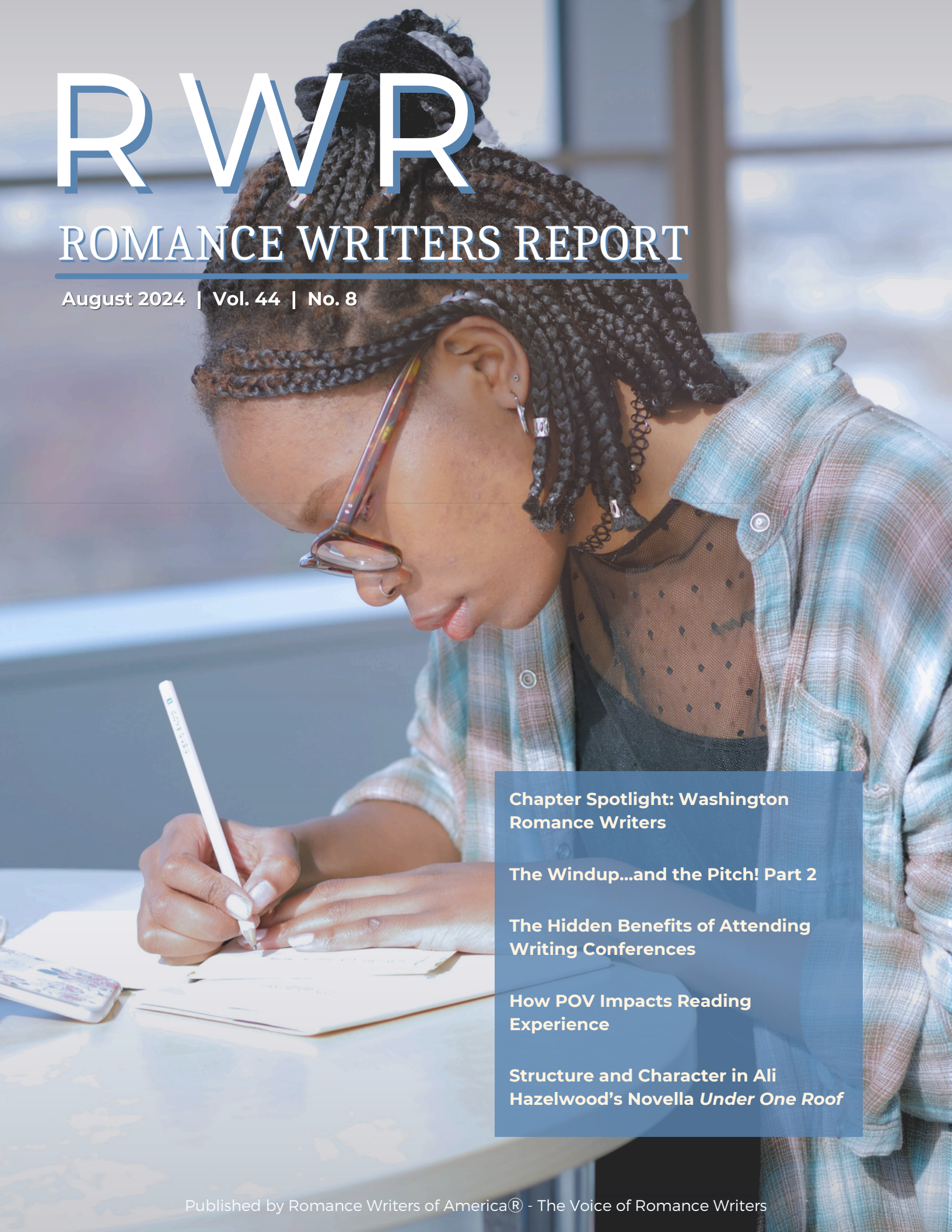


A woman with dark hair in braids, wearing glasses and a plaid shirt, is leaning over a desk, writing in a notebook with a white pen. The background is a blurred indoor setting with windows.

RWR

ROMANCE WRITERS REPORT

August 2024 | Vol. 44 | No. 8

**Chapter Spotlight: Washington
Romance Writers**

The Windup...and the Pitch! Part 2

**The Hidden Benefits of Attending
Writing Conferences**

**How POV Impacts Reading
Experience**

**Structure and Character in Ali
Hazelwood's Novella *Under One Roof***

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Contributors

Janet W. Butler

Janet W. Butler splits her days between writing, editorial consulting—and music. Winner of the RWA Golden Heart Award, she is the creator of 12 Weeks to Your First (or Next) Novel, a compilation of lessons and tips from her popular workshop series. When she's not singing or at the piano, she's writing more books...proudly represented by RWA member Terrie Wolf at AKA Literary Management.



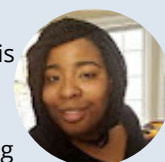
Sharon Roe

Sharon started writing romance stories in the fifth grade at a Friday night sleepover with her best friend. She wrote stories about her and my current crush, Sharon wrote stories about her meeting and then capturing the lifelong adoration of teen idol Donny Osmond. Now, she is an acquiring editor for Soul Mate Publishing.



Tenesha L. Curtis

As the owner of GetBookHelp.com, Tenesha is fortunate enough to help new, indie authors strengthen their craft and their careers on a daily basis. This includes one-on-one coaching services, publishing management, live classes, and free lessons on planning, writing, editing, designing, promoting, and publishing books independently.



Tara Roi

Tara Roi holds a bachelor's degree in Film Studies/Screenwriting from Yale, a RYT-200 yoga teaching certification, and an MFA in Writing Popular Fiction from Seton Hill University. A former journalist who often covered environmental issues, she married her ardor for love stories and her passion for environmental justice to pen romance novels with environmental themes as Tara L. Roí. She teaches workshops online and in person. Her Seduce the Muse workshop at RWA's 2022 national conference was filled to overflowing.



Message from the President

BY CLAIR BRETT



And here we stand, at the beginning of my last message to RWA members as president. Back in January 2022 when I received a call from LS, I knew if I agreed to step into the role of RWA President it would be until I was certain RWA had weathered its storms. I said that if the board was looking for someone to sign the closing documents to end RWA I was not the person for the job, but if the board wanted to fight to save an organization I loved dearly, then I was in.

I was not sure I was qualified, but I knew I loved the organization I had been brought up in, and that I wanted to make the organization one that everyone could feel such love and admiration for. I did not know at the time; this would end up being such a big part of my life for over two years. And I am still not certain I was qualified, but I was determined, and when I didn't know something, I reached out to people who did and asked for help. I surrounded myself with other people who believed as I did that RWA needed to remain, but in a new version, one of welcome and community, one that reflected the love that we write about.

Now, sitting here in my last week as president of

RWA, getting ready to hand over the reins to Jacki Renee, and the 2024-25 board of directors, I am proud about the work the boards have done over the last few years. And, as a former Girl Scout who took to heart the saying "leave something better than when you found it." I am happy to say, that maybe I didn't have a background in cooperative law, or administration, leadership, or any number of things past presidents have had walking into this space, but I had an unwavering love of Romance Writers of America, and a clear purpose, which was to save it in order for the next generation of romance authors to have what it offered me.

How many times have you sat at your computer and asked yourself "what am I doing?" "I'll never be as good as (put idol author here)"? The fact that you are sitting at the keyboard is the reason you deserve it. If you attend conferences and see your favorite authors and think you have no right being in such company, I promise you that each one of your favorite authors has a similar story they could share.

Don't worry about where you are at the start, just begin. Life is on the job training and that goes for someone stepping into a national president role, or someone writing their first story. Will you make mistakes? Absolutely! Will you feel defeated at times more than you feel success? Yup. But all those things lead you to becoming someone else's favorite author and a beacon to a new writer. We are all mentors whether we sign up or not. People watch people who are doing the thing they want to do. You have a responsibility to keep going and pushing yourself

into those corners that are unfamiliar and uncomfortable. You are showing yourself and others it can be done.

The best romances as we all know are the ones that seem impossible at the beginning. How will these characters ever get beyond their own failings and their mutual conflict to see, really see, the love that is waiting for them?

This is because we all know how crippling it can be to step into that unknown and take on the thing that you want, but don't know if you deserve.

If I, little unknown Clair Brett, can guide, squeeze, wrangle, and force RWA through the storms it weathered to see a new day with so much promise and excitement you can sit down and

write that next scene, or figure out that plot point.

And, as a proud member of RWA since 2004, I am not going anywhere. I will continue to be a fierce supporter of RWA, romance, and writers- ALL WRITERS!

So, keep doing the hard things, keep doing the first things, and remember every time you succeed a new writer is watching, and gaining courage through what they see in you.

Signing off,

Clair



FIND YOUR RWA CHAPTER

News & Updates

BITE-SIZED INFO ON THE INDUSTRY

PUBLISHING

550 Stores Participated in 2024 Bookstore Romance Day

Publishers Weekly

This year's edition of Bookstore Romance Day, its sixth, was held on August 17 and proved to be its biggest yet. "There were more than 550 participating bookstores in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K.," Billy Bloebaum, founder of the event, reported. This marks a significant increase from its inaugural event in 2019, which saw just over 150 stores participate.

"Year-over-year growth in terms of number of participating bookstores is usually around 15-20%," Bloebaum noted, adding that the event's reach has also extended beyond traditional brick-and-mortar establishments: "About 10% of this year's participants were online, mobile, pop-up, or other non-traditional models."

[Read More.](#)

Appeals Court Delivers A Mixed Decision in Iowa Book Banning Case

Publishers Weekly

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit on August 9 vacated a December 2023 injunction blocking parts of Iowa's controversial book banning law, SF 496. But the move could only be a temporary setback for freedom to read advocates, with court watchers noting that the decision also rejected the state's core legal argument: that the plaintiffs lacked standing to

challenge SF 496 because the placement and removal of books from public school libraries and classrooms is government speech.

In a brief but thorough opinion, the appeals court held that the plaintiffs in the case—which include the Big Five publishers led by Penguin Random House as well as four bestselling authors—do have standing to sue, and swiftly dispatched with the state's government speech argument.

[Read More.](#)

The Joy of Sexy Fiction, For Women by Women

The Guardian

In her article on reading smut, Zoe Williams focuses on the difference between romance and erotica (My weeks of reading hornily: steamy book sales have doubled - and I soon found out why, 6 August. To my mind, that misses the point. For me, it is about the difference between "good" smut and ... well, just smut.

I am a 54-year-old Cambridge English literature graduate and I feel I have only just "discovered" smut when reading Sarah J Maas's wonderful Acotar (A Court of Thorns and Roses) series earlier this year (by the way, those are the SJM books Williams should have chosen for her article, not the young adult Throne of Glass series, which has very little sex, in light of their intended audience).

[Read More.](#)

Association of American Publishers Backs Senate NO FAKES Act.

Publishing Perspectives

The American Senate's bill called the NO FAKES Act is an acronym that stands for the Nurture Originals, Foster Art, and Keep Entertainment Safe Act of 2004 and is has bipartisan sponsorship from four prominent members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Today (July 31), Coons and Blackburn introduced in the Senate an updated edition of the bill which, as Christiano Lima-Strong at the Washington Post today writes, "would give people a federal property right to approve the use of their voice, appearance or likeness—and expose those who create or distribute an unauthorized replica to legal liability."

[Read more.](#)



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Member Benefit

Publisher Alley is a web-based sales reporting tool that includes all of the sales and inventory data from Baker & Taylor. Baker & Taylor is the world's largest book distributor! We work with publishers to provide their book products to all markets. Publisher Alley allows authors to see what titles libraries are buying on a daily basis. Publisher Alley is the BEST tool available for analyzing sales on your titles and competitive titles by subject area, sales level, publication date, price point, reviews, author affiliations, interdisciplinary identifiers and sales channel. Full bibliographic data, including cover images and table of contents is available for all titles.

Book sales data serves several needs:

- Easily produce market research for book proposals, based on sales of comparable titles. Approach the right publishers for each project.
- Evaluate the potential of projects for self-publication: learn what sells in which markets, and at what price points.
- Locate expert authors as sources for newspaper or magazine stories, or identify trends related to world events.

Chapter Spotlight: Washington Romance Writers

BY J. KEELY THRALL
CHAPTER PRESIDENT



Spotlighting RWA chapters

Once upon a time, in a big bustling city far far away, Washington Romance Writers was one of the largest local chapters in RWA. (That would be Washington, DC, not our larger and rainier cousins in Washington State; hi, y'all!) At our biggest, WRW had nearly 300 members. Oh, Lance—hold me! Such a crush. The mind fairly boggles!

Then our chapter went through its “dark moment”—or moments, to be honest. We realized we needed to ask ourselves some very serious questions about... diversity. Inclusion. Cliques. Entrenched authority. Love, friendship, support. How to stay together without (very literally) infecting each other during the pandemic.

As we faced into those questions, our numbers declined, down to 42 at our lowest point. Too few members and too few resources for us to keep operations running like a “large chapter”. Oh, Lance—the world has changed beneath our feet with breath-stealing speed! What’s a delicate romance writer to do?!

Just like everyone else, we redid our coiffeurs, smoothed our skirts over our hips (with apologies to our non-skirt-wearing members), and met the new day with a pearly smile.

We’ve kept all the good stuff we learned during the lean years (like the bliss of online writing

groups, the importance of an active email loop for member conversations and questions, the value of realizing that writers tend to be introverted and maybe need a little extra support to be social). Instead of yearning for yesteryear, we are now focused on building our community—strengthening the support we demonstrate to each other and meeting the needs of our members no matter how far down the path they are in their writing journey, from first draft to global publishing empire.

We recently had our first “WRW at the Movies” when we gathered at an area theater to watch a movie together before dissecting its structure, characterization, themes and all the other aspects necessary to good story-telling (it happened to be “Deadpool and Wolverine,” and remarkably, even the senior stateswriters of our chapter really enjoyed it—yay!). Our Annual General Meeting is coming up, after which we’ll all go to lunch together. We’re up to sixty-ish members and more are coming back to the fold. Headcount aside, we’re a large tent with a big heart and there’s always room for at least one more... hopefully you! If you’re looking for a local group, we’re ready to welcome you. Yes, even if you’re introverted and need a little extra encouragement to join. We’ll hold your hand, answer your questions, cheer you on, and take you to the movies. But oh, Lance—why can’t it always be Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman? Just asking.



RWA 2024

Oct. 11-13 | Austin, TX

RWA 2024 Conference Registration Closes September 13!

The annual Romance Writers of America conference returns this fall! The countdown to RWA2024 has begun, and we can't wait to see you in Austin, Texas, from October 11-13, 2024!

This year's theme is *Legacy of Love: Returning to the Foundation of Romance Writers of America*.

Registration is now open on the official conference website rwaconference.org and ends on September 13, at 11:59 PM Central Time unless we reach capacity before then. Email questions to conference@rwa.org.

Hear from a renowned romance author and a key industry leader who will ignite your passion for writing and for RWA. We will unveil our keynote speakers in the coming days.

[Visit the official conference website to register today!](http://rwaconference.org)

Keynote Speaker: Brenda Jackson

We are thrilled to announce that Brenda Jackson, New York Times and USA Today Bestselling author, will be the opening keynote speaker for the Romance Writers of America's 2024 Annual Conference!

Brenda Jackson's significant contributions to romance literature have inspired countless readers and writers alike. Her presence at our conference promises to be an unforgettable start to what is sure to be an enriching and dynamic event.

Get ready to be inspired by Brenda Jackson's keynote address as she shares her journey, insights, and passion for romance writing. Don't miss this opportunity to gain wisdom from one of the industry's most influential voices!



The Windup...and the Pitch! Part 2

BY JANET BUTLER

In our first installment, we talked about a few tips to carry in your writer's figurative "back pocket" to help make the stressful experience of pitching your work, face-to-face, a little less intimidating—and, we hope, a little more productive.

What we'll talk about in this round is something we often forget: the pitch "audition" doesn't put just you on the spot, but also editors and agents as well. We tend to think of these publishing professionals as holding all the power or all the "cards," but...that's not necessarily so. Especially when it comes to the question-and-answer part of the appointment.

That interaction can almost be more frightening than the pitch itself, but it doesn't have to be...if you keep a few tips in mind.

Tip #1: Remember, *you are not the only one who is nervous here.*

No, I don't mean your fellow pitchers are all basket cases (although we know they are!)...but think about the poor editors or agents who "get to" sit through all this.

They spend hours captive in a little room, usually not a very comfortable little room, in a strange hotel, in a strange city, and see one stranger after another come in and try to make some connection with them.

It's exhausting.

Not to mention (let's face it) that it can be scary as well.

There are some "creative souls" out there that none of us would want to meet in an alley on a dark night. An agent or editor never knows if one of those people is going to find her table...and she never knows how she'll handle it if they do.

And if you think about all the conferences and workshops that editors and agents attend, and all the times that people want to spend pitching them work—whether it be in these official sessions or at the lunch table, or at breakfast, or sometimes when the agent just wants to have down time and a stiff drink...it's easy to feel more sympathy for them than nerves about your own stuff.



Some editors and agents are very, very young, fresh out of school, they see a seasoned pro writer come in—and they feel a little intimidated. (Yes. It happens.)

So just remember, and keep remembering: these are people you're talking to.

They might start out bright-eyed in the morning, or they might need three cups of coffee to hear any pitches before 10 AM. If you're at 9:30 and they don't look interested, don't assume it's you; it might just be that they need some caffeine.

Do the best you can, regardless of the end result of your pitch, to establish a friendly, professional connection that will leave them with a smile and a little more relaxed attitude toward the next person who comes in.

You're doing all three of you a favor that way.

"But," I can hear you ask, "what if I get done with my pitch, and the editor or agent asks if I have anything else...and I don't? What do I say?"

Tip #2: There's no need to sell yourself—or your appointment opportunity—short.

This is an excellent time for what a former business partner of mine used to call "the old truth ploy."

Sometimes, you truly don't have anything else to pitch...at that point. You're in there slugging with your first novel. (You brave little snowflake, you!) Or you do have other stuff, but it's not really ready to let out in public yet—you're revising, you're still getting feedback from beta readers, etc. So, then, remember that the "pitch street" goes two ways...and interview the editor or agent.



Chances are they'll ask you if you have any questions, *so be prepared with some.*

At various times, I've asked editors or agents if there's any kind of book they never want to see again. (Some people think that takes either guts or desperation!) I did that in one appointment, in which an agent flatly refused to even look at the work I was pitching because that particular genre "didn't sell." (It did, and it still does, but I was smart enough not to say so on the spot!)

And it worked like a charm. The agent actually laughed—which, you'll find, most of them will. It's a refreshingly disarming and unthreatening question, for one thing. And for another, it shows you're truly trying to learn. Which is a great way to get professional respect as a writer.

I've used sessions to pitch one or two projects, gotten only mild interest, and switched gears and talked about what trends the agent has seen lately that she likes. Again, usually they'll be quite honest about that. The inside information you can glean that way is priceless! Not to mention that it also shows you've thought beyond trying to shuffle your way through a memorized pitch or read it off index cards and then freeze!

Speaking of index cards...

Tip #3: This is a time to travel light.

You may be wondering, “What do I bring to a pitch? A partial manuscript? A synopsis? A one-page summary?”

Ideally, you bring yourself, your business cards, and your enthusiasm.

There was an era when it seemed everyone wanted a “one-sheet,” a little standard 8 x 11 page that tells them about what kind of books you write, gives them your contact information, and sometimes—if you’re published—can give them cover blurbs or teasers for work you’ve already done.

These are great to have because they’re portable, they usually have both a photo of the author and book covers or other graphics that convey the type of writing you do, and they’re great memory joggers for when and if you submit. But unless you’re going to a conference where editors and agents specifically demand those as part of signing up for an appointment, don’t fret if you don’t have them. They’re not deal-breakers.

In short? When in doubt...leave it out.

Other than a business card, don’t bring any other printed material to the appointment. Generally, editors and agents have no easy way to carry all of it home!

Now, to be fair, I have heard of agents asking if the author has a copy of a partial available. In that case, have your laptop with you at the conference, get the agent’s room number or the editor’s other contact information, go to the hotel business center, and print up what they want to see.

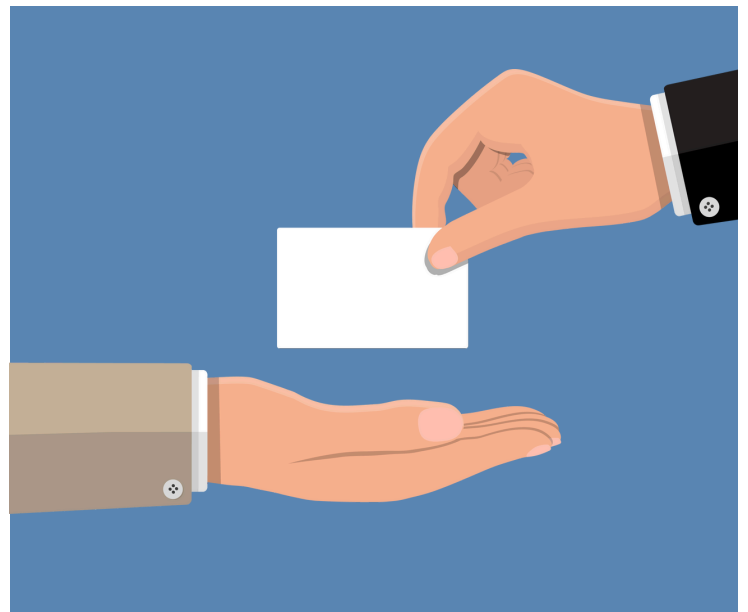
(Which is why it’s a good idea to have a laptop with you, with your WIP’s on it!)

If for some reason you don’t have your laptop, a thumb drive or such with some of your work on it will also help you cope with that possibility.

But in all fairness, out of being in this business for decades...I’ve heard of that request happening once. So don’t expect it to happen, don’t be disappointed if it doesn’t happen, and don’t worry if it happens to someone else and not you.

Even if an editor or agent is excited about your pitch, chances are they won’t get to read more before they go back to their offices anyway. So, while it’s nice to send them off with it, it’s generally not going to mean you get a contract on the spot, either.

Exceptions, of course, do happen. But you shouldn’t worry about being one of them!



In conclusion?

In one overriding sense, editors and agents are just like us: they're readers, and they, too, stay up too late at night with good books. If you've got a great story—and, of course, you do!—relax and let them in on it. All of them dream of finding that next great book and author Out There Somewhere, and you just might be the one.

So, hone your pitch from your synopsis, your queries, and other notes you write yourself about your story. Run these things past trusted friends and critiquers, combine them, tweak them, and practice them until you can't wait to tell someone about your book...

...and then, breathe.

Just....breathe.

In a few minutes' worth of conversation, you'll make a new contact. You may even make a sale, or several, from the encounter.

And that's all good.

Happy pitching!

Want to write for the Romance Writers Report?

Submit your pitch and earn up to \$500 if your article is selected and published.

[Click here to submit your pitch!](#)

The Romance Writers Report Committee seeks articles for all levels and tracks of writing. We welcome submissions from beginner to expert authors, and aim to include a diverse array of subject matter expertise, including craft, industry, marketing, business, and more. While articles of all themes are welcome, here are some areas that will be given specific focus in upcoming issues:

- *October 2024 - NaNoWriMo (submit by August 31, 2024)*
- *November 2024 - Time Management (submit by September 30, 2024)*
- *December 2024 - Writing Goals (submit by October 31, 2024)*
- *January 2025 - Book signings (submit by November 30, 2024)*
- *February 2025 - Love Scenes (submit by December 31, 2024)*
- *March 2025 - The 5 Senses (submit by January 31, 2024)*



The Hidden Benefits of Attending Writing Conferences

BY SHARON ROE

So you're thinking of attending a writing conference? Good for you! They're great fun (even if you're an introvert) and, if you use them correctly, can catapult your writing skills and career (even if you don't get picked up by an agent or publisher.) Here are three things you might not have considered when deciding whether or not attending will be worth it.

One of the top takeaways you gain from attending a conference is that writing conferences are the quickest way to up your business sense in the publishing world. If you're just starting out, you might be tempted to view your writing as "just for fun," and it is, but success comes from understanding the intersection between fun and business. Conferences, much like firehoses, give you a dose of what's good for you in double time. And besides, you come home feeling like you're all that because you treated your writing like it was all grown up.

If you're more of an intermediate with your publishing knowledge, attending a conference might just become the day you win the golden ticket and gain the attention of the perfect agent

or editor. Yes, if you are unprepared, giving an in-person pitch can be terrifying, but if you've done your homework and look at it as a professional opportunity, pitching can give you a better sense of the person you would be working closely with if accepted. That's gold. You're interviewing them as well, remember.

Another valuable takeaway is that pretty much every person you meet leads you to a higher level of writing. Whether it's new friends who later cheer you on in the trenches, expert pros who give you new insights that push you to a new plateau, or even an agent who says, "No, thanks," everyone there gives you input and information, and every bit helps move you forward.

Also, from all the intense listening that gets done at a conference, you learn how to navigate the treacherous waters of Writing Advice. Everybody's got their opinion, and as writers, we love to share it. Eloquently and loudly. Even if we're wrong. You'll know you've arrived when you can distinguish the difference between sound advice and someone else's limited viewpoint. Hint: if it kills your desire to write, don't listen.

Finally, attending a writing conference forces your attention front and center on YOUR dreams. As you sit in that grand ballroom in that fancy hotel or in that tiny meeting room at the back of your town's conference center, you are making a claim: I am a WRITER. And that's worth way more than whatever it cost to get there.



How POV Impacts Reading Experience

BY TENESHA L. CURTIS

The point of view (POV) from which a story is told can have various effects on what it's like to read a book. This includes elements such as how well your reader is able to relate to your characters or how suspenseful the story feels while reading. Many writers don't realize this, and simply launch into writing in whatever POV comes to mind once their fingers hit the keys. But taking a moment to step back and consider what kind of reading experience you want your audience to have can influence which POV you decide to use. Consider the following options and how they can color the type of entertainment you provide for your audience.

First Person

Writing from a first-person perspective means penning your story as if you were the POV character experiencing the plot. You write as though you're reacting to events in ways that make sense for your POV character's personality and mindset.

"I open the box to find a diamond ring inside, feeling the 'yes' throughout my whole body before I say it out loud. When the word finally leaves my lips, he lifts me in his arms, crushing the box between us, and kisses me like he's been waiting for decades to put his mouth on mine."

Stories written in first person use pronouns like "I," "me," and "my" to talk about the POV

character (who is often the main character of the manuscript, but not always). Think about writing a book like filming a movie. In first person, the camera is inside a pair of glasses that the POV character is wearing. The audience can only see what the character can see (nothing behind, above, or below them unless the character is deliberately looking in those directions for some reason).



In the example above, the POV character's name may be Utada, but she wouldn't use her own name when talking about herself as she's telling someone her proposal story. She would use "I," "my," "me," and "mine." She also can't say for sure what the person who proposed to her is thinking or feeling. She can speculate based on their behavior (things they do, things they say, etc.), but (unless there's a fantasy or paranormal element to the romance) she can't read the minds of any other characters to be able to know their internal perceptions for certain.

A First-Person Reading Experience

Increased Mystery

Writing in first person means that what the reader knows is limited. Even if your romance novel is not meant to be suspenseful or mysterious, those tones are heightened with first person POV because of all that could be going on around the character without them knowing. What is their teacher thinking? Did their spouse make the reservations? Does their best friend actually like their evening gown or are they lying? First person allows you to keep certain details and events from your readers so that you can catch them off guard with that information later in the manuscript as you see fit. Meet cute circumstances, pregnancy announcements, and breakup texts can be events that both the POV character and the reader are surprised by.

Immersive Storytelling

This POV also allows for more visceral and direct expressions of what a character is going through. You'll be describing sensations, emotions, and thoughts just as a character would process them. Watching someone get a hug from their crush can be exciting and heartwarming. But it's



nowhere near the same as being in a character's head while they are inhaling cologne, relishing the pressure of toned biceps against their rib cage, or feeling the stubble on someone's cheek against their forehead.

Third Person Limited

Writing from a limited third person perspective entails writing like you're accompanying your POV character throughout their journey and you know them like the back of your hand. You're standing right over their shoulder observing everything that's going on, but you're not actively involved in the story. As with first person, you have insight into what the character is thinking and feeling and can relay that to the reader.

"Utada opens the box to find a diamond ring inside, feeling the 'yes' throughout her whole body before she says it out loud. When the word finally leaves her lips, Amir lifts her in his arms, crushing the box between them, and kisses her like he's been waiting decades to touch his lips to hers."

Third person is the POV that uses pronouns such as "him," "hers," and "they." The writing takes place from the standpoint of someone observing what is happening, but not being directly involved in it. In the example, both Utada and Amir are referred to by their first names. Yet, only what's going on inside of Utada's mind is directly expressed because she is the character the "camera" is focused on (i.e. limited to). If your manuscript were a film set, third person limited would be like filming with a camera that stays a few feet behind the POV character. The reader still gets information on their thoughts and feelings, but from a slight distance. In this perspective, the other characters in a scene still are not having their thoughts and feelings directly expressed to the reader.

The Third Person Limited Reading Experience

Flexibility with Suspense

Third person limited still sticks closely to the experience of the POV character. You maintain the ability to withhold information from your audience in order to keep them in the dark about certain aspects of the story that your character wouldn't be privy to. However, you can also describe the character and their world from a few figurative paces away.

For example, by not being in the character's head, you can easily describe precisely what they look like. In first person, this is often done in more indirect ways. Examples would be having another character comment on the POV character's appearance, or having the POV character think about their own appearance as they look at the surface of a body of water or into a mirror. But you have to weave those events into the story to be able to use them this way (why someone would describe the character out loud, what situation in which they would be looking at their reflection in a still body of water, etc.). With third person limited, you can simply state what the character looks like and it wouldn't feel as out of place as it might if you had your POV character randomly thinking about the details of their own appearance (i.e. "I have curly brown hair and dark brown eyes and am about six feet tall," versus "At nearly six feet tall, Utada had curly brown hair and dark brown eyes.").

Newbie-Friendly Worldbuilding

Because, in most circumstances, your POV character will have been born and raised in the world that you've created your romance within, it can be tricky to help a reader understand that world (especially if it has highly speculative or fantasy elements). The names of certain kinds of

animals, roles in society, or even what a normal day looks like isn't something your POV character would focus on or explain much in first person because it probably wouldn't cross their mind to do so. Just as you don't carefully describe in your mind things that are habits or well-known information for you like how to use the subway system or how to do the job you've been working at for five years. There would be no need. But when you take a step back and use third person limited, you can offer jargon definitions, brief histories on relationships, the importance of landmarks, and similar information in a way that doesn't feel forced or out of place.

Third Person Omniscient

Third person omniscient perspective is writing from the viewpoint of the author. As in, you know what's going on in each character's head at any given time and are providing that information to the reader throughout the story, regardless of who the central character(s) may be. This POV provides a higher-level, "birds-eye view" of the story.

"Utada opens the box to find a diamond ring inside, feeling the 'yes' throughout her whole body before she says it out loud. When the word finally leaves her lips, Amir lifts her in his arms, not caring that he's crushing the expensive box between them, and kisses her without restraint like he's been waiting to do ever since he bought the ring."

In third person omniscient, the camera is high above the characters, able to see into every person's perspective in a given scene, including their thoughts and feelings. The omniscient type of third person POV allows for "head hopping" so that the reader knows what's going on in any given character's perspective as the author wills

it. In the example above, we know what Utada is thinking and feeling, but we also know what Amir is thinking and feeling even though they are two different people.

The Third Person Omniscient Reading Experience

Simple Reading

Because of the regular use of head hopping, books written from a third person omniscient POV can often read almost like a synopsis (A happened then B happened then C happened). You may recognize this POV type from various fairy tales you read as a child, such as “Cinderella” or “Snow White.” There is often very little the reader has to piece together or figure out. Any surprises are likely surprises to most of the characters involved in the story (hearing the news of a politician’s divorce, finding out a local grocery store is going out of business, etc.). But if a character’s boyfriend is planning on breaking up with them, or if the main character is attracted to their boss, the reader can get that information told to them in a direct manner (“Utada blushed at just the sound of his voice, but she tried to hide it behind the cluster of blueprints in her hands,” versus “As Amir finished his sentence, he noticed that Utada was holding the cluster of blueprints even closer to her face instead of sitting them on his desk like he’d asked.”) They won’t necessarily need to pick up on subtle hints, nuanced body language, or other methods in order to deduce what’s going on between characters.

Multi-Couple Management

The vast majority of romance novels focus on a single couple. This means the two central characters who fall in love and a few side characters who support their journey toward a

happy ending. But other romance novels may lean more toward genres like women’s fiction or drama in that they follow the stories of groups of friends, members of a large family, or even employees at a large company that have various romantic relationships contained within them (six friends in a group pair off, three sisters in a family all have partners from different parts of the world, eight co-workers within a company are all falling in love with one another, etc.). In these cases, trying to write for each of those characters in first person or in third person limited can be exhausting for the author and overwhelming for the reader. This is where a POV like third person omniscient can shine. You can focus on being an all-knowing storyteller instead of trying to share the plot through the lens of a single character. This means that sharing the story of multiple couples within a single book is easier for you to write and more enjoyable for your audience to read.

Choosing Your POV

Any story can be told from any POV. But, depending upon what you’re trying to accomplish with your book, your writing preferences, and the makeup of your audience, one POV may be more effective than others for your project. Don’t be afraid to experiment if you’re not sure which POV you’d like to use. For instance, you can write your book’s first scene in all three of these styles and then consider which one sounds best to you. That would be the POV you to write the remainder of the manuscript. Picking a POV that matches the heart of your story can enhance the reading experience for your audience. The increased quality of writing can leave your readers satisfied with your latest piece and salivating over your next release.

Structure and Character in Ali Hazelwood's Novella *Under One Roof*

BY TARA ROÍ

How does a bestselling author write a complete and satisfying romantic comedy with deeper themes in only thirteen chapters and approximately 30,000 words? By examining the scaffolding of a bestselling romance novella as identified in structural terms by Pamela Regis, I explore how an author can take Regis' formula, apply a unique spin, and create something new and fresh. One author who does this well is Ali Hazelwood. In the novella *Under One Roof*, environmental issues and patriarchy provide a backdrop for the love story between Mara and Liam. The author plays with the enemies-to-lovers trope, the stuck together trope, and the oblivious-to-love trope.

Although character and structure intertwine and affect each other, my approach to using *Under One Roof* as a model was to separate the character elements from the structural choices and examine each.

Under One Roof has 9,855 reviews on amazon, averaging four stars, and more than 77,000 reviews on Goodreads, which average 3.73 stars. In other words, Hazelwood knows how to engage readers. By examining when the author reveals each character's goal, motivation, and conflict (GMC) and by listing the POV character's goal, conflict, and disaster (GCD) for each scene, I intended to discover examples of GMC and GCD that keep readers hooked.

Hazelwood reveals Mara's GMC in Chapter One, which makes sense, since the heroine is the POV character throughout. Hazelwood reveals Liam's GMC in Chapter Three. Although Liam is not the POV character, Hazelwood makes his scene goals, conflicts, and disasters obvious in three chapters. The author creates a strong GCD for Mara in some chapters while leaving it unclear or almost inconsequential in others. I find the chapters that include both internal and external goals, conflicts, and disasters the most compelling. Still, in *Under One Roof*, the stakes are so low that even when they escalate, the problems seem very minor. RomCom traditionally has lower stakes than other Romance subgenres.



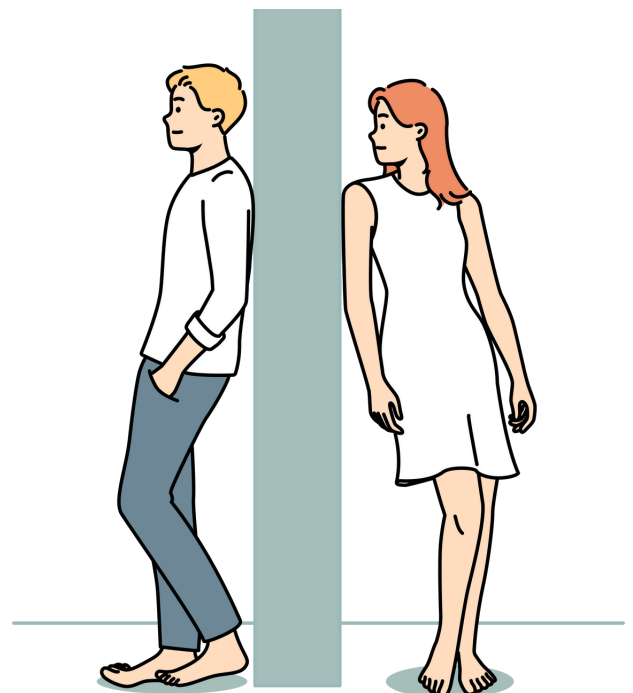
Location and setting are key structural elements in *Under One Roof*, as all but two chapters occur at the house. Chapter One begins in an Uber and ends on the porch of the house. The Epilogue occurs in a grocery store. In the store, the lens on the characters is so tight, it deprives the reader of a sense of place until halfway through the Epilogue. All other chapters occur at the house. Keeping locations to a minimum intensifies the 'stuck together' trope and gives the reader the feeling that Mara and Liam are in their own little world, even though they both leave the house for work and other activities. This tactic may not apply to your manuscript, but it ought to make you think twice about how many locations you've included. Too many? Too few? How many locations does your story actually need?

Under One Roof is written in an episodic format with time jumps of a week or more between every chapter. This creates minimal throughlines from chapter to chapter. The few sequels and transitions take the form of flashbacks and backstory. I think this style only works because it's a novella. I can't imagine a full-length novel, even one that's only 50,000 words, would feel satisfying if there was a significant time jump between every chapter and no clear thread between chapters. This is a reminder to work on enhancing sequels and transitions in your manuscript.

Character affects not only the believability of the book but also the potential for the couple to develop understanding and closeness, or create misunderstanding and distance. External circumstances may keep some couples apart. Usually, the characters' misbeliefs about each other and themselves create another obstacle to union.

What the author reveals about each character is closely tied to narrative choice. In first- or third-person close narration, the POV character controls the story and thus the reader's experience. When an author employs dual POV, as many authors do in full novels, then readers can more easily identify the characters' misbeliefs about each other. By using a single POV, the author reveals less about the non-POV character than they would in a dual POV narrative. This boosts the element of surprise. Hazelwood writes *Under One Roof* from Mara's perspective. Because readers only get Mara's perspective they can easily buy into her misbeliefs, including the one about Liam's views on environmental issues. Mara knows Liam works for a big oil company, and she assumes he is a climate denier who opposes environmental justice.

With wit and style, Mara rails against Liam and his anti-environmental beliefs in internal dialogue and aloud to her friends. Where can your characters adopt a light, playful tone in describing or debating issues that matter to them?



In an enemies-to-lovers romance, the protagonists are initially antagonists. We learn early that Mara's other antagonists are her sexist coworkers, specifically her patriarchal boss, Sean. Sean never appears in the book but is mentioned on eleven pages. Still, the reader knows Sean threatens Mara's ability to achieve her goals in life. Liam's antagonist is his mentor/boss. Like Mara's antagonist, this character never appears and is only mentioned on four pages.

Under One Roof contains six of the elements defined by Roach and all eight structural elements of romance defined by Regis: (1) society defined, (2) the meeting, (3) the barrier, (4) the attraction, (5) the declaration, (6) the point of ritual death, (7) the recognition, and (8) the betrothal. Regis' first four elements are compressed into Chapter One. Chapter Two features the couple as unwilling betrothed, (in this case, living together). The attraction builds over the next several chapters. Liam's recognition is hinted at in Chapter Eight.

In Chapter Eleven Mara achieves her story goal, which leads to the achievement of Liam's original story goal to keep the house to himself. However, Liam's story goal has changed. Now, he wants Mara to stay. Thus, the achievement of their story goals also creates this couple's ritual death. Following their first romantic moment, Mara finally recognizes—silently—that she is in love with Liam, Liam reminds her that she said if she got the job, she'd move out. Mara assures him that she will move. The whole event takes less than two pages. In the aftermath of the ritual death, Mara accidentally declares her feelings in a video call that Liam overhears. That inspires Liam's declaration and their subsequent joyful betrothal and HEA.



To use *Under One Roof* as a model for your novella, remember these tips:

1. Choose one character as the POV character. By using a single POV, you reveal less about the non-POV character than you would in a dual POV narrative. This boosts the element of surprise.
2. Reveal the POV character's goal, motivation, and conflict in chapter one. Reveal the second protagonist's goal, motivation, and conflict early, but not necessarily in the first chapter.
3. You can make the antagonist strong and threatening without actually allowing them to appear in the book.
4. Even if your characters are dealing with big, important social issues, keep the stakes low for your protagonists. RomCom moves swiftly because problems don't take forever to untangle.
5. Keep locations to a minimum.
6. Even if your novella is episodic, you can work on your sequels and transitions. However, time jumps may be required to move the story forward.

Contests & Conferences

CHAPTER CONTESTS

Chesapeake Romance Writer's 2024 Rudy Writing Contest

Sponsor: Chesapeake Romance Writers

Description: In honor of the best-selling, award-winning author and long-time member of CRW, **Judy McCoy**, we want you to finish your book.

Let our contest light your inspirational fire.

Dates: June 1, 2024 - September 1, 2024

More information: [Click Here](#)

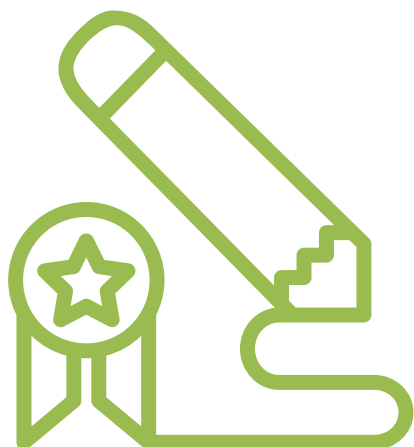
The Big Apple Contest

Sponsor: RWA NYC

Eligibility: This contest is opened to all published and unpublished authors. The entry should be the first chapter of a romance that has not been published in any form. There is a limit of 25 pages.

Dates: July 1, 2024 - August 31, 2024

More information: [Click Here](#)



ONLINE WORKSHOPS

September Online Workshops

Where on Earth Is My Next Favorite Author?

Sponsor: Kiss of Death

Date: August 27 9AM CT

Presenter: Tia Benson-Bond

FMI: [Click Here](#)

Open the Vein: Emotional Bleeding

Sponsor: FFPRWA

Fee: FFPRWA Members: \$15 | Nonmembers: \$20

Date: Monday, September 9, 2024 – Friday, October 4, 2024 (Groups.io Platform)

Presenter: Christina Rich

FMI: [Click Here](#)

Take Your Characters From Flat to Fabulous

Sponsor: FFPRWA

Fee: FFPRWA Members: \$15 | Nonmembers: \$20

Date: Monday, September 9, 2024 – Friday, October 4, 2024 (Groups.io Platform)

Presenter: Cynthia Owens

FMI: [Click Here](#)

Loving the Monster

Sponsor: FFPRWA

Fee: FFPRWA Members: \$5 | Nonmembers: \$10

Date: Monday, September 9, 2024 – Friday, September 20, 2024 (Groups.io Platform)

Presenter: Deb Bailey

FMI: [Click Here](#)

Keeping the New Releases Coming: Rapid Release for Hybrid and Indie Author

Sponsor: Hearts Through History Romance Writers

Fee: Member \$15 | Non-member \$25

Date: September 9 - October 4, 2024 (4 Weeks via Groups.io)

Presenter: Beth Daniels

FMI: [Click Here](#)

Prep for NaNoWriMo the Bare Bones Way

Sponsor: Hearts Through History Romance Writers

Fee: Member \$15 | Non-member \$25

Date: September 9 - October 4, 2024 (4 Weeks via Groups.io)

Presenter: Catherine Chant

FMI: [Click Here](#)

Creating a Living Setting

Sponsor: Hearts Through History Romance Writers

Fee: Member \$10 | Non-member \$15

Date: Saturday, September 21, 2024 | 11:00 AM Eastern (Zoom approx. 1 hour or view recording at your convenience)

Presenter: Jeannie Moon

FMI: [Click Here](#)

October Online Workshops

Build YOUR Authentic World of Magic and Magic System

Sponsor: FFPRWA

Fee: FFPRWA Members: \$15 | Nonmembers: \$20

Date: Monday, October 7, 2024 – Friday, November 1, 2024 (Groups.io Platform)

Presenter: Rebekah R. Ganiere

FMI: [Click here](#)

Tick Tock: Time Management for Writers

Sponsor: FFPRWA

Fee: FFPRWA Members: \$15 | Nonmembers: \$20

Date: Monday, October 7, 2024 – Friday, November 1, 2024 (Groups.io Platform)

Presenter: Jacqui Jacoby

FMI: [Click Here](#)

Freedom and Framework: Story Planning for Pantsers

Sponsor: FFPRWA

Fee: FFPRWA Members: \$5 | Nonmembers: \$10

Date: Monday, October 7, 2024 – Friday, October 18, 2024 (Groups.io Platform)

Presenter: Catherine Chant

FMI: [Click Here](#)

Outlining Your Novel

Sponsor: Hearts Through History Romance Writers

Fee: Member \$15 | Non-member \$25

Date: October 7 - November 1, 2024 (4 Weeks via Groups.io)

Presenter: Robin Henry

FMI: [Click Here](#)

Witchhunting in Britain

Sponsor: Hearts Through History Romance Writers

Fee: Member \$15 | Non-member \$25

Date: October 7 - November 1, 2024 (4 Weeks via Groups.io)

Presenter: Val Fassnight

FMI: [Click Here](#)

Marketing Your Book with Key Phrases

Sponsor: Hearts Through History Romance Writers

Fee: Member \$10 | Non-member \$15

Date: Saturday, October 19, 2024 | 11:00 AM

Eastern (Zoom approx. 1 hour or view recording
at your convenience)

Presenter: Eilis Flynn

FMI: [Click Here](#)

November Online Workshops

He Said, She Said Define Your Characters with Dialogue

Sponsor: FFPRWA

Fee: FFPRWA Members: \$15 | Nonmembers: \$20

Date: Monday, November 4, 2024 – Friday,
November 29, 2024 (Groups.io Platform)

Presenter: Cynthia Owens

FMI: [Click Here](#)

Something Tried and True

Sponsor: FFPRWA

Fee: FFPRWA Members: \$15 | Nonmembers: \$20

Date: Monday, November 4, 2024 – Friday,
November 29, 2024 (Groups.io Platform)

Presenter: Christina Rich

FMI: [Click Here](#)

Gut Punch: Using Emotional Conflict

Sponsor: FFPRWA

Fee: FFPRWA Members: \$5 | Nonmembers: \$10

Date: Monday, November 4, 2024 – Friday,
November 15, 2024 (Groups.io Platform)

Presenter: Tere Michaels

FMI: [Click Here](#)

December Online Workshops

Writing Romance with “Older” Characters

Sponsor: FFPRWA

Fee: FFPRWA Members: \$5 | Nonmembers: \$10

Date: Monday, December 2, 2024 – Friday,
December 13, 2024 (Groups.io Platform)

Presenter: Deb Bailey

FMI: [Click Here](#)

How to Design and Teach an Online Workshop

Sponsor: FFPRWA

Fee: FFPRWA Members: \$5 | Nonmembers: \$10

Date: Monday, December 2, 2024 – Friday,
December 13, 2024 (Groups.io Platform)

Presenter: Catherine Chant

FMI: [Click Here](#)

Podcast Promotion for Indie Authors

Sponsor: FFPRWA

Fee: FF&P Member – \$10; Non-Member – \$15

Date: Saturday, December 7, 2024; 11: 00 AM MT

Presenter: Amy L Bernstein

FMI: [Click Here](#)

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*To have your chapter's contest, conference, or online workshop
included in the RWR and on this web page, please send the
pertinent information (following the format above) to
info@rwa.org.*

*Disclaimer: RWA includes contests, conferences, and online
workshops from fully affiliated RWA chapters in good standing on
RWA's Chapter Events page. RWA chapters are separate legal
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online workshop, and/or speaker on the RWA website does not
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New Members

JOIN US IN WELCOMING THE PEOPLE WHO JOINED/REJOINED
RWA IN JULY 2024

Ann Brown
Bettia Torres-Miranda
Catrene Malshey
Charles Lafave
Christine Larson
Cynthia Barstow
Danielle Kress
Denice Perkins

Diane Douglas
Eve Dalleyrand
Eve Gaal
Gigi Pinwill
Grace Cathalson
Heather Burford
Kay Danzig
Laura Eyring

Lavinia Klein
Mallory Roseman
Marilyn Ramsook-Lilly
Meridith Styer
Nate Hoffelder
Robin Walsh
Stacey MacDonald



Welcome to RWA!

Debut Authors

**RWA congratulates the following authors on
the publication of their first romance
novel/novella**

###

*To submit your information for publication in the Debut
Author column, complete the online form at [https://
www.surveymonkey.com/r/RWAdebutauthor](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RWAdebutauthor).*

About the RWR

The journal is published for the members of Romance Writers of America, Inc., a nonprofit organization.

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