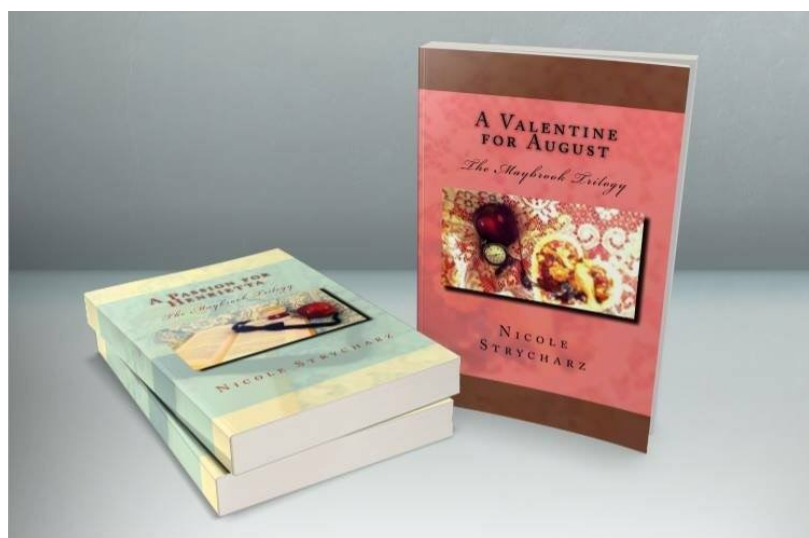
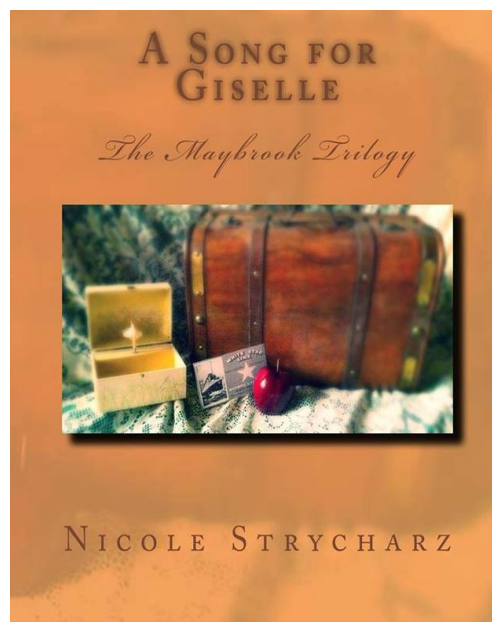
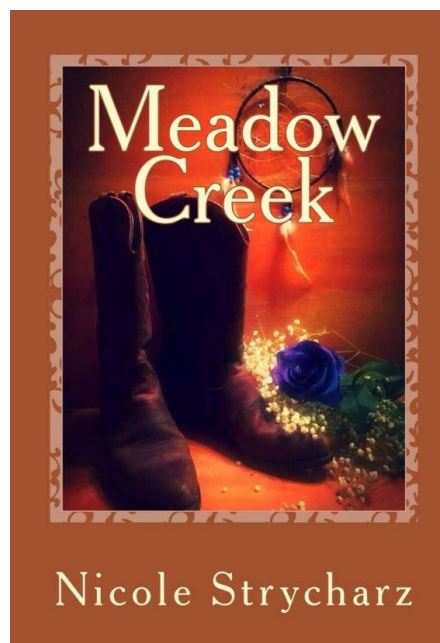
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Numbers Don't Lie

By Samantha Cole

Sigh. Cora Bishop stepped off the offensive scale and watched the needle swing back to zero, a far cry from where it had been moments earlier. Today was her fiftieth birthday, and at two hundred and ten pounds, while standing five-foot-six, those numbers combined into a depressing mess of vital statistics. She was what her mother had always described as 'big boned', but the bitchy bullies she'd known in high school had just called her fat. Well, Cora, the numbers don't lie—but now you're old and fat.

Holding the towel, which she'd donned after her shower, she shuffled out to the bedroom where Frederick, her Siamese cat, lay atop the covers, quietly grooming himself. He had multiple personalities, ranging from a cuddly animal who adored his owner to pretending she didn't exist. Today he was leaning toward the latter. Dropping her towel, she avoided her reflection in the dresser mirror and threw on her underwear, bra, jeans, and a comfortable, black sweater. When her body was completely covered, it was only then that she checked her appearance. Not bad, but far from great. A touch of makeup and styling her long, brown hair would help.

Three hours and half a dozen boring errands later, she began to head home in her eight-year-old Honda, which had seen better days. While she couldn't afford a brand new one, a gently used, former lease would probably be perfect for her. Making the decision to start looking for a new vehicle, she wasn't aware of the police car with its lights on behind her until the siren let out a short bark. Damn it. Glancing at her speedometer, she groaned—fifteen miles per hour over the posted speed limit. Great. Just what she needed to make the depressing day even worse—a ticket.

Pulling over to the side of the road, she remembered everything her ex-husband had told her to do if she was stopped by the police. She made sure she was far enough on the shoulder so the officer wouldn't have to stand in the roadway, then she rolled the window down, turned off the engine, and rested her hands on the steering wheel. This all helped the officer conclude that she wasn't a threat.

The crunching of feet on the gravel had her turning to see the uniformed man approach her driver's window with a stern expression on his face. Well, what she could see of it, since he had reflective sunglasses on. Pasting on a smile, she hoped he would let her off with a warning. "Hi, officer? Did I do something

wrong?"

"You were doing seventeen miles per hour over the speed limit, ma'am. License and registration, please."

"Really?" Maybe if she sounded clueless and remorseful, it would help the situation. Just don't cry she told herself. Her ex had said most cops had received the false crying routine so many times, they ignored tears. She dug into her purse for her wallet. "I'm so sorry. I didn't realize I was going that fast."

"I clocked you with the radar, ma'am. The numbers don't lie. I calibrated the unit myself about an hour ago." The tone of his voice was an indication he'd given that short speech many times before. Handing him her license and vehicle registration, she bit her lip. The stress of the day was starting to hit her as he studied her information. "Well, now, Miss Bishop. I can't exactly give you a ticket on your birthday, can I? That wouldn't be in the best interest of the public."

Instead of thanking him, Cora burst into tears. She couldn't help it as she covered her face in embarrassment. Her door opened, and through her fingers, she saw the officer crouch down next to her. His voice softened as he rubbed her shoulder. "Hey, now. What's this? I thought you'd be happy I wasn't giving you a ticket, and I don't think these are happy tears."

She shook her head and dropped her hands in her lap. "I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me. I just thought my life would be so different when I hit fifty, and it's not. I'm an old, divorced, overweight woman, who bursts into tears because a police officer is nice enough to say he isn't going to give me a ticket."

His chuckle went through her, warming her unexpectedly. "Fifty, huh? I didn't even look at the year. First off—you don't look a day over thirty-five. I'm divorced, too, so that just means we didn't marry the right person the first time around. I turned fifty last May, and trust me, the second half of your life is going to be awesome." Her tear-filled gaze met his. He was a good-looking man, with dark hair peppered with strands of grey. He'd taken his sunglasses off and she now saw his eyes were brilliant blue. After a quick glance over his shoulder, he turned back to her. "Tell you what, Ms. Bishop. It's about time I took a coffee break. Would you like to join me at the donut shop across the street? As long as you don't make any cop and donut jokes, that is."

What? Was he serious? No, you idiot. He's not asking you out, he just feels bad that you're crying. But her hands were still shaking, and she wasn't up to driving again at the moment, so what harm could be done by having a cup of coffee with the man? "I promise, no jokes."

“Great.” He stood and shut her driver’s door. “Follow me then.” you close to your kids?”

They parked in the lot and he held the door to the shop open for her. After ordering coffee and a cupcake for both of them at the counter, he insisted on paying for hers. Taking a seat at a table, she accepted the cup and small plate he handed her before sitting across from her. Mumbling a ‘thank you’, she didn’t know what else to say and hoped he would fill in the silence.

“I’ve been trying to figure out where I know you from and I finally got it. You walk laps around the high school track a few times a week, don’t you?”

Oh, great, he’s seen me at my sweaty worst, with my big boobs bouncing with every step, along with the rest of me. No matter how much exercise she got, she could never get below a size fourteen and usually hovered in size sixteen, which is where she currently was. Her doctor insisted that despite her size, she was healthy, with all her blood work and vitals within normal range. Cora just wished her outward appearance was an indication of her inner health. She studied him a little closer and realized she had seen him before as well. “You’re usually jogging around the track, aren’t you? I didn’t recognize you in uniform.”

He shrugged. “A lot of people don’t know me out of uniform, and sometimes that’s not a bad thing.”

His gentle smile tugged at her heart. He was really a nice man. “I don’t even know your name.”

“Sorry, I should have properly introduced myself. I lost my name tag on an arrest yesterday and haven’t had time to replace it.” He reached across the table. “Jim Zaragoza.”

Shaking his proffered hand, her eyes narrowed. “Zaragoza? Are you related to Beth?”

He nodded. “Yup. She’s my kid sister. How do you know her?”

“We work together on the pediatric ward. I’m a nurse, too.”

Taking a sip of his coffee, he smiled, brightening up his already handsome face. “Gotta love a small world.” He pointed at the cupcake she had yet to touch. “I wish I had a candle for you to blow out. Everyone deserves one on their birthday.”

Her posture sagged. “Yeah, well, it really isn’t something I was looking forward to celebrating.”

“How come?” When she didn’t answer other than a shrug of her shoulders, he rested his crossed arms on the table. “You mentioned you’re divorced. Any children?”

“Two boys and a girl, but they’re all out on their own now. I have four grandchildren, too.”

His grin grew. “I have three grandkids, and two daughters. Are

“Of course.” She smiled as she thought of her family. There was never a week where she didn’t see them on one day or another.

He nodded. “Okay, so you have a great job, which I can tell you love, just by how you said you were a nurse. You’re close to your children and grandchildren. With those beautiful eyes and smile, I bet you have a hell of a personality, which means you have a lot of friends, right?”

She could see where he was going with this, and the fact that he liked her smile and eyes made her sitting up a little straighter.

“Yes, I have friends I’m close to.”

“So what’s wrong with turning fifty? It’s only a number.”

When he put it that way, what was wrong with turning fifty? Her family was throwing her a party tomorrow night, but up until now, she hadn’t been looking forward to it. Funny. What had started out as a miserable day, had become something completely different thanks to her heavy foot and an alert, but kind, police officer.

They chatted until his radio squawked, alerting him to a burglar alarm. Standing, he threw out their garbage before walking her to her car. “It was very nice meeting you, Cora, but I have to run. Promise me you’ll obey the speed limit and enjoy your birthday. I think there should be a law about that somewhere.”

Laughing, she watched him hurry to his car and drive away with a wave in her direction. Sighing, she thought, now why can’t I meet a nice guy like that? She doubted he’d be interested in her. He probably already had a girlfriend—one who was a lot skinnier than Cora. Despite that last thought, she decided to take Jim’s advice and turn today into a celebration of all that was good in her life, instead of what she didn’t like about it.

At five-thirty that evening, she sat on her couch with Frederick in her lap. She’d spent the rest of the day getting a well-deserved manicure and pedicure, before checking out the local car dealer. To her delight, they had been running a special offer to get rid of last year’s models and make room for the new. Using the haggling skills her father had taught her years ago, she’d even gotten a better deal, one which made her sign for her new car on the spot. Now she was settling in for the news and then a rom/com movie she’d ordered from Netflix. She was looking forward to her birthday bash tomorrow and planned on going shopping in the morning to find a new dress to wear.

Just as a commercial ended and the news anchors came back on, her doorbell rang. Not expecting anyone, she peered out the peephole and saw nothing but the color red. “Who is it?”

“Jim Zaragoza.”

What? Unlocking and opening the door, she stared in shock at the man who was now dressed in his civilian clothes and holding a large bouquet of roses. “Hi. What are you doing here?”

Grinning, he handed her the driver’s license and registration she’d forgotten to get back from him. “I put these in my shirt pocket when you started crying and forgot about them. Then I decided I’d take a chance and see if the birthday girl still had nothing planned for this evening and wanted to go out with me. What do you say?”

Stunned, it took her a moment to respond as he waited patiently for her answer. Smiling, she admitted, “I say, I think I’m going to enjoy turning fifty. After all it’s just a number, right?”

NUMBERS DON’T LIE, PEOPLE DO

By Paul Fitzgerald

Numbers don’t lie, people do.

Of this fact John Cocker was sure. He had spent his entire life with the world of mathematics at the very core of his everyday existence. He had plunged himself into numbers since he was a child because of that very simple fact; numbers cannot lie to you as people can. And it was this fact he learned early on.

John had been lied to by people he was supposed to trust for as long as he could remember. His first memory as a child was of his father drinking heavily and storming out of the house after smacking his mother. John was no older than four years of age, but he could remember the first question he asked his mother.

“Where’s Daddy going?” he had asked her. “Is he coming back?”

His mother had turned to him, her right hand trying to conceal the growing, reddening welt on the side of her face. Through tears and a forced smile she said “Yeah, baby. He’ll be back soon.”

John’s father never did return. He wrapped his car around a tree that night in his drunken stupor. His father hung on for seven days in hospital before finally dying on the eighth day.

When John’s mother had taken him to hospital to see his father, he had asked her if his Daddy was ever going to wake up.

“Of course, baby,” she had insisted. “Of course you’re Daddy is going to wake up. He’s going to wake up and come home to us.”

She was wrong there too.

When John had started school in the following years he asked his mother if school was going to be fun. His mother simply smiled at him as she buttoned his coat on the way out the door and said, “Yes, baby! School’s going to be so much fun and you’re going to make so many friends!”

Although his mother had told him he would make friends and have fun John did not. He had found himself the subject of the petty torments of the other students, both boys and girls alike. He did not have fun. And he did not want to go back. His mother did go and address the bullying to the teacher, it was true. The teacher had done what she could, that was also true. She even managed to get an apology out of the ring leader, Davey who tormented John the most.

“What do you say?” the teacher sternly said to Davey.

Davey turned to John and with a scrunched up expression on his face said, “I’m sorry, John.”

“And what else?” the teacher said.

“And it will never happen again,” Davey said. “I promise.”

But it did happen again. It happened again and again and again. And soon John learned not to bother telling on Davey to his mother or the teachers or anyone else for that matter. People always would say they would help him, but they never did because, as John now knew, people tell lies.

Life had been quite bleak for John upon this realization. It wasn’t until the teacher began to teach the class about addition that John first discovered the one thing he could depend on; numbers.

“Two plus two always equals four,” the teacher had told the class.

Suddenly John found an absolute truth in what he saw as an untrustworthy world with even more untrustworthy people. Two plus two always equaled four and no matter how hard someone could try and deny that, it was always true. The numbers couldn’t lie.

And so John’s love affair with mathematical equations and the world of numbers began. While some kids with a troubled home life as John had might bury themselves in meaningful poetry or some artistic outlet, John felt most alive when delving into probability and calculations. He was at home with numbers

because numbers couldn't lie to him, numbers couldn't leave him, and numbers couldn't hurt him deeply as people do. Numbers simply existed without emotion or the illusion of love. His mathematical equations were unfeeling. His calculations were cold but true. And more than anything else in his life John strived to be just like that.

John graduated with honors and a full scholarship and was poised to become one of the greatest mathematicians of the age. The name John Cocker was thought to eventually become one of those names written in the history books with the likes of Albert Einstein and Hermann Weyl. Great things were in his future. And then he met Tinsley O'Brian.

Tinsley O'Brian was beautiful, curvaceous, and flirtatious. She was the first girl to ever really turn John's head. It was true he was heterosexual and like all teen boys like him he had discovered his body's yearning for female flesh in his early years of puberty. But all of that had just been hormones and bodily functions. John had never really noticed a woman before until Tinsley. And indeed John had noticed her from her long, platinum hair to her ample bosom to that unique and child-like giggle that seemed to escape her lips whenever he made an effort to amuse her. John had not only noticed Tinsley but he fell in love with her very quickly and before he knew it they were an item. Soon after that Tinsley was pregnant.

"It's alright," John had told her. "It's going to be fine. I'll get a job to support us. I have enough credits now to change my major. I can teach! We'll get married! Everything's going to be fine, Tinsley. I promise you, it's all going to be fine."

The strangest part for John was that he genuinely felt what he was saying to be true. Despite his dedication to his work and the fact he felt numbers to hold the only thing truthful in this world John had now found another absolute truth he could not help but trust and that was his love for Tinsley O'Brian.

"Promise me we'll be together forever," John said to her after the two had made passionate love. "Promise me, Tinsley, that we'll be together always and that you'll always love me."

Tinsley rolled over with a soft, sweet smile that still gave John butterflies when he saw it. She straddled him and tenderly leaned down to whisper in his ear.

"I'll always love you, John," she lovingly whispered. "You're all I'll ever need."

Time proved, however, that John was not all Tinsley needed. Although the two became engaged soon after Tinsley's pregnancy, they never did marry. Then their daughter, Julia Cocker was born. Tinsley was at first happy, but soon made it

clear she had grown bored with taking care of Julia.

"I'm trapped in this house, John!" she screamed one night over Julia's cries of colic. "I need to get out of this house. I need to be away from you...away from Julia...I need to find myself, John. I've lost myself, John!"

The words cut deep and John thought that perhaps it was his fault. Maybe he had failed her by not making her happy as he should. Perhaps there was something he could do to change that. And so he tried to. John set Julia up in a daycare center and took a second job. He indulged every whim of Tinsley's and supported her every choice. John waited for her to perk back up and become the Tinsley he had fallen in love with. But it never happened. Tinsley needed more than John, it seemed. She had lied to John. He had given up everything for her. He had abandoned everything that had ever meant anything to him including a promising future in the field of his passion. He gave her everything and in return she had given him nothing more than falsehoods and lies. And that did not sit well with John. It didn't sit well at all.

I can just leave her, John had thought. I can take Julia with me and just leave her. But when he suggested he do just that Tinsley told him that Julia was hers and that she wasn't going to let him have her. And so John stayed with the stranger who now seemed to be nothing more than the shadow of his former love and once again found himself stuck in a world of dysfunction and liars. He had been lied to again and nobody was going to do anything about it.

That's when it struck him.

There was someone who could do something about this situation; him.

The thought did cross his mind at how drastic what he had in mind to do was, but John had deduced by this time that while drastic it was not a crazy idea. As the saying goes, drastic times call for drastic measures and now John was going to take them.

It was 9:34pm according to his watch when he pulled back onto his street, his headlights turned off. In his driveway was a beat up pick-up truck. This truck was familiar to him now since the first time he had seen it so many months earlier when Tinsley first started to "find herself." There it had been parked in the driveway when John had come home to surprise Tinsley for lunch. There it had been parked and there it now was parked in front of him again. Its driver inside making love to Tinsley, no doubt, as had become routine at this point.

A Warrior's Heart

By Samantha Cole

Before he got out of the car John double-checked that the insurance policy he had taken out on the house was in his glove compartment and up to date. He then stepped out of the car and made his way to the house with the gasoline can.

John entered the house slowly and began to douse the bottom floor as quietly as he could. The sounds of ecstasy from the upstairs bedroom made this task easy. And then, when he was ready, John took the gasoline can and the lighter and made his way upstairs to the bedroom. He did not hesitate for a moment to kick open the door and begin heaping the flammable liquid onto Tinsley and her muscled lover.

The nude man attempted to lunge at John before he lit the lighter. When the small flame struck a silence filled the room as both Tinsley and the naked male froze in fear and anticipation for the bonfire of human flesh that was about to begin.

"D-don't do this, J-John..." Tinsley spoke through quivering words, her hands out in front of her as a futile safeguard and her eyes wide and unblinking.

John looked into her eyes and for a moment he stopped.

"Maybe you're right," he said, lowering the lighter slightly. "Maybe we can still make this work. Perhaps I don't have to do this."

Tinsley perked up anxiously and hollered "We can! We can make this work, John! I am so sorry! Just, please, don't do this."

John looked into Tinsley's eyes.

"I could believe you," John said, now raising the lighter again. "But your track record is against you. Each time you have promised something it has turned out to be a lie. Everything you've ever told me is a lie. So the probability of this too being a lie is almost one hundred percent. Just as two plus two equals four, more lies plus more lies equal nothing more than a great big pile of lies. Unfortunately for you, Tinsley, the number of times you have lied to me outweigh the number of times you've told the truth."

Tinsley's eyes followed the lighter as it fell from John's fingers to the mattress and the fire seemed to swell in slow motion and cover everything.

"And you see," John continued as flames engulfed the two nude frames upon the bed and fill the room around them, "numbers never lie, baby. But people do."

Thud-thump.

No. Please, God, this couldn't be happening.

Thud-thump.

All around him, the silence roared. Men were dead and dying, but he couldn't hear a sound due to the last blast that'd come too close for him to avoid. The attack had come from out of nowhere. Jokes and laughter had been replaced by screams and moans of pain. Arguments over which teams were going to be in the World Series this year were changed to shouts for a medic. A routine patrol had turned into something far worse than sweating in the unbearable heat.

Five months left on his last tour in Afghanistan. Five more months until he could retire into civilian life. Five more months until the birth of his first child.

His wife and he had been trying for four years without success, but for Christmas, she had sent him a care package. Inside were the normal food, toiletries, magazines, and books. A few gag gifts had been included, so when he was unwrapping the last one, he hadn't expected to find a pair of baby booties. Confusion had turned to shock. Shock had turned to elation and then at the top of his lungs, he'd bellowed, "I'm going to be a father!"

Thud-thump.

Shouts of congratulations had filled their barracks, in addition to back slapping and whistles. His captain had grabbed his arm, dragging him outside before taking off at a run. Using his rank and the good news, the man had gotten him to the front of the line of soldiers waiting to Skype back home. It had still been another half hour before he was face to face on the monitor with his wife. She'd been waiting for over two weeks for him to receive the package and open the contents. At her appointment three days earlier, she'd found out they were going to have a boy. The two of them spent his total allotted time, laughing, crying, and telling the other how their hearts were filled with love and joy.

Thud-thump.

That same heart now was fighting to continue beating—to remain alive. He couldn't feel anything below his waist, but the thumping in his chest, which was slowing down with each contraction, he was all too aware of. Looking to his left through the smoke and chaos, he saw his captain had already expired. With obvious head injuries, he doubted the man ever knew they'd come under attack, with RPGs raining down on them from the enemy. Others had been thrown violently or torn apart, and the uninjured and walking wounded were doing their best to administer care and battle the insurgents at the same time.

He was dying. He knew it and there was nothing anyone would be able to do to change the inevitable. Anderson, the medic, knelt beside him. He still couldn't hear and had no idea what the man was saying even though he saw his lips moving. Maybe it was false hope, that everything would be okay. Maybe it was a layman's last rites. He didn't know, but he did need to communicate somehow.

Thud-thump.

Opening his mouth, he struggled with what he wanted to say, hoping he would be understood. "L-Letter. L-Lock...er."

The words must have come out because the man nodded as he continued to try to keep the life blood from pouring from the battered body before him. It was a request the medic had heard and followed through on too many times to count. Please deliver my death letter to my family. My wife. My parents. My...unborn son.

Thoughts of what he'd wanted to do with the boy filled his mind. Fishing. Playing catch. Teaching him his ABCs and then one day, how to drive. He'd wanted to show his son how to treat a woman with the respect she deserved. That was what his wife had told him first attracted her to him. He'd held doors open. Pulled out chairs. Walked her to the front door after every date. It'd been what his dad had taught all four of his sons to do. Hopefully the old man would be able to see through his grief and teach his grandson the rules of being a gentleman, in place of the father who wouldn't be able to.

Thud-thump.

What day was it? They all seemed to run together out here in the desert. Someone had said it earlier. Through the darkness trying to overtake his mind, the numbers came to him. Oh, no. Not today, Lord. Any other day but Valentine's Day. Please. No.

It was the day he and his wife had met so many years ago. He'd gone out with a bunch of his single buddies to a local pub and there she'd been, visibly upset. Some jackass she'd been dating for less than a month had stood her up on what was supposed to be the most romantic day of the year. After receiving no answer

to her texts and phone calls, she'd gotten up from the table for two to leave and promptly spilled her purse. Being the gentleman his father had raised, he'd rushed over to help her. When she'd looked up at him with frazzled, tear-filled brown eyes, he'd known he was a goner. His heart had been hers from that moment on.

Two years later, he'd proposed on the same day. Cliché, yes, but she hadn't been expecting it. He'd enlisted the help of a few buddies and the principal of the school where his wife taught first grade. Her class was brought to the auditorium where she thought there was going to be a 'Military Day' with soldiers from the base. But instead, when the curtain went up, there he stood in his dress uniform. With his friends playing the piano and two acoustic guitars, he'd serenaded her with Me And You, by Kenny Chesney, before getting down on one knee to propose. After she finally stopped crying, she'd said yes to the delight of her eighteen students as well as her folks, who'd been hiding behind the curtain.

Thud-thump.

They had wanted to have a Valentine's Day wedding, too, but the military hadn't accommodated them, so on November 1st, they'd tied the knot in front of their family and friends, three weeks before he deployed. That first tour after they'd started dating, and the subsequent ones during their marriage, had been hard on both of them, but thanks to their letters, emails, phone calls, and Skype, they had made it through. And each time he arrived home to her loving arms, he thanked God for bestowing upon him the greatest woman he could've ever asked for.

This time was different though. This Valentine's Day his wife would become a widow with a child on the way. He wished he could have seen her one more time. Her eyes. Her smile. The way she crossed her arms and cocked her hip to the side when she was exasperated with him for some reason. He wanted to be there for when she would be screaming and panting in childbirth. He yearned to hold his son just once. Would he have blue eyes like his dad and beautiful dark hair like his mother? Would he know how much his father loved him and hated the fact they would never meet? Would the boy know the dying man's last thoughts were of him and the wife he was leaving behind?

Thud-thump.

After finding out they had a child on the way, he'd revised his death letter. In it, he'd added some notes to be given to the boy when he was old enough. Lord, please let him forgive me for not being there for him. Let him understand the reasons I had to leave and not to grow to hate the men who'd taken his father from him.

It was hatred that had brought him here in the first place. Hatred for people who thought, dressed, prayed, and lived differently. He wished by the time his son was old enough, there was peace throughout the world. He hoped there would never be a time the boy would experience the perils of war, although he'd be proud if his footsteps were followed. Just not to this point. Not to the point of dying in the name of freedom.

He'd come from a long line of military men. World War I. World War II. Korea. Vietnam. Desert Storm. Operation Iraqi Freedom which then became known as Operation New Dawn. And finally, what had led him here—the War in Afghanistan. Fathers, sons, grandsons, uncles, cousins, brothers, and even one sister from his family had fought for their country and each returned to grow old in the states. But that was about to change. He would be the first in many generations dating back to the 1800's who wouldn't be walking off a boat or plane and into loving arms. Instead, his body would be returned within the confines of a pine box, draped with the American flag he'd duly respected and saluted every day. That flag would be folded with precision and handed to his crying wife as an officer thanked her for her husband's service. Taps would be played. Shots would be fired. Fond memories would be told, and a pint or two would be lifted in his honor.

He knew the love of his life well—she was a true military wife. Despite her grief, she would place the triangular bundle of red, white, and blue in a glass and wooden display box, along with his citations. The same medals he'd proudly worn on his dress uniform, as well as the ones he would never personally receive—the Purple Heart, a combat action medal, and any others the powers that be decided to bestow upon him. She would explain to their son what each one meant and how they had been earned. He'd learn how to salute the American flag, say the Pledge of Allegiance, and know the sacrifices made so others could be free.

Thud-thump.

It was getting harder to breathe. The time he had left was becoming shorter with each desperate beat of his heart. Anderson had done what he could before moving on to the next mortally wounded man. Another person had taken the medic's place by his side. The new kid.

Nowicki, wasn't it? He was on his first tour and was still wet behind the ears as they say. But despite his ashen face, painted with dirt, grime, and blood, the boy had become a man today and clasped his dying brother's hand while praying for his soul. Would this be his son one day? Scared out of his mind, but compassionate enough to fake it?

How many more wars would take place in this world before the human race destroyed itself? Was peace just an illusion? A fantasy someone had created thousands of years ago, just to give people false hope? No. He knew good will existed. He'd seen it many times in his life and had been on the receiving end on numerous occasions.

A few months ago, the night before this last deployment, he'd taken his wife out to their favorite restaurant. Nothing fancy, but that was how they liked it. Relaxed and homey appealed to them more than crystal champagne glasses and fine china. He'd still been in his uniform from an earlier meeting and, because it'd been getting late in the evening, he'd opted not to change. While waiting for their food, they'd chatted and held hands, wishing time would slow down so they'd have a few more hours before saying goodbye. A young boy of nine or ten came over to their table and handed him a note, before saluting and then returning to his seat a few tables away. When his wife and he had looked over at the family consisting of a mother, a father, a set of grandparents, and two children, the older man just nodded and winked in their direction while the others smiled. Opening the note, they'd found words of kindness, prayers for his safe return from wherever he may be going, and gratitude for his service. The kicker had been their meal had been paid for. Neither one of them had been able to keep their tears at bay.

Thud-thump.

That hadn't been an illusion. A fantasy. It'd been real. That family respected the flag and those who sacrificed everything in the name of God and country. In his heart, he knew someday his wife would see a young couple, with one or both of them dressed in a military uniform, and she would send their son over with a note that said Thank you for your service. Your meal has been paid for. It's the least we could do for keeping us safe. We'll be praying that God will watch over you and return you to your loved ones.

Those words resonated through his mind as his sight dimmed. They had not been written in vain. The afterlife was waiting for him. He knew it. The last moments of his life on earth had come. Soon he would be watching over his wife as she gave birth to their son. He'd do his best to guide the boy as he grew and he'd pray his child would know only peace. But if that wasn't possible, he hoped the proud warrior's heart, which had been passed down through generations, would beat in his son's chest until he was old and grey.

The Art of Storytelling

By Elisa Marie Hopkins

“There's always room for a story that can transport people to another place.”

— J.K. Rowling

We all enjoy a good story, whether it's a book, a movie, or something else. They are a powerful thing to have. Sad ones, dark ones, funny ones; the ones that teach us to look for answers in not so obvious places. But those who tell the stories, according to Plato, rule society.

Good news is we all have stories to tell. There are 7 billion stories roaming around out there. Let that sink in. Insane, isn't it? We all have some sort of circus playing in our minds—words, ideas, characters, stories, are all bouncing around, juggling and pirouetting, putting on a show like no other. Sometimes they're real, sometimes they're not, and sometimes we let our imaginations sour as we put pen to paper.

What does it take to build a great story? Great characters? Great plot twists? Great writing? Great conflict?

While there are many answers to that, and all the aforementioned usually do the trick, I believe the one essential ingredient you want to be throwing into the pot is great storytelling. To take your story to the next level, you need to give it that *je ne sais quoi* feeling, that “I can't put it down” page-turning power.

Think of a novel (series) like *Red Rising*. Pierce Brown comes up with a boy living the lowly life of a miner in an oppressive dystopian society on Mars. He doesn't just give him inner conflict. He doesn't just give him a vendetta. He gives him a dream. And it's a dream that resonates with thousands of readers and leaves its mark in our memories like if it were our own experience. We can all relate to politics (it's practically the national dialogue), how society wants to organize and share power, big dreams and broken ideals, death and sacrifice. Because we all itch for connection, right? We want to feel like we're not alone in this struggle. What Brown has done here is a masterpiece.

Storytelling is an art in and of itself, no matter the approach. When a story does something to me on another level, so much so that it makes me want to go back and change my opinion on every other story I've ever read because it cannot fall in line with impossible high standards, then I know I got a winner.

So, what's your story? What stories appeal to you and who are your favorite storytellers? What makes them so good?



CHURCH LIGHTS

Ashes and sudden blazes
To the ring of bells:
There's one place where Churches
Set on Fire
"I always wanted to burn a Church"
Some says
Looking up the burning
Evangelical church in Bistrita
Romania.
The space here, kids pretty much
on their own privileged to see
The union of Sky and Earth
For the love of self-respect
Profaning graves
Threatening with death to priests
Playing a band of black metal
Because they live
At the edge of Fire.
Transcendence by the fireside
As Durruti
The most dedicated militant
Of the Spanish Anarcho Syndicalism
Saying:
"La Iglesia que más Luce
Es la que Arde"
(The only church that light
Is the one who burns.)
Churches, churches falling in fire
All night hearing thrss thrss

Sounds of burning banks, pulpits
And confession boxes
Rotating nebulae thoughtlessly
Sacred incendiaries laughing at first too
Brushing down their hairy
Ready to star for a new faith
In witness of Pagan.
Then curse:
Fire clouds over churches
Perfect hot wisdom
As a high way of Gothic Theology
To the ring of bells
Aflame with smoke desire
Drum-rolling that Paganism is the first
And was destroyed
Bay the savage and cruel Christians
Flashing the no-God light
Thru the Inquisition
Expectation to see what?
Cutting up no believers, witches and pa-
gans
Burning them
Or putting them on the rack
Fire curses and the wind saying:
"All of you are Gods
No Satan, no Christ
Yes, Anton LaVey
Unzipping in morning blizzard
And the High Great Odin' air
"Cracking the spinal membrane of believ-
ers
And Priests"
As Euronymous of Mayhen said
Via Inner Circle

Revealing Love and Life.
Repulse of Christianity and fundamental-
ism
Is in the middle of the sacred fire line
Kids sleeping on a wheel
Burning up the Church
Down the fire
Already feeling hot love, asking
How many Churches have to be burnt
To snore a comfortable life?
So, many generations, Norwegian first
Gone by black music
Building a wiki up clumsy enough
To be burn down churches
Suddenly realizing their freedom
Even if fire did blow over
Just being able
To destroy the false faith and fraud
Priests Satan's heads
Funeral thru fire puzzle
Bones turned to dust
And go
Being burning hot.
You're getting warmj
With the torching of a Christian church
A fire bac-stich to joy.
**HOW MANY DOGS DOES
ANGELINA HAVE?**
Angelina rides astride on horseback
Common dogs following her

Gowned dogs, mitred
Crowned
With epaulettes, stripes and bands
As host of common people
In front and behind
Flattering in all places
Where she direct her look
Seeing Asses with erect pizzles
Stocked with ass sparks
Born in a friars' monastery.

Extreme is the She-Ass "Hee-Haw"
Looking at pucker
Excited in this way:
Machiavelli's Ass, comedian
Is fucking Lewis Carroll's Alice's Ass
Adventures in Wonderland
Celebrating a special online
Fucking in love on the green book
Of cunning and devious Renaissance.

-Gee upi, get upi
It's normal, she said to herself:
Spain, mother country of an Ass
Adores and venereas Asses.
It's not estrange
Because in all the world
Wo/men are.
Angelina see Asses in all over the sides:
Apollo's Ass, Apuleius'
Aquinos', Aristotles's
Aristophanes', Buddha's
Buphon's and Jesus' She-Ass
Balam's, and Mohammed's
And there, in that wheat-field

From Brieva de Juarros, in Burgos
A Monk'Ass from Navarre
Is composing a flesh tale
With a fattened lay-brother
To whom he gives love dog's style, say-
ing:
-Come to the boil, and cook onion
I'll tell you about the night of wedding
You're like a cat on hot bricksj
Making it up, she continues saying:
-Without Asses there aren't kings
No Religions
At the Earth, wo/men play apart as asses
In the Sky, there isn't another constella-
tion
That the glutton Ass
Who work for creating nations
With its trail
And dogs cultivating people
Braying and barking
From door to door.

HIT HOME

Going home ward, billowing home
At the home straight
Where all of us breathing mania
I thought:
"I'm privileged to see
The union of sky and earth
Because they lived
At the edge of silence
In front the tower"
But, ghost town, ghost company
Ghost of wo/man' s presence/absence

Is what makes life so intolerable?
Exposure:
Prostitutes and uniformed bad men
Turned me to dust
Harness straps blades
Crusher's bins and rations
All going back to earth.
Conversation and reclamation
Gives me wild stretching sand
Unmarked by wo/man
Sensing to be home As
A spiritual and honeyed homing pigeon
Did to me to recognize my nature
To clarify all my needs of a life
Constructed around our openness
And nakedness.
I wanted aloneness, space peace
And clarification of my needs
Just hearing the honk of geoses saying:
"We feel in Love
With these pieces of sky and earth".
Do You Look:
They do the honor of the house
Putting the hoodoo on ideals and dreams
So we "emptied ourselves".
There's a Buddha in the garden
Where the honkytonk of hooligans
Dance around.
I began to root in home
Impatiently waiting
For Chochette's entrance into the world
By hook or by crook
Where life and death fill all senses
All forms
All spaces.

Here's yr name
That contains me:
The Holy of Holies of Love
I say
Teaching us about our human hood.

- Daniel de Culla

Men are stupid
Women are mad
But if they join
lust will make
Wonderful things.

MARRIAGE WRITES WITH "L" OF LOVE

An organ from a sacred or lay chapel is playing
A choir singing:
"Marriage, Love and Shroud
Get off from the Sky"
While from among green leaves
Red roses, carnations, hyacinth
And orchids, with its stems
(Fiancée's bouquet
Hurled backwards
To the striped girlfriends in engagement)
Love shows with a triangular look
With longings for kissing
The next marriageable sweetheart
Giving a kiss
Acceding to the marrieds' enjoyment

And usage
From what will bloom harmony or no-harmony
Of two in one, and a claw
Lion's clutches
In affection of twos
Any jaws with an only tooth.
-Love mej Fuck mej, you, he-man from my heart
More, more, more
Deflowered to death
Dilated upon love's speech
With what one get into a scrape.
-Yes, my darling
Life erupts after torn to pieces
That man can pull out a flower
Withering it
Woman feeling a sweet breeze
In her cold buttocks
Announcing that
"Marriage nor domain
Don't want fury nor dash".

-Daniel de Cullá

From Behind the Desk of a Poet

By Nadia Gerassimenko



It isn't true that only talent determines how well you can write poetry. I'd say it's 10% talent and 90% hard work which entails being inspired, writing, editing, and coming back to it to polish it some more. Reflection is also part of it—reflecting on whether your poem can be relatable to anyone else besides you. Sometimes it's luck that the muse bestows you with wonderful material and you can write your poem so eloquently that it doesn't need to be further critically analyzed. That's great! But do still put yourself in the shoes of an objective observer and see it from their perspective, because it's natural for us poets to love our poetry like our children which can consequently cloud our judgement. I don't always write great poetry. Especially as time passes by, I think to myself, "And I wrote *this*?" At the time, a certain poem means a lot. But as you grow, so does your poetry. And over the years, I learned certain other knacks that can help with inspiration and creation.

Where to look for the muse

Reading other people's poetry is always inspiring to me. I usually turn to the greats, poets published by literary magazines and small presses, and writers in online writing communities like [WritersCafe](#) and [Eliteskills](#). Likewise, engaging in activities that move your soul and make you contemplate on life and foster your creativity can be inspirational. For me, it's listening to Kate Bush, dancing to New Wave and Gothic Rock, and watching indie films. Keep in mind that inspiration can't always be knocking on your door, which brings us to the following point.

Don't force it if you can't write

You can't force yourself to be inspired; it has to come from a place of authenticity, naturally and fluidly. You can't make yourself write either if it doesn't come to you at all. At least for me, whenever I forced inspiration and writing upon me, my writer's

block would become more resistant and enduring. What helped me get out of it was to just let it be. I told myself that it's just a phase and it will pass. I tried to embrace it instead of fighting it. It did pass and it always does.

But if you must write...

There's writing prompts! In my college creative writing class, our teacher told us to write non-stop for ten minutes whatever came to our minds. It was an interesting writing exercise (and hilarious too!), and it can be helpful to at least "fake it before you make it" as they say. I've recently got into collaborative poetry. It is very challenging to even start and continue, but it's a fun exercise that gets you thinking and practicing your writing skills. The next challenge for me would be to do some Exquisite Corpse—that fascinates me to no end.


Write, edit, repeat

When you and your muse are on the same page and you can write, always edit your work afterwards. Look for mistakes, inconsistencies, and—yes even— clichés. If you're not sure about your poem, ask for someone else's honest opinion. Whether it be a fellow poet or a friend who doesn't necessarily write but who appreciates poetry nonetheless. They can usually identify what's missing and what can be developed further. After editing your poem, leave it. Then come back to it again after a week or two and polish it some more. It really does help to read and edit it with different eyes than when you first wrote it and were practically in love with it.

Get rid of redundancies

After beta-reading a poem of mine, several poet friends pointed out that I use a lot of words like "a," "the," "and," "but" that can be eradicated altogether and the poem would still have the same meaning. If the wording doesn't change in significance, let the redundancies go and focus more on words that can enrich the language, imagery, and emotion of your poem.





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Love,

Urban Lit Magazine

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