

The Gabriel Writer

For The San Gabriel Writers' League
www.SGWL.net

February 2011

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Who Originated Valentine's Day? By Robert Fears



Do you ever wonder who started the concept of giving candy and flowers to your favorite lady on February 14? Or do you blindly go through the ritual of love each year enjoying every savory minute and not really caring who started the wonderful tradition?

Regardless of how you answer these questions, you will have an opportunity to learn how it all started when you attend the February 3 SGWL meeting. Your program coordinator will give a slide presentation on the history of Valentine's Day.

My public speaking experience came from 33 years with the Dow AgroSciences where I held marketing and product development positions. These jobs required that I make numerous presentations to company personnel and customers on products and land management practices. Volunteer activities also involved public speaking when I served as chairman of Williamson County Crime Stoppers, Sun City Wildlife Management Committee and Sun City Neighborhood Representative Organization. Although not a volunteer job, I chaired the Williamson County Appraisal Review Board. I am currently chairman of St. John's United Methodist Church Adult Ministries Committee.

Writing experiences during 2010 include 32 published magazine articles, numerous articles placed on the eHow website and three or four articles published on Lance Armstrong's LIVESTRONG.COM. I recently accepted a retainer to write for cattlemanagement.com. In my spare time, I am writing a non-fiction novel about my early life on a West Texas ranch.

Recap: Melody Lovett "Tax Talk 101" by Karen Swensson

Back by popular demand, CPA Melody C. Lovett regaled SGWL members and guests with her dry sense of humor and straightforward approach to the subject of income tax returns.

After commenting that while some tax provisions had been extended, there were no rule changes for this year, she distributed copies of pertinent tax forms and launched an animated monologue on how to maneuver through the intricacies of our tax system.

She covered the what, why and how of Employer Identification Numbers; entity type choices (incorporation vs. sole proprietor or self-employed); hobby losses (the law vs. the reality); and the advantages and disadvantages of being a sole proprietor.

Mrs. Lovett suggested using a "sleep factor" barometer to assess your audit risk: determining whether or not you can

sleep with the reporting choices you've made. She explained that there is only black and white in dealing with the IRS; the "grey" is in the planning. Mrs. Lovett warned that a 10% or more reporting error constitutes fraud, which does not fall under the seven-year time limit on taxpayer liability. The IRS assumes "guilt before innocence, the burden of proof is on the taxpayer, and "it can come back to haunt you forever."

While programs such as Turbo Tax are helpful in avoiding math errors, which trigger 90% of IRS letters, Mrs. Lovett warns that yes or no answers to a program's questions will take you down a particular path. If your tax reporting is complicated she recommends that you consult a tax professional.

Mrs. Lovett can be contacted at P. O. Box 872, Round Rock, Texas, 78680; by telephone at 512-517-7777; or e-mail to melody@storystonesinc.com.

Minutes for January 2011 meeting

President Sam Holland called the meeting to order at 7:00

Helen Nardeccia gave the Treasurers Report.

Jamie Roton has taken over website duties

Carol Menchu asked that the membership fill the February newsletter with love and submit Valentine themed poems and short stories.

Sam announced that the Secretary position is open and asked for a volunteer to step up and fill the slot.

Sam announced the new member drive **100 in 11- 100 new members in 2011** and asked that all members do

their part to bring in new members.

Sam directed the attention of those in attendance to the Participation Clipboards at the back of the room that contained sign up sheets for a proposed SGWL Birthday Picnic, Red Poppy Festival Tent, Red Poppy Festival Parade and Workshop.

Karen Swenson introduced Melody Lovett.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20.

Submitted by Sam Holland

2011 Programs

February.....History of Valentine's Day.....Robert Fears, SGWL program coordinator

March.....Internet Trends for Authors....Cindy Phillips, Author and high tech Marketing Consultant

April.....Double Life of a Genre-Crosser: from Fiction to Non-fiction Crime.....Diane Fanning, author

May.....TBA

June.....TBA

July.....TBA

August.....TBA

September....TBA

October.....TBA

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How Love Entered the English Language by Edurne Scott

Etymology is the study of the history of words. Find out how 'love' entered the English language, from what source, and how its form and meaning have changed over time.

Love is a word used to describe one, if not the most, potent experiences available to humans. The word love was once *leubh, a word used by the Proto-Indo-Europeans approximately five thousand years ago to describe care and desire. When love was incorporated into Old English as *lufu*, it had turned into both a noun to describe, "deep affection" and its offspring verb, "to be very fond of".

Love and Religion

One of the earliest uses of love, and its biggest influence, was religion. Love was used to describe the benevolence and affection of God, as well as the affectionate devotion due to God, "God is love, and hee that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God" (John 4:16). From this widely recognized meaning, love began to be used to positively describe instances of affection or acts of kindness

Falling in Love

From Middle English onwards, the most popular meaning for love however was to describe a "beloved person" (1255)—especially one's sweetheart. This naturally turned love into an intimate form of address which began to describe goings on of lovers such as love letters (c.1240) and love songs (c.1310). One could say that they had "fallen in love" with someone from 1423, and under a hundred years later that they were lovesick (1530). To

make love (1580) meant to "pay amorous attention" to another person and it wasn't till the middle of the twentieth century that it became a euphemism for sexual intercourse. The word love was introduced to tennis from 1742 to mean no score— from the notion of playing "for love", came the notion "playing for nothing".

Love and Sex

Of course the sexual meaning of love was present from the very beginnings of Old English, but it was not till the late 17th century that love was more strongly associated with sex. At first love was used to describe the personification of sexual affection in the form of cupid, "Wher'er her step in beauty moves, around her fly a thousand loves". By the early 18th century however, love began to mean an illicit partner, or even sexual intercourse itself. From this meaning came the negative term love brat, or its modern form love child (1805), which described a child born out of wedlock. New meanings for love were still being created well into the 20th century— love life (1919) began to mean "one's collective amorous activities" and was originally used as psychological jargon

Conclusion

What "love" means from person to person, let alone from century to century, is one of the most varied in the English language. From describing one's faith to God to describing a child born out of wedlock, the connotations for love are many and varied

Episodic Fiction: Another Way to Tell a Story By: Dan Holt, Pen Campbell

Publication: The Quarterly, Vol. 23, No. 3 **Date:** Summer 2001

Summary: Using as a model John O'Brien's story "Birds"—in which separate episodes are juxtaposed for the reader to weave together into a story—the writers experiment with this form for themselves and in their classrooms.

About fifteen years ago, Dan Holt read a story that changed the way he looked at fiction.

"Birds," by John O'Brien, was different from any story he'd read before. Unlike a movie or traditional short story, in which elements of the story line are connected by transitions to tell a story in a linear fashion, O'Brien's "Birds" seemed to Holt to be more like a slide show or even a music video. Separate episodes were like individual images juxtaposed to be woven together by the reader into a story. He found the form intriguing and, as writers are wont to do with intriguing forms, decided to try his hand at it to see where it would lead.

At the time, he had two different stories in progress, neither of which was working out: one about a man who, while visiting his parents in Arizona, struggles with the decision of whether or not to leave his wife, and a second story that grew out of a newspaper report about a man whose horse had broken its leg in the desert and subsequently been killed by coyotes. Experimenting with the episodic form, Holt combined these two stories into "Ten Stories About Coyotes I Never Told You." In doing so, he took as a model for his own story one additional element from O'Brien's "Birds" beyond the episodic form itself—that of a repeated motif occurring in each episode.

"Birds" is not really a story about birds. Rather, it is a story about a man coming to a decision concerning himself and the sanctity of life around him. Each of the episodes of the

story features a bird, not as a symbol, but more as a repeated motif—perhaps the way Alfred Hitchcock's cameo appearance was featured in each of his movies. Holt used the repeated motif in "Ten Stories . . .," which, despite its title, is not really about coyotes, though one appears in almost every episode.

Pleased with having solved the problem of the two balky stories, Holt sent "Ten Stories . . ." to Stuart Dybeck at Western Michigan University, who had suggested the O'Brien story to him in the first place. Having sent it with no more purpose than to say "Thanks—I enjoyed the story and fooled around with the form; here's what I got," Holt considered the matter closed. Several months later, however, when he received a copy of a magazine in the mail, there in the table of contents he found his name and "Ten Stories about Coyotes I Never Told You." Dybeck had sent the story on to his friend John O'Brien, who promptly published it in *The Great Lakes Review*, which he edited.

Since his introduction to episodic fiction, Holt has in turn introduced many others to the form: students in his high school creative writing classes, participants in both invitational summer institutes and advanced institutes at Western Michigan University's Third Coast Writing Project, and participants of the 2000 Festival of Writers sponsored by the Louisiana Writing Project State Network.

Editor's aside: 99% of you have not read my two poetry collections, *The Musing Mistress* and *Beyond the Gate*, but I do the exact same thing talked about in this article. Instead of filling a book with disjointed poems, I find individual poems that, while capable of standing alone—on their own merit, create their own story. See pg. 7 Carol Menchu

Now that the holidays are over we might kick up our feet and say “whoa.” But balancing stress after the holidays may not be so simple. We spend more, eat and drink more, travel, and party. Perhaps your Christmas did not live up to the “Hallmark Christmas” shown in cards and commercials? Perhaps you felt forced to spend time with someone who bothers you, family members who brought painful memories and grudges, or felt the loss of a loved one?

Stress is normal. It gets us up from bed every morning and drives us to get through our daily tasks. It is our body’s way of rising to meet a challenge. It protects us when that saber tooth tiger attacks! But too many changes, good and bad, in too short a time, can increase our stress to unhealthy levels and harm us physically. Some negative signs to look for are: irritability and moodiness, hard to focus, sleep problems, tightness in our chests, stomach problems, increase in allergic reactions such as eczema or asthma, anxiety, and panic attacks. Some suggestions to help alleviate negative symptoms of stress:

1. Take control of your surroundings; avoid that traffic; turn off the telephone; don’t over schedule your time. Say no if you do not want to do something.
2. Don’t take on new projects for now. Wait until your body tells you it is ready.
3. Don’t try to be perfect—no one is. And don’t expect oth-

ers to be perfect.

4. Take care of your body. Get plenty of rest. If you can’t sleep, get up and read, listen to music, or watch old John Wayne movies. Don’t pressure yourself. You will sleep when your body demands it. Walk, exercise, play, and eat healthy foods.
5. Smile! Laugh! Do things you enjoy with people you enjoy. It increases positive endorphins, cleanses toxins, and makes us feel good.
6. Do something for someone else. Call an old friend, send a card to someone you care about, drive a friend to the grocery store, volunteer at the food bank.
7. Spend time with children. Reach out to someone new.
8. Forgive. It takes energy to be angry.
9. Commune with your Higher Power.
10. You can list more . . .

Being aware of these can help us make positive changes as Writers. Listen to what your body tells you. It is a time to think positive, learn from mistakes, and see negative stress as an opportunity to make healthy plans for the New Year.

Have a happy and blessed New Year,

Waiting for Death by Tracey Skeen

In my younger and more vulnerable years I used to dream I would escape this place. I would sit on my cot and stare and the ceiling and dream of the adventures I would have outside these walls. I would dream of being discovered and rescued and released. I used to keep track of the hours, the days, the years. That was before they moved me to a room without a window. Now time no longer exists and I only dream of my only hope for escape. Death.

The first time I saw him was the first night they brought me to this room. I stared at him as my mind came out of the land of dreams into the land of the reality.

Expecting him to fade away, I sat up and bed and blinked three times. Slowly he came into focus - the sight of him sent a chill down my spine for I recognized him immediately. He wasn’t what I imagined him to be, nothing like the scythe-carrying robed-skeleton that I’d seen in great works of art. But it was he, nonetheless.

He stepped out of the shadow, for there was a light coming in from the door, and spoke in the peculiar way that he had. “Hello, Catherine.” I stared at him in disbelief. My eyes stared at his black boots, black denim trousers, and black cotton t-shirt. His eyes and hair were a shade darker than coal.

“Death?” My voice faltered.

“Please, I prefer to be called Azriel.”

“Death – Azriel, I almost didn’t recognize you without your robe and scythe.” I wasn’t trying to be funny but he laughed all the same.

“Death comes in many forms.”

“Am I dead then?”

“No, Cathy, you are not.”

“What? No, I’m not alive or no I’m not dead?”

“Ah, these things take time. Be patient. I just had to have a look at you to see if you were worth it.”

“Worth what?”

“Worth his life. Not that it matters. The contract has been signed.”

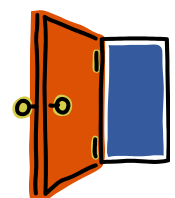
“What contract?”

“You are a very lucky lady, not many would be willing to trade his life for another.”

“William Short?” I knew without asking and he knew I knew. His ebony eyes danced but otherwise his face remained expressionless.

I felt something crawling on my leg. I looked down but there was nothing there. When I looked up again, Azriel was gone.

Now I spend my days waiting for Death. And wondering what is taking him so long.



Someone was trying to slip through the hedgerow again.

Jack strode over to the dense wall of ligustrum just as a bedraggled female figure in cut-offs, an orange tank top, and barely-there sparkly flip flops emerged into his brother's backyard. Lifting his chin and crossing his arms like a sumo wrestler, he fixed her with a reproving stare.

"Miss, this is a private event."

"Do I look like gate-crashing teen-ager, you officious idiot?" the woman sputtered, brushing twigs and leaves off her shirt. "I'm here to collect my nieces from the birthday party!"

Jack laughed. He'd been called a lost worse. Even in the dim evening light, he could see that the trespasser indeed was no teen-ager. In fact, she looked more his own age. He relaxed his stance and stepped back a pace.

"Sorry about that." He gestured toward the hedge. "I was assigned to patrol the perimeter and it's been a long evening. This is my nephew's first girl-boy party and my brother recruited me to act as security."

The woman smiled and nodded. "That's okay. I guess I sort of overreacted," she admitted, combing her fingers through her hair for debris, then retying her pony tail. "I'm Cindy Glover, the twins' aunt." She offered her hand. "Getting through that hedge was harder than it looks. I mean, the girls do it all the time, but they're just fourteen and they'd disappear if they turned sideways."

The tank top showed off her mature curves to good advantage, Jack noted. There was no way Cindy Glover would disappear if she turned sideways.

"Jack Boback." He clasped her hand briefly. It was warm and soft.

She looked around the darkening yard. Silver balloons bobbed in the light breeze, cicadas sang in the trees, and a large, shaggy dog wandered aimlessly to and fro, snuffling for food scraps in the grass around the barbecue pit.

"But where is everybody? I thought this was going to be a backyard deal."

"The kids are in the house finishing up with ice cream and cake. We can go wait on the lawn chairs until the shindig is over, if you'd like."

Cindy checked her watch. "The girls are supposed to be home by 9:00, but I guess a few more minutes won't hurt." She began walking toward the casual arrangement of chairs next to the barbecue. "It's their first boy-girl party too, and their parents were really upset about having to be out of town. I think they were torn between photographing the whole thing and forbidding the girls to go." She smiled. "So they called me."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm a police photographer."

Jack laughed. "That sounds exciting. I'm afraid being just a middle school principal doesn't measure up."

"I'm not so sure. I bet you have your days. You certainly gave me a thrill when I came through the hedge."

Jack sat down on a chair of molded plastic while Cindy chose the chaise lounge. The big dog immediately ambled over to her.

"Bozo, you're such a love bunny." She cooed, bending down to massage the dog's ears.

"I see you're well acquainted with the local wildlife."

"Bozo and I have been great friends this week." The dog shivered in ecstasy and moved in closer to Cindy. "I'll miss him."

"When are you leaving?"

"Early tomorrow morning. My brother and his wife will be back in town late tonight."

"Oh. I assumed you were a local girl."

"No, I've just taken a week off to help the family." She kicked off her sparkly flip flops and tucked her legs to the side, half-reclining on the chaise. With a deep sigh, Bozo settled down under the lounge and closed his eyes.

"Did you really have problems with crashers?" she asked.

"Just two boys trying to come in the back, near the gate."

"High school kids?"

"A couple of years younger, more like my son's age. More a nuisance than anything else. It's the sort of thing my boy would do too except that, as a cousin, he was invited."

"Do you have other children?"

"No." Jack paused. The darkness created an intimacy that allowed him say more than he normally would have. "His mother—his mother and I split up right after he was born. I have complete custody."

"It must have been hard for you."

Jack shrugged. "It was a lot easier than staying together."

Cindy looked into the darkness as if into the past. "I'm a widow, no children. My husband was killed by a drunk driver three years ago. Jeff was a highway patrolman."

"That's tough."

"Life is tough."

She was easy to talk to, Jack thought. He's like to get to know her better. It was a shame she was leaving tomorrow, when he'd just met her.

There was a sudden commotion in the house, and he knew the party was over. Bozo awoke with a sneezing snort, nosed around a little, and trotted off into the far corner of the yard.

"I guess I'd better go get the girls."

He nodded, still under the spell of the darkness. How could he make time stand still?

Cindy reached down under the chaise, but just came up with one flip flop. "Do you see my other one anywhere?" She knelt in front of the chaise lounge and felt around in the grass.

Jack went down on his haunches beside, then stood up and moved the lounge, but there wasn't a sparkle in sight.

"Oh well. I guess I'll have to go barefoot," she said, dangling the remaining flipflop by its strap. "If anyone locates the stupid thing, just give it to my brother and he'll send it to me."

The sliding glass door opened and two teenagers whirlwinds burst into the yard. "Aunt Cindy!"

She turned to Jack. "It's been nice meeting you, Jack. I wish—"

"Aunt Cindy, look at the favor I got, a real live goldfish!"

The girls danced around her, crowding out Jack. He backed off a little and watched her examine her nieces' treasures, then herd them gently but firmly toward the hedge. She waved him a quick good-bye just as she disappeared into the ligustrum.

Jack stood there for a few minutes, then walked slowly to the patio and sat down again, feeling very lonely.

Bozo lumbered back across the yard with something

sparkly in his mouth, dropped his treasure at Jack's feet, and looked at him expectantly.

"Good dog," Jack said, picking up Cindy's missing flip flop and cradling it in his hands. "In fact, a better dog than you know."

He smiled. He was no Prince Charming, but Cinderella hadn't seen the last of him.



It lingered like a beautiful song. She knew she heard the words as he turned and walked away from her. She wanted them repeated.

Ed and Joyce would be married twenty-five years next month. She had to decide what to wear for this "special occasion," as her children called it. She roamed through her closet flipping hangers and pulling out different outfits that just might be appropriate for an exclusive restaurant and a reserved room full of friends and relatives.

Their three children were honoring them for years of patience, love and understand.

What a laugh, she thought. This marriage has been on the rocks for more years than I care to count. What about the nights I spent alone? The fights and brawls over too much alcohol and the unforgettable extravagance that kept us on the brink of poverty?

The arguments and nastiness might have been gone from Ed and Joyce's marriage, but not the tension that hung in the air like a dark cloud. They'd been apart since Christmas. She remembered his call from Chicago, which infuriated her since she hadn't heard from him in weeks. The sad looks on the children's faces knowing he wouldn't be home. She hated the mystery about him. Where did he go? Who was he seeing?

Joyce threw the last outfit on the bed, grabbed her sweater and walked out to the trail that ran adjacent to a pond behind the house. The glittering solar lights around the pond had cast numerous shadows of bending trees. As she turned a curve on the grounds, she saw someone coming her way. *Could it be?* she wondered.

When he drew nearer, she saw the wild gray hair that the pond lights picked up, and the old burgundy sweater that she asked him to get rid of a long time ago. It was Ed.

His walk toward her was slow, but his eyes caught the gold of her hair as the light descended from the porch. *She's still very beautiful. Wish we could begin again.*

They stood facing each other, and he smiled. "May I have this dance? I thought we should practice."

How absurd, she thought. But the moment he reached for her, she lifted her arms. He put his hand around her waist. His touch gave her a shiver. Then he placed his cheek against hers, and they began to dance. They danced slowly all around the pond in a rhythmic motion without a word. She could swear she heard music.

When they broke apart, he turned to leave and a word lingered on a soft breeze that found its way to her ear. *Did I hear right? Did he say I love you?* Suddenly all the bad times were washed away in a second and she wanted to hear him say it again and again.

"Wait, can you stay a little longer," she found herself saying. It lingered like a beautiful song. She knew she heard the words as he turned and walked away from her. She wanted them repeated.

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**Who
"said" ?**

"To be capable of giving and receiving mature love is as sound a criterion as we have for the fulfilled personality. But by that very token it is a goal gained only in proportion to how much one has fulfilled the prior condition of becoming a person in one's own right. "

Love In The Married Lane by Suzie Miller

While sitting in a biology class in high school I made a notation of an exciting discovery. "The quickest way to a man's heart is not through his stomach as the old adage says, but through direct dissection."

This thought helped shape my life and saved me time that would have been spent perfecting and baking apple pies to please my future husband. In fact, as it turned out, I married a man who had never sampled my cooking before the wedding. It had to be TRUE LOVE. He spent his life showing his love for me in ways I had never considered.

I knew he loved me the year he bought a 10 lb. box of Valentine candy. Of course, that was the only time I was seriously dieting. To compensate for the candy episode, he started dropping his shoes, socks, shirts, and underwear all over the floor so I would have to bend down and pick them up to keep me in good shape. His theory was that I needed motivation to lose weight.

He showed his concern over the appearance of the house by throwing newspapers all over the floor to cover up the fact that I had neglected to vacuum the rugs. The reality was I had lost the vacuum cleaner under the Sunday newspaper three weeks earlier.

I knew my husband loved me because he gave me thoughtful presents. One time he bought me a new sponge mop so I could wash the top of the truck. He understood my 'shortness of stature' problem and he was tired of the

top of the truck looking dirtier than the rest of it. He also knew I spent a lot of time in the kitchen, so he began buying me kitchen utensils as gifts. For our first Christmas he bought a new frying pan which was followed by a set of knives for Valentine's day and a cutting board for Easter.

He proved his love for me by NOT buying me a fur coat. He knew if I had a fancy coat we would have to go out to dinner every week at someplace other than McDonalds to get some use out of the coat.

One year he surprised me with a cute jewelry box. He had stained a little wooden box, sanded it, polished it, made a special trip into town to get just the right hinges, lined it with velvet and handed it to me. As I admired the box, he took it out of my hand and said, "I'm going to put my pair of cufflinks in this box."

For his next birthday I bought him a \$300 radial arm saw, thinking he would make desks, dressers, and chairs for the house. As I remember, the only product his saw turned out was sawdust (in great quantities). Apparently, the little box was enough to satisfy his woodworking talents.

Since he died, I don't know how I'll celebrate Valentine's day. Maybe I will buy a 10 lb. box of Valentine candy and think about how my life would have been without my husband and his ways of showing love.



Selections on Love By Carol Menchu

Sometimes it seems love grows
to be suddenly larger than imagined
before you know it has started
or even accepted its existence

and there seems no sense
of what is to become of it —
whether it should be encouraged or,
while not discouraged, shied away from.

Sometimes love just has to be lived —
experienced on its own terms
for the unmistakable animal pleasure
that is the result of its existence.

Sometimes—if it is written down
before it runs its course,
it becomes immortal in its own right.

Love's path is not easy
but it is possible to travel
in the space of time we choose for it.

It must be taken
to its fullest
each time
and when it runs its course
and the path forks,
the new ways must be taken
in forgiveness and release
so that each new love
can be real and true

We are here to learn
and teach one another
the life of heart and soul.

This task must not be taken lightly
nor should it be labored
for a love given heavily
sinks to chore
a love given lightly
seeks to soar !

Each love I've had is real
re-lived each time music flows
through the air
touching my soul as new
to shiver me with memory.

And so I love you —
each of you —
you who have touched my life this time
and I Will love you
each of you . . .



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Chapter VIII: In which the Hero awakes to gunfire.

Moonlight gleaned from the tip of the dwarf's 38 special. He bit down on his cigar and glared with his good eye. "She's dead, Carl, and you're next!" The gun's blast lit up the dark office like a strobe light and Carl felt a

bullet narrowly miss his cheek.

"Your daughter was dead when I got there, Lewis. Nothing I could do!" Carl inched closer to his desk where he kept a Walther PPK pistol.

"I don't have a daughter, you idiot. It's my fiancée who's dead. You didn't find her in time, just like you won't find your daughter either!" The one-eyed dwarf fired again, the kickback almost toppled him. A lamp next to Carl blew apart. "And I'm not a dwarf for Christ sake! That's only in your stupid book!" The dwarf grew taller; his legs straight, his fingers thinned out, and his forehead receded. He fired the gun twice more as Carl dove behind the desk.

That's right, it was Lewis's fiancée who died. This is a tragic love story, not a detective pulp. *Carl thought to himself:* How could I get that confused?

"It's not a love story either, you sanctimonious prick! It's my life!" Lewis screamed. "My beautiful Clair is dead. Your girlfriend, Katarina, will be next. You won't save her or your daughter!" Lewis fired again and again. "Wake up, Carl. You can't save anyone!" He blasted out the front window. "Wake up!" he fired again.

"Wake up!"

"Wake up!" Margo screams over the gunfire and breaking glass. "Damn it, Carl get up, we have to get out of here!"

Carl McGavin's vision swims. The sound of Margo's cries echo down a long tunnel in the center of his brain. Vincent yells for Margo to take cover as two more loud bangs pound into his skull. Vincent must be shooting but at whom?

The room is in shambles, the front window shattered, and bullet holes riddle the walls. Margo pulls him behind the bed. "Get down!" she yells as another volley blasts through the front door. Vincent, crouched next to the door, is covered in splinters. He springs up and blindly fires two shots out the window before taking cover again.

"What's going on?" Carl tries to shake the hangover away.

"We were coming to wake you when they pulled up and just started shooting. Vince busted in your door and we barely made it inside. We didn't even get a good look at them." There is panic in Margo's eyes. The gunfire starts again and she ducks her head screaming.

Carl scans the room. The table where he'd been drinking the night before was knocked over and his gun was on the far side of the room. He lunges for it, keeping low to duck the bullets flying over his head. He grabs the gun and checks the clip. Six rounds left, only the bullet he used to kill Matt Richards is missing. The shooting stops for a moment and Carl crawls over to Vincent.

"Where are they?"

"Blue Sonata, on the right, two of them." Vincent says as he reloads his revolver. "This is the last of my ammo!"

"They're waiting for us to run dry so they can finish us off." Carl peeks out the broken window and sights the Blue Sonata.

"What do we do?" Vincent's voice shakes.

"We charge." Carl says. Vincent looks at him like he's mad. "We drive straight at them and make every shot count." Vincent looks at Margo for a moment. She cringes behind the bed in tears. He nods in agreement. Carl shouts to Margo, "Wait until you hear my call. Then grab my backpack and anything else you can carry and come running."

"What if you don't call?" Margo's voice cracks. Carl's expression is grim but he doesn't answer.

"You go low, I'll go high." Carl says and Vincent nods again. "On three, 1...2...3!" Carl screams a blood-curdling cry, flings the motel door open, and charges out, keeping his body sideways to make a smaller target. He fires once and the windshield of the blue Sonata spider webs. One gunman breaks cover and fires. The bullet just misses Vincent as he dives to the ground, aiming for the second gunman's feet under the Sonata. He lets off three rounds, striking the second gunman's shin. Carl fires again and wings the first gunman's right arm. Despite his wounded shin, the second gunman leaps up shooting. Vincent recognizes him and freezes, it's officer Charlie Day. Carl pushes Vincent out of the way and fires back; a third shot that narrowly misses officer Day. The first gunman pushes Charlie into the Sonata's passenger seat before taking the wheel. Their tires squeal in the parking lot and Vincent fires four more rounds into the car as it speeds away.

"That...was..." Vincent tries to say but he is too winded.

"I know." Carl says. "Margo! Let go, now!" He yells.

Margo runs from the motel room with Carl's backpack stuffed full and the threesome climb into Vincent's green Dodge. "Get us out of here fast. Head east on 29. We're close to Buchanan Lake. There are some back roads on the other side of the lake where we can lay low for a while." Vincent puts the car in gear and peels out of the parking lot onto TX-29.

"I can't believe it, that was Charlie back there." Vincent concentrates on the road. "I spoke to him last night. He said they traced some calls you made to New Orleans, Carl. They think you're going there. Charlie said he was covering for me and asked if you were still dead! Acted like it was a joke. I told him we were in Burnet. He must have traced the call."

"But why? Charlie let us go in Austin?" Margo cries.

"That's because he thought I was already dead." Carl says flatly. "Somehow he found out different. He's probably mixed up with the same people who sent Matt to kill me."

"Jesus! It's my fault!" Vincent says. Carl knows better. He made a call of his own last night. He remembers the thick Russian accent on the other end telling him he would be dead by morning and he remembers Saffy's screams. Who are these people? Katarina's husband, Igor, must be behind this but he never had cops in his pocket. He must be big time now.

"It's not all your fault, Vince. I might have..." Carl starts to say when the car jolts forward. Margo screams and Vincent sees the blue Sonata in the rearview mirror. It speeds up and rams them from behind again. His car swerves and Vincent tries to keep it on the road. "Damn it!" Carl yells. "Give me your revolver!" Margo fumbles Vincent's gun from his holster and hands it to Carl. "We're coming up to the bridge. Just beyond that is a side road. Take it!" Carl shields

Continued on the next page . . .

Chapter Play continued

his face with his casted left arm and fires the revolver out the back windshield. It shatters and he empties the gun into the Sonata. It swerves into oncoming traffic, narrowly missing a silver Prius. They enter the bridge and the Sonata speeds up. Carl draws his Walther PPK and gets off one

shot before the Sonata clips their left bumper. The Dodge spins out, crashing through the concrete railing of the bridge, and into the water below.

To be continued...

Catch up on the story at: <http://www.jason-minor.com/journal>

Permit Me by June Venable

The November SGWL meeting consisted of a brainstorming session with ideas tossed out for possible League events in 2011. Among others was one of sponsoring a raffle. The suggestion was made that we find out if a permit was needed.

Should be simple, huh?

So I volunteered.

Just a quick call to the right number and have an answer in 15 seconds max. Right?

Well, not so fast, friends.

My first call to a city office put me in touch with someone who didn't know, but was happy to pass me along to someone else who didn't have an inkling either.

Two more tries, two more blank walls. By now, I'm thinking that Georgetown has never had a raffle inquiry from anyone at anytime. Little did I know that my quest had just begun.

Number four, however, gave me a tip: "Try the Police Department or the IRS."

Not wanting to begin an intimate relationship with either of the two, I chose the lesser of the you know what's and dialed the police. And for all those who didn't have an answer for me... "Book 'em Dano!" Sorry. I've always wanted to say that.



I'll give you three guesses. Nope, no information, but the nice officer did offer one more source. "Why not go to the City of Georgetown's website and search the regulations listed?" *Bang!* (me hitting my forehead).

But little did I know what evil lurks in the hearts of men (and women). Next time you want to know what enterprise needs a permit, don't wade through their very long list - just call me. I am now the foremost authority on what does or does not require a permit within the Georgetown city limits.

If your entrepreneurial spirit leads you to produce a carnival, a circus, or run a horse-drawn carriage business, you need a permit. If you offer taxi or bus service, you need a permit. If you are a peddler or solicitor, you need a permit. Was I getting close?

Before my question was finally answered, I learned the most unusual need for a permit: If you have plans that include lodgings, never offer anyone a place to sleep for less than ten hours without that necessary piece of paper!

While contemplating the last entry I almost forgot what I was looking for.

Oh, yes!

We do NOT need a permit to have a raffle. But please don't ask me to chair it. I don't think I have

Scare The Dickens Out of US from Roxanne Rix and Gretchen Rix

Last year members of the San Gabriel Writer's League came pretty close to placing in the top winners of our Scare The Dickens Out of Us ghost story writing contest. We hope you will put notice of this year's contest in your newsletter. We'd definitely love more top-notch entries from Texas writers.

The Scare The Dickens Out of Us ghost story writing contest for 2011 is entering its third year. First place prize of \$1000.00, second place prize of \$500.00 and third place prize of \$250.00 will be awarded this year for the best original, previously unpublished ghost stories 5000 words or less that are submitted. For younger writers, The Junior Scare The Dickens Out of Us ghost story contest, which follows the same rules, offers \$250.00 for first place for writers aged 12-18.

This contest is a fundraiser for the Friends of the Dr. Eugene Clark Library in Lockhart, Texas. The main contest requires a \$20.00 entry fee and the Junior contest a \$5.00 entry fee. The contest is privately funded. All entry

fee money goes directly to the Friends where it is donated to the library for library projects.

Entries are accepted beginning July 1. The contest postmark deadline is October 1, 2011. Full rules are at www.clarklibraryfriends.com.

No publication is involved. Writers retain full rights to their stories. The contest is open to published and unpublished writers, and to local, national and international writers as well.

The only rules are that you write an original, unpublished ghost story and that it be 5000 words or less in length.

Yours, Roxanne Rix and Gretchen Rix, contest coordinators

P.S. The first year of our contest saw mostly Texas entries, the second mostly not. We want more Texans!

Who "said" Answer ... Rollo May ...

(April 21, 1909 – October 22, 1994) was an American existential psychologist.

He authored the influential book *Love and Will* during 1969. He is often associated with both humanistic psychology and existentialist philosophy. May was a close friend of the theologian Paul Tillich. His works include *Love and Will* and *The Courage to Create*, the latter title honoring Tillich's *The Courage to Be*.



Ask the Book Doctor: Dialoguedly Confused

Dear Doc

A writing instructor I went to criticized my dialogue as unbelievable and unnatural because my characters speak too correctly and don't use contractions. I was crushed. In that certain passage the instructor read, I intended to use precise speech to fit the personalities of the two prim and proper characters. Had he only read farther, he would have met more "natural" characters. What is your opinion on this?

—Dialoguedly Conflicted

Dear Conflicted,

You have the right idea. Mode of speech is one of your most powerful tools for conveying characterization. While most people, even educated ones, do use contractions, if it wouldn't fit your particular characters, then by all means don't use it.



The problem arises from this passage being your beginning, when your readers are settling into your style. At that point, you need to hook them, and unless you give plenty of other clues that these characters are unusually formal—even stuffy—the readers may not “get it.” If they think it's the writer's pedantic style, they will put the book down.

Would it be possible, in this opening scene, to show one or both of these characters in conversation with a less formal character? The contrast should clarify what you are doing and even enhance the difference.

—May the prim be offset by the plain—Joan Hall

Have a question to share in this column? Email me at: jmuHall@aol.com with “Ask the Book Doctor” as your subject line. If you want to remain anonymous, I'll address you by whatever pseudonym you sign. To see previous issues, go to: <http://www.joanuptonhall.com/books.htm>. Scroll past the book covers and click “Ask Doc” Q&A's.

Announcing New Marketing Opportunity For Authors

Starting February 7, 2011, **Sylvia Dickey Smith** resumes her weekly live Blog Talk Radio internet talk show. The format has changed from *Murder She Writes*, to *Writing Strong Women*. The 30 minute program will air at 1:00 p.m. CENTRAL time, every Monday. Conducted over the telephone, live, it will also be archived for those listeners who cannot tune in at that time.

Sylvia will be interviewing published authors who write any

genre, any time period, fiction or non-fiction, whose work supports the topic of strong women. Listeners may also call in to ask questions or comment.

This opportunity is free and the format is relaxed and casual.

Email Sylvia at: sds@suddenlink.net to book a time slot and look forward to a fun half hour talking about YOU!

10-Minute Fixes to 10 Common Plot Problems

by **Elizabeth Sims** from www.writersdigest.com . . . Continued **Note from the editor:** [this is a many part series over](#)

Let's look at 10 common plot problems you can tackle in a flash—and then find out how to do it.

2. MY ACTION IN THIS SCENE DRAGS.

We've all been there: You've got an action scene that's starting to bore even you. Granted, your story is moving forward, but it feels cumbersome.

10-MINUTE SOLUTION: Resist the urge to pile it on; rather, tighten what you've got.

You could spend hours—days!—trying to inject more life into a scene, but the best solution is often just the opposite. Usually a quicker pace will do the trick.

One of the easiest, most effective ways to tighten prose is to turn full sentences into fragments and opt for one-line paragraphs.

If you start with this, for example:

The thug was much taller and heavier than Jamal. Looking up, Jamal thought: If I don't figure something out fast, we're all dead meat. There was the pool cue, propped against the table, his only available weapon. He grabbed it, wound up as the big man began to react, and swung. It was with a tremendous sense of satisfaction that everybody in the bar heard a crunching sound.

Turn it into something like this (and be sure to drop the “dead meat” cliché):

Jamal looked up.

A giant.

Without thinking, he grabbed the pool cue and swung, eyes closed.

A satisfying crunch!

You shouldn't try to write a whole book this way, but rat-a-tat passages like this will bring variety and movement to your fiction.

Special Interest Groups

The Williamson County Coroners is a mystery/suspense group and participants must have novels in progress. The meetings are held at the 10:30 a.m. at the Red Poppy Café in the Georgetown Library. **And there is room for one more !!**

Last Writes Critique Group—Full

Meets (usually) at 7 PM, 2nd & 4th Wed. each month, at Oaks at Wildwood Clubhouse. Novels in progress, varied genres. Membership currently full. Contact: JmuHall@aol.com

Novel Crafters is Full right now, but welcomes a Waiting List

Meets every other Thursday on the second floor of the Georgetown Library in a private room. Contact is Mary Stafford at marylynn@mstafford.net

Quixotic Quills critique group represents varied interests. Our

group writes historical novels, short stories and memoirs. Meetings are usually on the second and fourth Thursday of each month unless we reschedule because of holidays. We meet at 7:00 p.m. at the Monument Café. Contact is Sharon Lyle, 512-639-1162, iwritecozyes@gmail.com. Currently, we are closed to new members.

Bard Masters Critique Group

We meet at 6 p.m. on Tuesdays at the Georgetown library. We have 6 members and we feel that 6 manuscripts is all that we can handle and do the process justice. Until further notice Ross Carnes is the contact: graphicsrex@hotmail.com

If you are interested in joining a critique group, contact Joan Upton Hall (jmuhall@aol.com) or Sylvia Dickey Smith (sds@suddenlink.com)

Member websites

Anna M. Bell

Website: <http://www.annamaebell.com>
Author Blog: <http://annbell.wordpress.com/>
Educational Technology Blog: <http://annamaebell.wordpress.com/>

Ross Carnes

<http://webstarts.com/RHCarnesStoryTeller>

David Ciambrone

www.davidciambrone.com

Mary Fenoglio

www.eggsinmypocket.com

Joan Hall:

www.JoanUptonHall.com

Sam Holland:

www.samholland.com

Melissa Leedom:

www.forgive490.com

Linda Lipscomb:

www.lblipscomb.com

Jason Minor:

www.jason-minor.com

Helen Nardecchia

www.helennardecchia.com

Joy Nord:

www.joynord.com

Jamie Roton aka Lillian Grey blog

<http://lilliangrey.wordpress.com/>

Sylvia Dickey Smith:

www.sylviadickeysmyth.com

SGWL website:

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Columns are 3 and 1/4 inches wide.

If you have illustration, send it and I will try to use it

Send to SGWL Submission
181 Young Ranch Rd
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Demystifying Writers' Demons One at a Time by Joan Upton Hall

Do demons bedevil your writing? Similar, confusing words? Grammar, punctuation, or capitalization rules? "The Demystifier" will clear up the mystery (primary reference unless otherwise noted: Garner, Bryan A. *Dictionary of Modern American Usage*. N.Y.: Oxford University Press). Address questions and comments to freelance editor, **Joan Upton Hall, PO Box 179, Hutto, TX 78634**, or email: jmuHall@aol.com. More problems like the one above are demystified in the booklet, *50 Writers' Tips*. Find a few of them at "books, etc." on website: www.JoanUptonHall.com.

Demystifying Writers' Demons©

Bad/ badly

- Verbs "feel," "smell," and "taste" can be linking verbs, requiring the predicate adjective, "bad." But they can also be action verbs modified by the adverb, "badly."
Correct: "I feel bad about this."
Misused: "I feel badly about this." (Something wrong with your tactile senses?)
Correct (but not recommended): "Since severing his nerves, he feels badly. (impaired tactile senses)

Correct: "Un-refrigerated, three-day old beef smells bad."
Misused: "The beef smells badly." (Huh! A live animal with sinus congestion?)
Correct: "To me, artichoke tastes bad."
Misused: "Artichoke tastes badly." (Of course! It has no taste buds.)
- Any action verb should be modified by the adverb, "badly," meaning "very much."
Correct: "I want chocolate badly." or "The story needed editing badly."
OR "The story was badly in need of editing." (Here it modifies the adjective prepositional phrase, "in need.")



The Gabriel Writer



181 Young Ranch Road
Georgetown TX 78628

the
February 3
SGWL meeting
is at the
Georgetown Public Library
N Rock St
between
7th and 8th
gather at 6:30
meeting
at 7:00 p.m.

The Write place for the writer in you!