

Liberty States Fiction Writers

New York ~ New Jersey ~ Pennsylvania



August 8, 2010

Volume 2, Number 7

Let Freedom Ring!

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175
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STRONG!

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Cloned? by Colleen
Admirand, aka C.H.
Admirand**

**Using Conflict to Sell
Your Book by Virginia**

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Liberty States Fiction Writers Newsletter

(requires login to Members Only area of Liberty States Fiction Writers Website)

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LSFW Announcements

(requires login to Liberty Announcements Yahoogroups)

Meeting Reminder

Just a reminder that this month's meeting is Movie Day at Anne Walradt's house. The meeting will start at 11 a.m. and continue until the last kernel of popcorn is done or Anne gets tired of us! Directions to Anne's house will be sent via e-mail later this week and will also be available online in the members only section.

President's Column



August is the height of vacation time. Everyone is either coming or going, or so it seems. And the Board is no exception. Since the July meeting we have been "on vacation." What that means is that we have not passed any proposals or thought of anything new for that matter. Currently the only item that is open is elections. We know that we are going to have one, and we know that we will be doing an electronic vote. So let me talk about that for a few moments.

Read More . . .

Author Spotlight

Kantra

**Where a Good Idea Leads
You by Mickey Flagg**

**The Perils of the Prequel
by E. F. Watkins**

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★**Current**★

★**Bestsellers**★

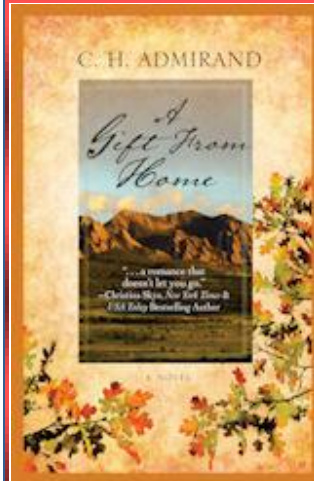
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**Booksense Indie
Bestsellers
NY Times Bestsellers
Publishers Weekly
USA Today Bestsellers
Washington Post
Bestsellers**

**As the August meeting is Movie Day,
there will be no Author Spotlight in August.**

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Member Releases



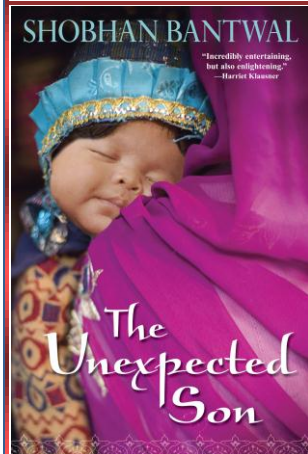
A GIFT FROM HOME

by C.H. Admirand

ISBN Not Available

Five Star Expressions

John Reilly is expecting a package from home, something light as a feather and twice as sweet. Little does he realize the package isn't the baked goods he's been dreaming of but a grown-up version of the thirteen-year-old girl who used to follow him everywhere. When John Reilly doesn't return to County Cork, Ireland, Jessi Fahy boards a ship and tracks him down. She arrives in Emerson, Colorado, hot, tired, and dusty, but he doesn't recognize her. Five and a half years of waiting in vain, combined with a horrendous voyage and the realization that John doesn't remember her, have Jessi fisting her hand and testing Mrs. Reilly's secret weapon. With a wicked right cross, big John Reilly goes down like a stone. In Book 4 of C. H. Admirand's Irish Western Series, the temporarily disbanded Committee for the Betterment of Emerson is at it again! This time they accuse Jessi Fahy of setting fire to Peterson's Stable, injuring Mr. Peterson, brawling in public, and ruining the good name of the Flahertys' foreman, John Reilly.



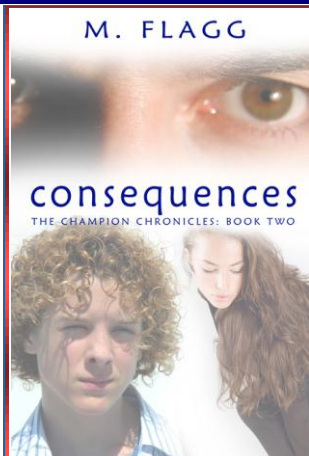
THE UNEXPECTED SON

by Shobhan Bantwal

ISBN 0758232039

Kensington Publishing

What happens when a woman who's realized her dreams wakes up to a shocking truth? A mysterious letter turns Vinita Patil's contented American life upside down. It tells an impossible story: she has a grown son in India whose life may depend on her...



Consequences... The Champion Chronicles: Book Two

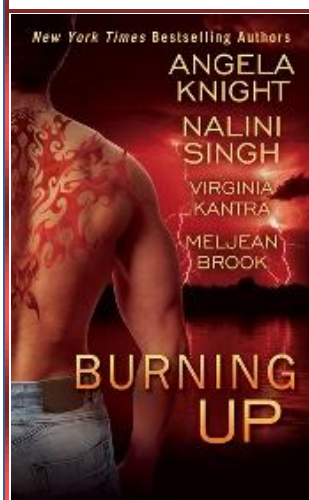
by M. Flagg

ISBN 1-60154-777-3

ISBN 13 9781601547774

The Wild Rose Press

There are always consequences to face on the road to redemption. Rescued from Hell on earth, a centuries-old mystically enhanced vampire rests in his mortal lover's arms. Poison seeps through his nervous system. In the beautiful seaport of Portofino, Italy, the beast within is removed by mystical healers. Love of Alana, his Guardian, and concern for Lukas, his human son, spurs him to agree to this unprecedented occurrence. Michael Malone's existence is changed yet again. As Michael's eyes open, confused and terrified, the vampire only recalls humanity lost in 1690...and his journey begins. It is an unknown path. Alana's worry deepens. Lukas Malone faces his worst fears. A brave Servant of Souls forces him to face undead life with courage. But a new threat looms. And The Document of Atonement awaits his compliance. Memories shatter him. He asks for death, but instead, deliverance emerges... and redemption waits, only a heartbeat away.



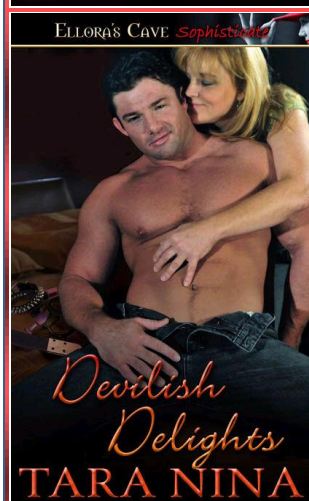
"Shifting Sea," Morwenna's story, by Virginia Kantra

in the anthology BURNING UP

with Angela Knight, Nalini Singh, and Meljean Brook

ISBN 9780425235959

Virginia Kantra continues the haunting tales of the Children of the Sea in her story of a wounded soldier rescued by an enigmatic young woman.

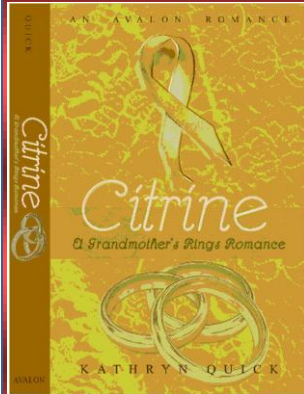


DEVILISH NIGHTS

by Tara Nina

Ellora's Cave

An older woman with a secret sexual addiction meets a younger man with the desire to play. Can he be taught? Torn by their age difference, Shelley Dupree takes a chance on a one-night stand, but gets more than she bargains for in her young stud. Jack O'Malley's enticed by a woman who's vibrating silver balls land on the floor at his feet along with an array of sex toy paraphernalia. Finally, a woman with a desire to experience more than vanilla flavored sex. This woman fit the criteria of perfect dating material. Now if he could just convince her. Age was a number that didn't matter. Great sex ruled, and he intended to teach Shelley the true meaning of orgasmic fun and sexual playtime. When a complication arises in connection to a trial they're both a part of, Shelley is abducted. Jack must choose...justice for a bootlegger or the perfect woman's survival.



CITRINE **by Kathye Quick** **Avalon**

Cools excess anger—given to Ali. The last one left, Ali is determined not to let Grandmother's Ring get her. But first she has to go to her new nephew's baptism and face the whole family, including Trent and his new fiancée, Linda. No way is she going to be in that wedding. One was enough. As everyone coos over the baby, Ali pastes on her best face and accepts the teasing of her brother and sister about the last holdout. When she retreats to the backyard to escape them, she finds another deserter, Jake Daultry, Nick's cousin. Jake, a Blackhawk helicopter pilot, joined the family festivities on his way home to enjoy a thirty-day leave. Ali, a self-proclaimed peace activist like her mother, and Jake, a red-white-and-blue soldier, clash in a contest of wills that culminates in a kiss on the front porch. Shaken by her sudden reaction to Jake, Ali leaves. Later that day she finds Jake waiting outside her townhouse to apologize. For the rest of his leave, each tries to get the other to see the other side of war and peace as the attraction between them becomes enough to melt any cold war. As Jake gets ready to return to his unit, Ali discovers he's taking her heart along with him. Can the peace activist and the soldier find some neutral territory in order to follow their hearts or will Ali and Jake just have to settle for some combat wounds that may never heal?

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Road Story

My Road Trip
by Debby Buchanan

A close friend once told me he thought life was like riding a raft down the Kaskaskia River, taking you where the currents flowed. Occasionally you'd land on the riverbank for a while, but when the level of the river rose and the current quickened, you'd be swept farther down the river.

I prefer to think of life as a road trip. As the driver, you have control over when you leave, where you go, and how fast you travel. You can use a map or you can make turns without knowing the destination, sometimes being pleasantly surprised by the road you take.

Things like potholes, traffic, detours, breakdowns, and the actions of other drivers may be out of your control, but you can choose how you react to each. You can choose where to steer next.

From an early age, I wanted to be a writer. I loved *Highlights Magazine* and as a young child wanted to write stories for it. I preferred reading to playing outside. I read all the Nancy Drew and Cherry Ames books I could talk my Mom into buying for me.

In seventh grade, I wrote a poem as a homework assignment. The teacher called my Mom to school to tell her that I was talented. I think he also wanted

to point out that the subject of the poem, a hanging, was a bit dark for a 12-year-old.

In high school, I worked as a “stringer” for a teen magazine and was a library helper at the Montville Township Library.

I majored in journalism in college, but dropped out. English Composition had been my favorite class. My teacher, Miss Redden, was disappointed when I left school and kept in touch with me for quite awhile, encouraging me to continue writing.

Married young, then divorced young, I soon had to go to work to support three small children and myself. With a background in advanced math in high school, I was able to land a job at Crum & Forster in loss accounting. Later I became the Accounting/Office manager at an Allied Van Lines agency. The last 21 years of my accounting career were spent at Hammer Press as the Accounting Manager and then as Controller.

Along the way, I remarried, divorced again, dealt with an auto accident that left my middle child, Carrie, a quadriplegic at age 17, contended with two bouts with cancer shortly after that, and faced another auto accident a few years later that left my daughter, Chris, in an ICU, not expected to survive.

But my road trip continued.

Throughout my life, I’ve continued to write poems and short stories and I am now working on three mystery novels. I’ve remained an avid reader. Mysteries are my favorite.

I attended several Deadly Ink conferences when the conference was run by Patti Biringer. In 2005, Patti announced that she was retiring from Deadly Ink. My daughter, Chris Abbott, and I approached Patti and bought the rights to the Deadly Ink name and mailing list.

I’d never run a conference before, but it was fun to learn. I announced at the 2006 conference that Deadly Ink was branching out, adding Deadly Ink Press to publish mystery and suspense books. I didn’t know anything about publishing, but once again immersed myself in learning the business. My fiancé, Dave Sasher, helped me with the June 2006 conference. He passed away later that year. The David Award is given in his honor.

Through the 2009 conference, Deadly Ink was a part-time sideline for me. At the beginning of July 2009, my employer, Hammer Press, closed its doors with only a 3-day warning to its employees.

I could find another job in accounting, or I could run Deadly Ink full-time. I chose the latter. Rather than view life as a constant struggle to stay afloat on a sometimes turbulent river, I choose to create my own clear road map ahead of me, leading to publishing more titles per year, adding authors to our list, publishing more anthologies with proceeds going to charity, increasing the

size of the annual conference, and writing mystery novels myself.

There will undoubtedly be side trips, some sad, some joyful, some tiring, some inspiring, but all contributing to the adventure that is my life.

It should be quite a trip!



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★This Month's Articles★

President's Column Gail Freeman



Gail has been writing for twelve years and is a yet to be a published author. Ms. Freeman served as President of another writing organization for two years and has also served as Vice President, Treasurer, Special Events Chair, and Hospitality and Critique Chair in that organization. On a national level, Gail was one of the founding staff members of the Romance Writers of America's electronic newsletter, eNotes and served as editor of that publication for a number of years. In 2005, she was

August is the height of vacation time. Everyone is either coming or going, or so it seems. And the Board is no exception. Since the July meeting we have been "on vacation." What that means is that we have not passed any proposals or thought of anything new for that matter. Currently the only item that is open is elections. We know that we are going to have one, and we know that we will be doing an electronic vote. So let me talk about that for a few moments.

When we were in the planning stages for Liberty, the founders all agreed to take on a two year commitment to the organization. Our by-laws allow an individual to run for any one office three times or for a total of six years in the same job. Heck, some marriages don't last that long! But just because we can be in office for six years does not mean that we will be there. In order to grow, any group needs new ideas and a fresh outlook on the existing operations. It's how things get better and how things grow. The founders never wanted a group that settled for "it's always been done this way," and I don't think any of our members would benefit from that attitude. I ask that you give serious consideration to running for a Board position. Even if you don't win the election, by committing to run you show your willingness to volunteer and, trust me, we have jobs for you to do if you are willing.

In future bulletins we will be announcing our election committee, so keep an eye out. The announcement will also give a brief job description to help you make up your mind. Nominations will be open on September 1st and will close

awarded the RWA's prestigious Service Award for her commitment and volunteer efforts. She also chaired the RWA's 2007 Chapter Newsletter Contest and the 2008 ad hoc committee for reform recommendations and changes to that contest. For the past eight years she has been a member of the RWA Communication Committee. After being out of high school for twenty years, Gail went back to college and obtained her associate degree in accounting. A lifelong resident of the Jersey Shore, Ms. Freeman believes in happy endings and working towards your goals, no matter how long it takes.

on September 15th. The link to the ballot will be supplied on October 1st, and all votes must be received by October 15th. There will be a weekly reminder to vote. The new Board will be announced at the November meeting and will take office on January 1st. Existing Board members will work with the incoming members for one month to answer any questions and ease the transition.

As always, if you have any questions, feel free to contact any Board member. We love to hear from you.

Enjoy your summer vacations and I'll see you at "movie day."

Gail

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Can This Writer Be Cloned? by Colleen Admirand, aka C. H. Admirand



C.H. Admirand was born in Aiken, South Carolina, but her parents moved back to northern New Jersey where she grew up, which, if you've met her, would explain a lot. She's always had her nose in a book, has traveled the world over, and even tested the time-space continuum, thanks to the awesome power of the written word. One of her writing quirks is that she loves to include bits and pieces of her ancestors and ancestry in all of her books. The castle on her website is the ancestral home of her Purcell ancestors, Loughmoe Castle in Tipperary, Ireland.

C.H. Admirand's 9th novel, A

When I received Anne's e-mail a few days ago requesting an article, I thought of course, I'd love to. That being said, here I am at the eleventh hour trying to think of some bit of useful advice to help others trying to juggle their lives to include their true passion: writing.

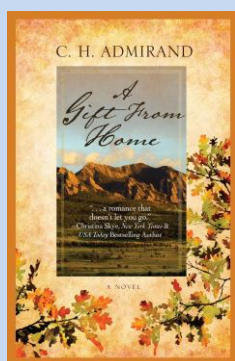
Time is definitely something I don't have to spare. My darling daughter once told me that if she could make a wish, she'd wish for more hours in the day for me. I laughed and told her it was a wonderful idea, but that I'd probably fill up each and every one of those extra hours with things that just had to be done. Hence the title of my article and the question: Can This Writer Be Cloned? I admit the first image that comes to mind is from an old Woody Allen movie, where they were going to clone their leader from what was left of his nose. Was it his movie *Sleeper*? I'm sure someone out there knows. Unfortunately, I can't remember; my brain is totally fried because I just turned in the proposal for the second book in my trilogy ten minutes ago. Getting back to the topic at hand, if I could be cloned, I could do twice the work and accomplish everything that needs to be done.

As writers, it isn't enough to write a great book; we have to actively promote said book. Promoting the book encompasses attending conferences and book signings, as well as on-line promoting via Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and various other groups and blogs.

BUT, I have a day job that I juggle with the mundane tasks all of us have to do: paying bills, grocery shopping, etc. Those of you who know me, know that my mom has been in and out of the hospital for the past decade, so added to all of the above would be paying my mother's bills, taking her grocery shopping, to doctor visits, etc.

As there are only so many hours in the day, I've decided that cloning would be the way to go. But who has the time to research the procedure and medical

GIFT FROM HOME, Book 4 in her on-going Irish Western Series, will be released by Five Star Expressions on August 16, 2010. The first book in her Medieval Trilogy, THE LORD OF MEREWOOD KEEP, will be released in audio format in Nov./Dec. 2010 by Audiolark. Watch for her debut in mass market paperback with the release of her 10th novel: THE SECRET LIFE OF COWBOYS: TYLER, coming in March 2011. With 8 short stories and 10 novels to her credit, this award-winning, multi-published author's books are available in paperback, hardcover, trade paperback, magazine, e-book, and audio format. Visit her at: www.chadmirand.com and c.h.admirand@gmail.com



facilities that would handle the procedure? Then there is the expense. Frankly, I'm not sure I can come up with the extra money, since I recently spent the money to attend the RWA Conference, but at the last minute rushed my mother to the hospital with a fever and hip pain. She had a partial hip replacement this week and was transferred to a rehab unit two days ago. Needless to say, I cannot get my conference fee back. Too bad. I could have put it toward the bank account I'm considering opening for my CTWBC Fund.

As it always pays to have a Plan B; I have a color-coded spreadsheet of a schedule that I hope I'll be able to stick to. (Deb Mullins, if you're reading this, you know how much I love them <g>.) So it all comes down to prioritizing. My family, my mom, my job, and writing take precedence over spending time updating Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, blogs, etc. So until I can save up enough money for the clone procedure, or hire someone to post for me, I'll be sticking to my spreadsheet. Thank goodness my darling husband helped me create a working schedule this morning. As always, he is my hero.

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Using Conflict to Sell Your Book by Virginia Kantra



USA Today bestselling author Virginia Kantra credits her love for strong heroes and courageous heroines to a

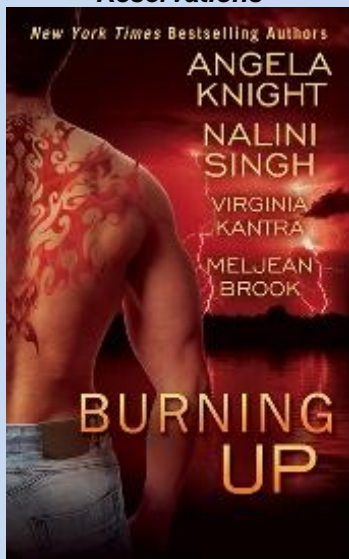
I get to judge a lot of contests. Not as many as I used to, but enough that I'm beginning to understand editors more. One of the things I've noticed recently is that even the worst of the contest chapters are not bad. Format is flawless. The hero and heroine meet pretty darn close to page one. The writing is competent, the dialogue is sometimes really clever, and writers are using the five senses all over the place.

So why are these entrants still unpublished? Or, for those of us who love reading romance and read a lot of it, why do some books leave us cold while others, books with mistakes in them that our critique partners would never let us get away with, keep us reading until two in the morning and hit the bestseller lists?

I believe it's our emotional identification with the story, the author's ability to make us care about her characters and what happens to them, that hooks us. And if it can hook us, chances are good that story will hook an editor as well.

A key component in creating emotional identification is a strong and personal

childhood spent devouring fairy tales. A six-time Romance Writers of America RITA Award finalist, Virginia is the winner of numerous writing awards, including the Golden Heart, Golden Leaf, Holt Medallion, Maggie Award of Excellence and two National Readers' Choice Awards. After writing her popular "MacNeill Brothers" and "Trouble in Eden" series for Silhouette, Virginia turned her hand to romantic suspense and paranormal romance. Her new series, *Children of the Sea*, began with the back-to-back releases of *Sea Witch* (July 2008) and *Sea Fever* (August 2008). Look for *Sea Lord* in bookstores now! Married to her college sweetheart and the mother of three kids, Virginia is a firm believer in the strength of family, the importance of storytelling, and the power of love. Her favorite thing to make for dinner? *Reservations*



conflict. One of the reasons romantic suspense is popular—and spies and Navy SEALs and historicals with power struggles and castle sieges and battlefields—is that conflict is already inherent to those worlds. My own children of the sea series exploits not only the mythological struggle between the children of the sea and the children of fire, but the inherent tension between the mystical, magical, sensual world of the merfolk and the pragmatic concerns of the Maine islanders.

Now those of you who are writing light contemporaries or drawing room Regencies can protest this does not work for you. Your fictional worlds may not be inherently dangerous places. Nobody's shooting at your hero and heroine. But your characters still can face grave emotional danger: the agony of a blind date, the loss of a reputation, the weight of a parent's disapproval, the failure of a marriage, the loss of a child.

Hooking readers' emotions. Tapping into readers' fears. That's what emotional connection is about. Publishers like Harlequin know this. There is a reason why there are so many books published about secret babies and reunions and marriages of convenience. Those situations carry the seeds of emotional conflict that make a story.

This does not mean that every romance has to be a tearjerker or make use of an easily identifiable category hook. But if you write romance, you are making an emotional promise to your readers. What are you promising? That depends on the kind of story you have to tell. But to satisfy your readers, you need to establish that promise on the very first page.

One way to do this is to suggest the main character's emotional conflict in the opening hook. Contrast the opening lines of my two most recent releases:

Major John Harris squinted between his horse's ears, willing himself to ignore the throbbing in his knee and the pounding like hoofbeats in his head.

He had survived the bloody siege of Ciudad Rodrigo. He would not die of a hangover now that he was home.

Now that he had a home.

And all his limbs.

He had not expected either outcome. He was a man used to dealing with life's harsher realities. But he could not be sorry that life, for once, had frustrated his worst expectations.

- "Shifting Sea," *Burning Up* anthology, Berkley, August 2010

The trip of a lifetime, the tour brochure had promised. *Culture, nightlife, adventure, and romance in Europe's most swinging capital.*

Twenty-two-year-old Elizabeth Ramsey tightened her grip on her purse strap. Getting accosted outside a dance club in Copenhagen might qualify as adventure.

But *romance*?

She looked at the men blocking her way back inside the club. Three of them—she counted—with pockmarked skin, bad hair, and crappy attitudes.

Not a chance.

- *Immortal Sea*, Berkley, September 2010

The opening lines show both characters on the point of change in their lives, confronted with an unexpected situation and a shift in expectations. But the characters, their goals, and their conflicts are very different. Major Jack has come home seeking peace. Liz Ramsey left home seeking adventure. Each of these openings makes a different emotional promise. By establishing the character's conflict on page one, the writer has a better shot at fulfilling that promise.

If you don't have an inherently emotional subject, your characters will need killer motivation. Even a trivial goal can assume importance if the reader can identify with the hero/heroine's reasons for needing whatever-it-is. A deep, personal motivation works better than an abstract one. Not, "save the wetlands," but "save the family farm." Not, "my best friend's uncle's marriage is having problems," but "my mother left my father," or even, "my husband left me."

I mentioned the tensions inherent in the children of the sea novels. But the conflict has to be personal for the reader to care. Jack falls in love with a mysterious woman from the sea. Liz's shot at adventure has personal consequences she couldn't imagine. Those high personal stakes create the emotional identification you need to hook a reader's heart...or an editor's attention.

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Where a Good Idea Leads You by Mickey Flagg

The genre you choose to write in always has parameters or notable traits. As an author, we explore those qualities to bring characters, settings, even situations to life. The way a good writer does this is with research. Classified a noun, research is more of an action: the methodical investigation into a subject in order to discover facts, to establish or revise a theory, or to develop a plan of action based on facts. It's safe to say no matter what you write, be it time-travel, mystery, historical, or paranormal, you simply must knuckle down and do your homework. If the story hinges on a left-handed adversary, you'll want to explore the distinct differences between him/her (in the case of paranormal or sci-fi—it) and a right-handed villain.

Often in the midst of research, something other than the subject you're



Passion sharpens one's creative edge and fractured life-events change everyone. Believe me, I've had my share. So I sat down and wrote a book. Born and raised in northern New Jersey, my first nineteen years of life were spent in my father's florist shop. This makes me an original flower-child before the 1960s began! When Mom purchased a piano for my sister, my destiny was revealed. After earning a BA in Music Education, love for learning led me to RADA in London to study acting. I have an MA in teaching, Supervisor Certification, and an M. Ed. in Educational Leadership. Although tempted, the doctorate is on hold at the moment. In 2009, I received the title of Distinguished Music Educator at the Yale University Music Symposium. During intense coursework for the second masters, I wrote many journals and educational essays. This led to being a contributing author in a book about music education in urban schools. And when my life changed again, I took a trip into the paranormal to pen Retribution! Consequences followed shortly thereafter, and Inheritance is now under contract. My children, Richard and Kara, my sister, Linda, and supportive friends continue to encourage the dramatic story teller within me.

researching tweaks your interest. It may even move the plot in a different direction. Facts lead to other facts. Some facts reshape a storyline; some add depth. And while the purist will procrastinate, the passionate author will allow research to enhance the storyboard with new possibilities. Details unearthed in solid research create a "real feel" to the piece. It makes characters jump off the page, paints a more vivid picture for the reader.

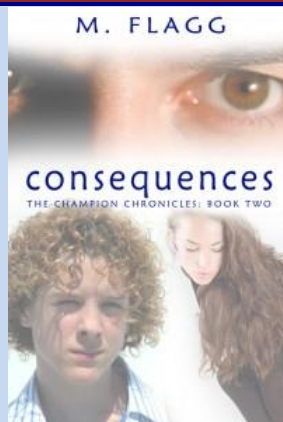
Research takes time and a certain sense of stamina. With technological avenues open to all today, an afternoon at the old laptop can explore a lost civilization or a museum in the Czech Republic. A trip to the local library can be the difference between brilliant and blasé. In world-building for time-travel, sci-fi, and the paranormal, legends as well as scientific data might be the "what-if" to turn your novel into a fantastic journey.

Another method of research is demonstration. Pause and step back. Find someone to interview or watch; maybe take a class or two. Be it Karate or cooking, if you're not an expert, during the writing of your novel is not the time to guess. And if the current WIP is number ten in a long line of published successes, why let down a faithful reader with faulty facts?

It is often the seed of an idea which sparks creativity in a writer. Through research, the seed begins to take root. So spin every tale with solid facts.

Study various authors' styles of delivering those facts, and, above all, make time to investigate the details. Even if something doesn't directly relate to your piece, store the knowledge for future works. A good idea can lead many places. With a bit of research, ideas blossom into fabulous stories in any genre.

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The Perils of the Prequel by E. F. Watkins



2009 Golden Heart® Finalist
E. F. Watkins specializes in paranormal suspense, and has published five novels with Amber Quill Press. Her first, DANCE WITH THE DRAGON, received a 2004 EPPIE as Best Horror Novel. Her third, BLACK FLOWERS, was a Finalist for both the 2006 EPPIEs and the 2007 Indie Excellence Book Awards. Her other books include the romantic mystery RIDE A DANCING HORSE (as "Eileen Watkins") and the paranormal thrillers PARAGON and DANU'S CHILDREN. Her sixth book, ONE BLOOD, is due out September 2010. She is a member of the Garden State Horror Writers, Sisters in Crime, Liberty States Fiction Writers, Mystery Writers of America and Broad Universe. For more background, visit

In Hollywood, the perils of making a sequel to a successful movie are well-known. For every triumphant *Godfather II*, there's a dreadful *Jaws II* or *Exorcist II*.

Even fewer moviemakers attempt a prequel. The best-known example is George Lucas, who filmed not one but three prequels to *Star Wars*, many years after the original version.

I admire his courage.

I've just finished writing a prequel to a novel I published seven years ago. I never really intended to—I sort of got talked into it.

After my book *DANCE WITH THE DRAGON* came out in 2003, one reviewer and a few readers said they wished they knew more about the hero and heroine, Kat Van Braam and Armand Renascut, joined forces and became sort-of paranormal crime fighters. One person said, "It almost feels as if there should have been an earlier book."

There was. I wrote it many years back (badly) and called it *NO SUCH THING*. It was basically vampire romantic suspense at a time when no one was publishing books like that. *DARK SHADOWS* was still big in reruns, Frank Langella was chewing scenery and necks on Broadway as *DRACULA*, but book publishers didn't get the message.

So I tabled that book, but I couldn't forget those characters. I let them age a bit in my mind, came up with a villain who would give them a good challenge, and wrote *DANCE WITH THE DRAGON* as a paranormal thriller.

A new POD publisher called Amber Quill Press liked the result. And in 2004, *DD* won a national EPPIE Award for Best Horror Novel.

Write a prequel? Heck, why tempt fate?

But today, in 2010, you can't swing a string of garlic at your local Barnes & Noble without hitting a vampire romance novel. I started to wonder if I should stake out a bit of that territory for myself. More accurately, for Kat and Renascut, who are quite a bit different in style from either Sookie and Bill or



Bella and Edward.

This will be a snap, I thought. I know the characters inside and out by now, and I already wrote the story once before. All it needs is an update, a little polish.

Ha! As soon as I re-read my earlier version, I knew I was in for a lot more work than that. The process actually was more like building a suspension bridge.

As I understand it, bridge-builders start on either side of the river and work their way toward the middle. I'm sure an awful lot of planning, engineering, and math that go into the project. Still, there has to be some degree of suspense (pun intended) as to whether those two halves really will connect up in the middle of the river.

It's a good metaphor for my sequel, in two ways.

First, there was the problem of getting the plot of this book, ONE BLOOD, to sync up with the original. DANCE WITH THE DRAGON was published in 2003 and written in 2000-2001. Shortly after it came out, I grew conscious of the fact that references to a "boom box" and an audio cassette tape already sounded dated, and some readers asked why my characters didn't use cell phones in emergencies. So how could I write ONE BLOOD using 2010 high technology?

I asked my publisher about putting out an updated version of DD, but he didn't think that was feasible. My editor suggested I set the prequel in the late 1990s. At first I wasn't crazy about that idea, but soon I began to see advantages. Because of the type of work my characters end up doing for the government, it actually would be more credible if DD took place before the events of September 11, 2001.

They meet in Princeton, so I set about researching both the town and the university during that period. It didn't help that the university seems very secretive about revealing even the most mundane information to outsiders, but I did my best. It tried to stick close to reality in terms of the town and campus buildings and events, and tweaked just a few things for dramatic effect. I'm also including a Foreword that explains certain inconsistencies between events in ONE BLOOD and background information that's related in DD.

The other big logistical problem was getting my hero and heroine on the same page, at least figuratively. I admitted to my critique group, "They're living together happily at the start of DANCE WITH THE DRAGON, but right now I don't know how I'm ever going to get them there!"

At the start of ONE BLOOD, my "hero" is still a pretty bad guy; the only ray of hope is that he's really sick of being a bad guy. He tracks down Kat because she's the last descendant of a man who almost destroyed him a century ago.

She likes him fine until she finds out exactly who and what he is, and then she *loathes* him. She has to—that's the Kat I created in DD. She's a world-traveled archaeologist whose parents died on a mission for Doctors without Borders. She's just as highly principled, with an IQ over the moon and a fighting spirit to match.

Of course, she and my "hero" are perfect for each other, but it took me nearly the whole book to convince them of that. Me and a common enemy.

In the end, though, I think I pulled it off. You can judge for yourself when ONE BLOOD comes out from Amber Quill Press next month (September). As the book closes, Kat and Renascut have worked out a rather unusual domestic arrangement and are poised to jump into the action of DD.

And at the end of DD? Well, my hero is doing remote viewing for the U.S. government, and at that point terrorism wasn't even the major threat that it became shortly afterward.

A sequel? Possibly.

But before that, I need a break from these two! Maybe even another seven years...

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