



SARW Dates

Next Meetings

18 June

16 July

20 August

Competition

postmarked 11th July

Conference

11 October

Contents

SARW Incorporation	1
Musing	2
Q & A	3
Avid Readers Make Better Writers	4
Writer's Block	5
Anticrastinate!	5
Feature article - Beginnings . . .	6
Moments of Change	6
Back to Basics - Taste	8
Bringing it home	8
What do I do now?	9
Grammer Genie	10
A day in the life . . .	11
Resolutions to a Muse	11
Continuation of a theme . . .	12
Passion food	13
Industry News	14

SARW's Incorporation!

Welcome to our first newsletter since becoming an incorporated body!

We are now officially known as South Australian Romance Writers Incorporated. So why did we incorporate? There comes a time in a group's life when it has to make a decision – do we stay informal, offering services under the auspices of other organisation(s) which may have similar but not the same objectives as we do, or do we take the next step along the maturity path and become a legal entity in our own right? Given the success of our one day conferences, the need for a local romance group, and subsequently the vision of that group to raise the profile of the Romance Industry in South Australia, became obvious and the decision was made to formalise proceedings and thus, incorporation. We are still a relatively small group – but what we lack in numbers, we make up for in enthusiasm and drive.

Incorporation gives us the tools we need to ensure that SARW Inc. exists for the benefit of it's members in our local writing community. A community of writers who are able to come together in an accepting spirit, with no prejudice, to discuss their trade, to learn new skills and to share their knowledge. We focus primarily on the romance genre, what it is and how writers craft their creation, but we also recognise the importance of romantic content and subplots in other genres and story telling mediums. The cross fertilisation of ideas and methods may just give



you the edge you need to get your work accepted.

We are continually being told from the biggest publisher of category romance that they are on the look out for something new – a new voice – but they also want the story to meet their guidelines. Isn't this a contradiction? How can something be new but still the same? A paradox! But there are other publishers who have different demands who are trying something a little bit different (or is it a little bit the same?), who are responding to the market place. There are numerous writers out there with great stories, but if the readers are buying them then the publishers aren't buying them. And as writers, we must make a decision – do we write just to get published or do we write as a career? The answer to this question will guide all else, will establish your mindset and your relationship with a potential publisher.

And so with our writing group. The path which we now follow has the potential for us to support fellow writers through providing activities and events which may not have been possible if we had not incorporated. Although we are still in our infancy, the goal remains the same – to provide support, guidance and the opportunity to network on a local scale for all romance writers.

Regards,

Peter Clark

Chair

SARW Inc.

South Australian Romance Writers Inc.

Musing



Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Muse*, the South Australian Romance Writers Inc. Newsletter!

We look forward to

providing you with many an informative article, news, publishing information and hopefully a bit of fun stuff to relieve the stress of writing. We hope through this newsletter we can have contact with our members, both those who can make the monthly meetings and those who are unable to attend. This is YOUR newsletter, one which we hope you will contribute to regularly, with articles, letters, comments or anything you desire.

Muse will be published four times a year. It will have specific topics that it covers in those issues, but please feel free to contribute anything you feel like! These topics will be advertised in the previous month's *Muse* and contributors will be invited to email articles for publication. This month's topics are: procrastination, or, I really should clean that bathroom; plotting, or where did my damn story go; and emotional punch, or damn, but that brings a tear to my eye..

I am very good at procrastination. Very, very good. I can not stress enough how good I am at procrastination. If it were an Olympic event, I am sure I would win the gold every time. How do

fly?

Do you want to write Sexy romances?

This line is also published as Harlequin Presents and M&B Modern Romance. You should ground your story in reality, but don't be afraid to let it fly - after all, it should be a compelling modern fantasy! A world full of spine-tingling passion and provocative romance awaits you!

I fight the dreaded "hmm, I'm sure that needs dusting, maybe I'll do that" syndrome? When I manage to flex my meager muscles and bash that demon into submission, it's usually through the means of a goal, or a deadline. If I set myself little deadlines, such as I have to have my manuscript half-finished by this date, or I need to have my plan completed by then, I usually buckle down and reach my goal. Note I said usually. It doesn't always happen this way. Let's face it, having a life is good. I enjoy seeing my friends, spending time with loved ones, doing 'research' at the movies (c'mon, I'm sure Bond films are very educational) and if I cut this out in order to write, I wouldn't be enjoying my life. So don't beat yourself about the head if you don't achieve your goal. Just set a new one and go about achieving that!

Hmm, plotting. A necessary evil. While some people prefer to 'fly by the seat of their pants' (sounds very uncomfortable to me!), I like to plan. I admit, I am a bit of a control freak, but I find it comforting and yes, inspiring, to know what is going to happen in my story next. Before I started to plan, I would have the best beginnings of stories. They were fantastic! However, I would get maybe three/four chapters into the story and it would fizzle away, as if it had never been. But now, I have planned and plotted my current story and lo and behold, I am three-quarters of the way through it! Yay! Beginnings, while very important, can't sustain a story and plotting is needed in order for the story to have some direction. Even if you go off on a tangent, at least you can come back to your plan when you lose your way.

Emotional punch. Isn't that a cocktail? No? Ah, so it's that dreaded phrase editors use to tell you your story is lacking something. I like my cocktail idea better. Emotional punch is the reason people read. We want to be involved in the story, biting our nails as

Contacting us

postal po box 322 morphett vale sa 5162
website www.sarw.cjb.net
email muse@sarw.cjb.net

Credits

editor Cassie Wilson
contributors Lucy Clark, Kate Ferrar, Martina Taeker, Peter Clark, Caitlin Silversmith, Sylvie O'Shale, Cassandra Dean, Vanessa Morrish

SARW Inc. Executive

chair	Peter Clark
vice chair	Anne Clark
treasurer	Peter Clark
acting secretary	Kate Farrer
c & a director	Martina Taeker
publications editor	Cassie Wilson
executive officer	Anne Oh

South Australian Romance Writers Inc.
ABN 79932428591 is registered in SA as an Incorporated Association the liability of whose members is limited. *Muse* is the official publication of SARW Inc. and no part can be reproduced or used for profit by SARW Inc. members or others without prior permission from the Editor. Reproduction rights exist between agreed parties on the condition that appropriate credit is given to *Muse* and the author of the article. Copyright remains with the author. The views expressed in *Muse* do not necessarily reflect the official policy of SARW Inc. All care is taken to check details reproduced in these pages but no responsibility can be taken if they are inaccurate. Please contact SARW Inc. if *Muse* has published the wrong details and every effort will be made to correct the mistake in the following issue.

Copyright © 2003
South Australian Romance Writers Inc.

the heroine faces evil, scared with her as she faces her demons and rejoicing when that luscious hero declares his love for me . . . I mean, the heroine! We want to feel what they feel, see what they see, experience what they are. Emotional punch gets you square in the chest, makes you gasp, makes you cry, makes you laugh out loud . . . it is the thing that ties us to the story and won't let us go.

So now that that's all clear as mud, enjoy your issue of *Muse* and emails us with your comments, thoughts, articles or anything you want to!

Cassie Wilson, editor extraordinaire

Q&A

I want to enter competitions. What's your advice?

There are several important points you should consider when entering competitions:

Choose contests that suit the market your book is aimed at.

Check the final judges—they may work at publishing houses you are aiming for.

Ensure you leave time to meet the deadline.

Read the rules.

Don't forget a SASE for returns. If it's a US contest an email can clarify this—usually an addition to the entry fee is all that is required.

A thank you note to the judges is appreciated.

How do I start off writing? I have an idea but don't know how to get started.

Hmm, how to start? I guess there's no way around it - just start! You can't wait for the perfect moment, the perfect pen, the perfect writing book - it will never happen. There is always something that you keep telling yourself needs your attention - that jigsaw you started but never finished, the half-finished knitting, the woodwork project you've been promising yourself you'd see to this summer . . . but all this is just procrastination. Just plunge in, feet first. You'll be surprised how easy it is once you actually *start*.

How important is editing?

Editing is *very* important. But don't let your inner editor stop you from finishing your first draft. It is vital you remember this simple adage - you can't fix a blank page! Finish your first draft and then go back and cull, refine, cull, cut, cull . . . Take as many drafts as necessary before you declare your manuscript perfect. It is hard to stop yourself fixing things as you go along but remember, your plot, characters, etc could completely change before the end of your book - so what's the point in editing something that may be cut later anyway?



What do you think emotional punch is? How do you achieve/remedy its lack?

This is a brilliant question and one that is often asked. Emotional punch is achieved when you focus on your characters main motivations, which in turn stirs their emotions. Confused even more? Let's break it down. The first thing when writing is to know that everything is very incestuous. There's characterisation, internal and external conflicts, there's motivation, there's show . . . don't tell, structure, plot, pacing – there are so many facets that go into making your story a whole and like you – as a person – you need to work hard to make them three dimensional. I have received rejections based upon a lack of emotional punch and subsequently wrote a book which I thought had heaps of emotional punch only to be rejected yet again with “the character's motivations don't ring true”. I'd gone so over the top putting in action and drama that I hadn't focused on the characters emotions. First of all, take a breath. Secondly, take a really good long look at your protagonists. Who are they? What makes them tick? What has happened in their past to sculpt them into the person they are today? Dig deep. If you don't give them any skeleton's in their closets, then where is their conflict coming from? Once you know the answers to these questions, look hard at what motivates your protagonists. What makes them act or react a certain way? How do they feel? Write down a list of emotions you feel your characters might be feeling in these heightened circumstances. Now go and write that scene again. Use your senses – all 6 of them and concentrate solely and wholly on the

emotions. Emotional punch is a skill – just like everything else involved in the writing process – and one that you can learn with persistence and determination. The next time you read a book that makes you want to laugh out loud or brings tears to your eyes, highlight the passages. Ask yourself why you felt like crying/laughing. Take a closer look at how the author brought you to that point where your stomach was completely fluttering with nervous anticipation and learn from it.

How do you get inside your hero's head?

It's not always easy getting into your character's head. It's even harder when the character is the opposite sex to you. But if you want to create a three dimensional hero and write from his POV (point of view), then it is essential.

I think this is an occasion for background homework. Unless you have chosen to copy your hero from someone close to you (and be really careful if you do this) you need to create him from scratch, his physiology, psychology and sociology.

His physical appearance, self and body image will affect his outlook on life. Give him goals and ambitions; secrets and regrets; likes and dislikes; hobbies, habits and mannerisms; a driving passion and motivation; problems to solve; sexuality. Give him a past and a family. Don't make him perfect – make him real.

If you are still struggling to get inside his head – test him. What would he do if he found a case full of money? Was threatened? suffered hardship? Was diagnosed with a serious/fatal disease? What would he save from his burning house?

Write a short autobiography – *his*, not yours.

If you take the time, you will be well rewarded for your efforts. You will know this guy inside and out. What makes him tick and what ticks him off. If you love him, so will your heroine and your reader.

Avid readers Make Better Writers . . .

by Martina Taeker

Want to write a romance? You have pen and paper ready. Or you're sitting before the computer, the cursor blinking at the top left of a blank screen. Let's step back for a moment. What do you mean by romance? Do you want to write single title or category? Which genre (single title) or line (category) interests you?

Confused? You wouldn't be if you were *a reader*. You would know what is on the bookshelves in stores and libraries. You'd know the type of story that most captivates you. What does this have to do with writing? Everything.

There's an old saying – *write what you enjoy reading*. Why? you ask. For several reasons and we're going to look at some now.

First, let's get the money and fame issues out of the way. Some people think that with their first novel they'll get a six-figure advance and hit number one on the New York Times bestseller list. Unlikely. The rare, first-time author that does, does so incidentally. Her first priority is to write the book that has captured her heart, hijacked her mind, and possessed her soul. Her passion for this story is so intense and consuming she *must* write it. Someone who writes solely for money

and fame does not have this fire and will not succeed.

Second, let's consider the time factor. It's not easy to 'crank' out a novel and I'm willing to bet most of you already know that. Somewhere, somehow between work, family, and sleep you must make the time to write a first draft. Then you need to revise it: rewriting, pruning, toning, and honing, until you think it's ready. Finally, you need to send it out to publishers.

How are you going to survive spending hours every week on a novel you don't like? You probably won't. You'll give up. Or the going will be much tougher and take much longer than if you were interested in the story. So, do yourself a favour and choose to write the sort of novel you enjoy reading. If you prefer reading single title, then write single title. If you don't enjoy reading sweet romance, then don't write one.

Third, reading other authors will help you learn the writer's craft. With every story you read, you take in plot, character, sentence structure, and so on. All this is instinctive, unless you are already *reading as a writer*. If so, you have the advantage. If not, then start. Now.

Read the book once for enjoyment. Then reread it and analyse what the author is doing. How does page one start? How is the heroine introduced? The hero? How is the conflict established and developed? Take each passage apart, each sentence, and discover the techniques the author uses. Then start applying them to your own writing. The opposite is also true. When you see something that doesn't work for you, then don't do that in your writing.

Fourth, as an avid reader you'll know what type of romance you're writing because you will have read novels of that line or genre. Your familiarity with that line or genre will make it easier, and more enjoyable, to write. You'll know what is selling and what is not. You'll know what sort of stories are on the shelves and what is missing – waiting for you to write it. You will know the expectations that editors and readers have and you will be able to satisfy those expectations – in your own unique style, of course.

By now, I'm sure you've thought of more reasons why reading is vital for writers. But some people just don't seem to understand the connection. Reading

continued on page 12...

South Australian Romance Writers Inc. Presents . . .

**Happily
Ever After!**

Send us the last chapter &/or epilogue of your masterpiece!

Competition closes: Friday 11 July 2003

For more information contact Competition Coordinator

competition@sarw.cjb.net



You've done it. You've made time for yourself out of your busy schedule. The kids are taken care of, the husband is happy, the housework is as up to date as it needs to be and you've planned these four hours for days.

And you can't think what to write.

What's happened? Why is the blank computer screen you have worked towards for so long now frustrating to face? Is it a pile-up of guilt for all those times you wrote when you were supposed to be doing something else? Is it exhaustion from those late nights and early mornings when you stole time from yourself because you had to get your story written? Fear of failure? Fear of success?

Stop analysing yourself and start analysing your story.

Many beginner writers are still in the 'telling' stage. They want to tell the reader the story is really exciting and interesting. They're not actually showing the reader what is happening. Half the time they haven't even visualised it themselves. They have a really exciting scene to write but they can't say what the heroine is really thinking and feeling or how she will speak. They don't know how to describe the hero's reactions and emotions. What

should be a juicy twenty page chapter turns into an unsatisfactory half a page.

So what do they do? Instead of thinking about it and pouring everything they have into the scene, they start writing the backstory. They plod through pages and pages of backstory in order to prepare the reader for their exciting plot, which actually begins somewhere in the middle of chapter three. They don't want to write it and the reader doesn't want to read it.

But what if you're not a beginning writer and have trouble with writer's block? Go back to your story. Are you working on an exciting development which furthers the romance? If you know what you want to happen, do you know the characters well enough to have them go through it?

I don't like the arbitrary division of writers into 'seat of the pants' writers or 'plotters' but I must admit there are two approaches you could take here. The first is to grit your teeth and write anyway. Type out a scene and figure out the good bits as you go. The story will gain momentum if you figure out the dialogue and action line by line. It is pain, it is agony, but gradually a novel will emerge.

Anticrastinate!

Procrastinate is such a strange word. It seems to be encouraging us to slow down and put things off. Yet for a writer it is one of the worst traits to own up to and I have to be honest, I have been a **pro** with regard to being a procrastinator.

When the Romans came up with *procrastinatus* (put off 'till the morrow) I'm sure they had good reason for doing so. It was probably a good idea to put off slaying Julius Ceasar (at least until the Ides of March when the whole Senate could join in).

I'm sure the Romans had all number

by Kate Farrer

of reasons for embracing *procrastinatus* but they did not let it get in the way of developing a humungous empire of great wealth and size.

In the same way, we should not let procrastination get in the way of our writing. Instead of being procrastinators we need to *carpe diem quam minimum credula postero* (enjoy the present and trust as little as possible to the future). In other words **seize the day and write!**

I therefore put it to you that you support my proposal that 2003 be the year of **Anticrastination!**

The second approach is to (gulp!) leave the keyboard you have so little time on and go back to your plot. Re-visit your storyboard and your character charts. Interview your hero or heroine to see how they feel about it all and interesting facts will emerge and soon you will be dying to show them.

You may know what your characters look like and sound like and how they would they act if faced with the conflict in this particular scene. Have you got that far and you still don't want to write? Then either the scene is contrived or it's boring. If it's a good scene, your fingers would be tapping.

There are lots of reasons for writers leaving the keyboard. They want to watch a movie, they need time with their family, they don't feel like writing. But if you are serious about writing, stay there. You will create something worthwhile if you stay and type.

Caitlin Silversmith has created 5 complete novels and although none has sold yet she loves them all.

Fun Websites!

Check out these websites for information, insights or just plain fun!

www.torridromance.com - if you want to order a romance featuring you and your hunnybunny, this is the site for you!

www.mrsgiggles.com - acerbic reviews of romance novels, films, music, and tv! Enter Mrs Giggles's world if you dare . . .

www.joseager.co.nz - yummy food that is really easy to make. Check out Ms Seager's extra yummy mocha fudge brownies . . . excuse the drool!

www.ebay.com.au - for cheap books and great bargains, check out ebay, an online auction site!

<http://home.att.net/~jaclynreding/links/index.html> - for lots of useful information

Did you Know?? Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to smell so brides carried a bouquet of wildflowers to cover the smell and that is how the tradition started that we have today, of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Have you ever found yourself immensely bored by the opening scene of a book or movie, unable to connect with the characters or the situation they find themselves in? Chances are, you have been witness to the deathknell of a story – an uninspiring beginning.

Beginnings are very, very important to a story. Very important. One of the most important things about the story. Did I mention they were important? The beginning is what will grip your reader, make her unable to put your book down, make her just *have* to stay awake til two in the morning to find out whether your hero and heroine really do get together. It will also get an editor to take a deeper look at your manuscript and your reader to buy your book. If you haven't captured your reader within three paragraphs, you're in a wee bit of trouble.

One of the main problems with beginnings is writers don't know WHERE to begin. You have these wonderful characters that have had fantastic lives and you know what? Your reader should really know about those lives. So you put in the first chapter that your hero was abandoned at an early age to be raised by a Himalayan Mountain Goat herder, while also managing to get a degree in astrophysics. And your heroine got a degree in Psychic Phenomena at University, where she also joined the chess, science and maths clubs while becoming the

most popular of cheerleaders, and organised a social that was the smash occasion of the year. Meanwhile, you are now up to chapter five of a ten-chapter book and your heroine and hero have yet to reach their moment of change. Actually, they've yet to meet! It is important that you know your characters' backstory. What you need to realise is this backstory MUST be woven into your manuscript, not given in big chunks at the beginning.

It is imperative that you begin at the moment, the very *second*, a change occurs in your hero and heroine's lives. This is the driving force behind the story, the reason your readers love your stories. The journey from the moment they realise something is lacking to the moment they gain it is why we read. The change can be anything – a realisation, a meeting, an event – but it must be significant to your characters.

So what makes a good beginning? Picture your hero and heroine. How do they meet? What is the impetus that brings them together? Say they are involved in an arranged marriage and you want to explore how they handle that marriage. Where do you think you should begin? With how they met, the circumstances behind that meeting? With the arranging of the marriage, which if a historical, could have occurred when they were children? Or should you begin it in the MIDDLE of the event happening to them, on the wedding night or shortly after they are married? When picturing your beginning, imagine the scene and then begin in the MIDDLE of it. This draws a reader into the scene immediately. Why are these people here? What are their reasons? How do they relate to each other? What has brought them to this point? These are immediate questions that lead your reader into the rest of the story in search of them.

It is said in films that you must know everything you need to know within the first five minutes. Characters, situations, conflicts, everything should be set up and ready to go. Strap yourself in, the ride's about to begin! The same is true of novels. Within the first few pages, you want to hook your reader, grab her by the throat and never let her go. You have to intrigue her, titillate her, entrance her. A prime example of how this works is the film *The Matrix* (1999).

In the opening scene, we see a telephone trace programme running on screen, the green numbers running against a black background as an unknown element traces the line. We hear characters talking over the image, a phone conversation between a man and a woman. The man asks why the woman has relieved him, to which she says she felt like it. He replies "You like to watch him." Ignoring him, she asks if the line is tapped and he assures her it isn't. From this very brief scene, no more than 45 seconds, we gain a lot of information. It might not make sense at the minute, but the importance of it becomes obvious as the film progresses. Several questions are raised. Who are these people?

Moments of Change . . .

Lucy Clark

Something I struggled with early on in my writing career was where to *start* the book. I had been told to start the book at the "point of change" but *where* exactly was that? This is what I've learnt - that your characters get up, eat breakfast, go to work, come home, eat dinner and go to bed. They do that day after day without anything out of the ordinary happening to them. Then, one day - BAM! Something completely beyond their control happens and their lives change forever. THIS is the point of change. THIS is where you start your book because THIS is where the story begins.

Beginning writers often become wanna-bes because they don't do what every writer must do – write!

You can't sit around thinking. You have to sit around writing.

David Long

What are they doing? Who is tracing them? Who are they talking about? It also sets up some very important conflict between the man, the woman and the person they are talking about. Sorry this is so vague. I have recently become aware that some people actually haven't seen *The Matrix* and I'd hate to ruin it for those people! It really is a movie you can't describe, you have to see it for yourself. I highly recommend you do. It is a fantastic example of good writing.

Now, what about a beginning line? Dialogue, action, mood, all are valid ways of beginning your story. You must choose what is most appropriate for your plot, your characters, the situation they find themselves in. Consider the following examples:

Valerie had three choices – she could stay here forever, frozen to the spot and die of exposure; back away slowly and put up with the jeers of her fellow travellers. Or she could jump.

The river flowed what seemed like a hundred miles below her, the current throwing white water violently against the jagged rocks breaking through the surface of the river. She looked at the bungy cord fastened to her ankle by what seemed the most tenuous of fastenings. Back at the river. Screw it.

She jumped.

This immediately throws up several questions – where is Valerie, why is she so scared of jumping and how did she get there. It also gives a bit of insight into her character – she is scared to death, but jumps anyway. The beginning illustrates her dilemma and sets up some interesting possibilities. But did it grab you? Do you want to find out what happens to Valerie? Ask yourself this when creating your beginning. Am I intriguing the reader, *making* her read on?

“Get down!”

Sarah whipped her head around, trying to see who was yelling. “What, what?” she asked, confusion evident in her voice.

“Just get down, woman.” A hand slammed into her back, the force of the blow pushing her to her knees, her arms braced in front of her.

She opened her mouth, about to berate the bastard who had pushed her when a strong hand clasped her over her mouth. She turned furious eyes to see intense green ones staring back her.



“Shut up if you want to live,” he said.

Dialogue is a great way to convey the frantic nature of a beginning. Short, static sentences create a mood of frenzy, impetuosity, *rush*. Action in a beginning throws your reader in amongst the characters and takes them along for the ride.

This example immediately throws you in to Sarah's situation - who is this man, what's he talking about? Why is her life in danger?

What is also important is that a problem has been presented. Something is not right with Sarah's life, or she would not be in danger. Even if it's a case of mistaken identity, Sarah's life has been disrupted and the only way to find out what's going on is to experi-

ence the journey with her.

Another way to begin is with a descriptive passage.

The sun beat down on the unrelenting surface of the building, the red brick walls absorbing the heat into themselves. The windows glittered, reflecting back with rays of its own the sun's yellow glare. The building seemed to shimmer in the intense heat, the imposing structure made vulnerable by the wavering ribbons of air in front of it. It seemed vaguely obscene the sun should be shining on such a day. After all, the master of this grand structure had finally died.

Descriptive beginnings are less frantic than the other kinds. They slowly introduce a reader to the situation. But they do create a wonderful sense of menace. Take, for example, what is perhaps the most atmospheric beginning of all

Last night I dreamt I went to Mandalay again. It seemed to me I stood by the iron gate leading to the drive and for a while I could not enter, for the way was barred to me. (*Rebecca*, Daphne du Maurier)

Or there is the short, sharp and shiny:

Right about the time her parachute failed to open, Matty pondered the folly of learning to sky dive.

So play around, experiment. Start your story in the middle of a sentence, a scene, a catastrophe and see if you can create a compelling, forceful and gripping beginning to enthrall your reader.

BACK TO BASICS

by Lucy Clark

Let's take a wander through the senses.

Taste, Touch, Hear, Smell and Sight. I think I'll also add in a sixth sense, Intuition, because heroines should have this in abundance!

All of the senses are very important when writing. Using them will help make your characters three dimensional. For instance - a flower. You *see* it's bright colours, you can *smell* it's beautiful fragrance and, depending on the flower, you can even *taste* it. You can *hear* the bee buzzing as it comes to gather pollen and, of course, you can *touch* it, feeling the soft texture of the petals.

I challenge you to become more aware of ALL your senses, even when doing something as mundane as washing dishes. *Feel* the water, *smell* the scent of the dish-washing liquid, *see* the water and bubbles, and maybe even *hear* a few bubbles pop. *Tasting* the water? That's entirely up to you!!

Most of the time, we take our senses for granted. For someone who is blind, their other senses become more finely attuned. If you're writing a character who's blind or deaf, you need to be in their shoes. Walk around your house with a blind fold on or block your ears up, experience what they would experience. That way, you can really write about it.

For this article, I thought I'd start with *TASTE*.

To me, it's one of the more *sensual* of the senses. Why do we eat? For pleasure. What do we eat? Food we like.

An exercise I'd encourage you to try is to describe your favourite ice-cream. If you don't like ice-cream, try describing your absolute favourite food. The colour and the texture will only tell us so much. How does it *taste*? Good? Come on, you can do better than *good*!

You'll find as you do this exercise that your other senses will come into play. They're all intertwined but try hard to simply

focus on the taste.

Adjectives are wondrous. They're the perfect way to convey to the reader what our characters are going through. Choose your adjectives carefully. You should only need one or two to describe your noun, with an absolute maximum of three. The correct adjective will convey the senses accurately to the reader, thereby causing *them* to experience those same emotions.

For example: The blandness spread throughout her mouth, due to the coldness of the confection before the sweet flavour of vanilla bean teased her senses. As she savoured the sensation, a fruity zing burst forth, delighting her. She closed her eyes and slowly swallowed, the fresh liquid sliding down her throat, caressing her from the inside.

continued on page 12...

Muse Submissions

We welcome submissions from our members. The next issue of *Muse* will deal with:

Conflict

Hooks

Three Dimensional Characters

If you have scintaliting views on any or all of these topics and are just itching to share them, please write to us!

email submissions@sarw.cjb.net.

Please keep your article between 250-500 words. Your work will be reviewed and any changes will be sent to you via email for your approval, where possible. The Editor's decision on publishing your work is final. No correspondence will be entered into regarding the Editor's decision. Please note any submission is tantamount to an agreement of these stipulations.

Bringing it home

by Vanessa Morrish

Have you ever read a book that you can't put down? Or a book that makes anything else other than what you are reading seem unimportant? What makes it so this happens? It's that thing writers like to call emotional punch. The name seems almost cheap after you have spent the last 20 minutes with a box of tissues because Alexander never told Sarah that he loved her before he tragically died. However emotional punch is exactly that. The writer takes a swing at you when you are at your most vulnerable; when they have taken you to the point when you are so engrossed in a story and it's characters that you go from an outsider to an insider, a participant in events. You can't wait to turn to the next page and even consider committing a reading sin - turning to the last page to see what happens at the end of the story.

So, how do you do it? When it comes down to it, writing is based on events, personal experience, daydreams, friends, family - all the little day to day idiosyncrasies which we may not notice, but writers turn into fiction. This is how we relate to a story and how writers connect with their readers. Writers use a character's point of view to control the reader's emotions. If successfully done, when the character gets angry, you do too. To set this reaction up, you may choose to use any or all of the five senses to trigger your feelings. If the aroma of a

continued on page 12...

fyj

Do you want to write Medicals?

Be prepared to do a lot of research! Medical authenticity is not necessarily checked by the editor, after all, she's an editor, not a doctor! She expects your medical research to be accurate and up to date so if there are any problems, it will fall squarely back on your shoulders and you may even lose readers over it.

What do *J* do now?

by Sylvie O'Shale

You've finished your first novel. You feel great, and already have the ideas for your second buzzing around in your head. But what about number one—your first baby? Are you going to file it away in a drawer somewhere and not let anyone read it?

What if it's not good enough, you say. You'll never know if you don't get it out there. Odds are it's not a best-seller—yet. So who can you show it to?

A good critique partner can help you see mistakes you don't. So can a good critique group. Reading your work aloud to a group can be a scary experience. I found groups beneficial when I first started writing, but after a couple of years, I felt the time taken to attend could be better spent writing. And reading—don't forget to read. If your group isn't as dedicated as you, find another, find a partner or go solo.

I decided to road-test my first novel with a manuscript appraisal service and am glad I did. For me, I liked the anonymity, it didn't matter how badly written it was, I'd never have to confront her with my

inexpertise. It's like having your own one-on-one tutor, and it looks at the novel as a whole, rather than an isolated piece or opening chapter submitted in contests.

When I got my manuscript back, to my horror, she'd slashed page after page. Half my novel was superfluous. I shoved it in that drawer and considered not writing at all. But the urge crept back after a few weeks. I'd already started another one when I took my old manuscript out and really looked at what she'd said. Having spent the money, I decided to edit it the way she suggested, if only as an exercise, so began cutting. Ruthlessly. When I finished, I sat back and reread. And realised she was right.

After more work, back it went to her again. Then there was more cutting, more rewrites, new scenes in, old scenes out, but it was beginning to sound better. The story moved faster, the characters became more three dimensional, and I began to understand what she was saying. I also realised I had much more to learn.

For me, it was like learning to

paint, something I enjoyed doing years ago before I discovered writing. Sketching out the bare bones, adding layers and depth as you revisit. The best part was when I began to see stuff she hadn't commented on and was able to slash it myself.

It's expensive, but well worth while. For the first appraisal I paid full price, then for a re-appraisal of the same manuscript a few months later she charged me half. I used her again for another manuscript and by then her fees had doubled. I still think it was good value.

How long did that take? Years. I've written new novels since but I still come back to that novel now and then and each time I see changes I can make to improve it. It's paid off. After 18 months on the slush pile, I've had the full manuscript requested by Dorchester! In a follow up letter, I told them I had revised it and they want the revised edition and the first three chapters of the sequel, which I'm now hard at work revising.

Competitions are another way to get feedback and remain anonymous. Usually for round one, you get 2-3 critiques on your work. If you're lucky and make it past round one, you can get 4-6, or more.

Competitions can be tough. They can slap down your self-esteem and make you wonder if you should continue writing. Put it away for a few days or even weeks, then take it out again. If more than one judge is saying the same thing, it could be they have a point. Scoring varies widely. Just because it does well in one contest doesn't mean it will in another. One of my manuscripts came 4th in an US contest, even earning a perfect score from one judge, and came 2nd to bottom in another; same work, different judges.

Initially, try using contests simply for the feedback you receive. I found it really helped my writing develop and grow, until I was finishing in contests here and in the US. Now I

continued on page 12...

We've got a secret!

Romancing the Page Conference Saturday, 11 October 2003

Keynote Speaker:

Australia's only Silhouette Desire™ Author

Bronwyn Jameson

will be coming to Adelaide



Registration forms in the September issue of *Muse*.

Mark the date in your diary now!



In the beginning was the word and the word was: “Oh, God, I *hate* Grammar!”

Okay, I know, that’s more than one word. The point is most of you agree with that statement. Why? Maybe you weren’t paying attention in class, or the subject was difficult and confusing, or worse still, boring. And then there’s every student’s favourite: “It was all the teacher’s fault.”

Grammar doesn’t have to be confusing. And if you’re a writer, it *shouldn’t* be boring. After all, grammar is word play and sentence construction. It’s Lego with letters not bricks.

The word is the writer’s primary tool. One word, though, doesn’t get us far. It takes hundreds to make up a short story, many thousands to make up a novel. And one can’t just throw them onto the page. There has to be some order, some structure to create meaning. Enter the sentence and the paragraph. Enter grammar.

A wonderful story is more than just a collection of words and sentences. It’s an experience we savour, and not just once. We reread our favourite stories over and over. They are not just stories to us – *they are magic*. Grammar is a set of rules to ensure the magic you create doesn’t backfire on you. Grammar helps you enchant the reader, so she becomes caught up in your words and carried away by your story.

She doesn’t hear the ticking of the clock, the gabble of TV commercials. She doesn’t smell the dinner burning, or see the dishes piling up in the sink. Those problems belong to someone else. She is living your story.

Her eyes feast on your sentences and her imagination fires. She is there in the rowboat and the moonlight caresses her skin as

gently as it does the still water of the lake. She breathes in the scent of pine and night jasmine. Her hand trails in the cool water. She hears the rhythmic dip and swish of the oars. The muscles in the hero’s biceps contract and stretch, contract and stretch as he rows her towards the grassy clearing where he first kissed her. His lips tasted of...

Hello? Remember me? I’m the grammar genie and that’s why I’m here. I’ll help you understand grammatical magic so you can enthrall the reader with your story. Now some of you might be saying, but grammar doesn’t help captivate the reader. Doesn’t it? Well, let’s try that rowboat scene again without the grammar.

there rowboat she. is moonlight Skin her gently in Caresses still lake the does water it she of breathes, trails scent oars contract...

Hmm? I don’t know about you, but I sure wasn’t captivated. In fact, it didn’t even make sense to me. And if it doesn’t make sense, it’s not going to hold my attention or interest.

As a writer, you cannot afford to treat grammar as the enemy. Lack of meaning and disorder are the enemy. Confusion and nonsense are the enemy. Grammar is the writer’s friend. More importantly, it is your *essential ally*.

Don’t be scared of grammar because you got poor marks in high school English. Remember Einstein? He flunked maths at school before he became, well, *the* Einstein. Many

published writers, including bestsellers and Pulitzer winners, did poorly in English or flunked. All an A in English proves is that you can get an A in English. To be fair, school English isn’t preparing you to be a fiction writer. It’s survival training for the world.

Also, grammar is not a separate entity, complete unto itself. It is there to guide you in the writing of your story. Grammar is there to create and enhance meaning, and make your words work with your story not against it. Perhaps we should go back to that sentence I wrote earlier, ‘grammar is a set of rules to ensure the magic you create doesn’t backfire on you.’ Let’s change that sentence. Grammar is a set of *guidelines* to ensure the magic you create doesn’t backfire on you. Yes, that is more appropriate. And more truthful.

There may be some puritans who even now are scratching out an indictment like the following: “Dear uneducated Grammarian. You began a sentence with ‘and’....

Yes, I did. Get over it. ‘And’ and ‘but’ have been used to start sentences with since at least the tenth century AD. There has never been a ‘rule’ saying not to use them in this way. Grammar is not puritanical and rigid, and never was. Grammar has always been flexible and adaptive. If it weren’t so, then some of the greatest writers in the English language would never have been published. Writers like Shakespeare, Chaucer, Austen, Dickens, the Brontës, Woolf,

James, Fitzgerald, Joyce, Plath, Dickinson, Wodehouse, Bradbury, etc.

Oh, they did not ‘break rules’ but they certainly ‘bent the guidelines’ to suit their writing. To enhance it. To improve the word magic they were creating.

And if you are a serious writer then you need to

continued on page 12...



SARW Inc. are proud to present . . .

www.sarw.cjb.net

for the latest info, goss and up to the minute (or as often as the webmistress can handle!) stuff, check out our new website!

A day in the life . . .

by Kate Farrer

So you've decided to become a writer. You figure you'll slave over the keyboard for a couple of months; send your brilliant manuscript to a publisher; promptly receive a huge advance with your contract; sit back and watch the royalties flow in; go on a trip and plan your next best seller. **WHAT A LIFE!**

Then reality bites. It turns out not to be that simple. You've planned your day: write, write, write. Then you try and get dressed only to discover you have nothing clean to wear and the laundry basket is doing its impression of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. So you dig out that outfit you swore you'd never wear again because it made you look like your mother and throw a load into the washing machine.

The phone rings and it's your best friend who has *the most important* news (read gossip) to tell you about. You tell her you don't have time to talk because you are going to write today and stuff down some breakfast while she does enough talking for two. She finally finishes and you hang out the washing.

You step out the front to check the post box only to find your garden is slowly going crisp and brown. Grab the hose and splash some water around to save the poor neglected plants and leave the hose to trickle onto the wilting roses.

Then the dog proudly carries his leash out to you and drags it through the fresh mud you have just made before jumping up on your horrible but previously clean clothes. You brush the worst of it off before taking him out for a walk – telling yourself the exercise will do you both some good (and it will!).

Home and feeling very virtuous, it's time for lunch.

Right, leave the dishes on the sink with the rest for later. Sit down at the keyboard and... and... The cursor blinks accusingly at you, "Well, you've called me up – so

write!' Now what was that great idea you had for your heroine? She was going to confront the hero and... and... Well maybe you could do the scene from his POV (point of view). Yes that could really solve it. You could get right into his head and explore what he really thinks about the heroine. Or would that be telling too much?

Okay, how about you let your subconscious think about it for a while – and you can play a hand of solitaire. Yes, well, that hand wasn't very good, was it? Just one more? Why not keep playing until you solve a hand, then you get the satisfaction of watching it dissolve all over the screen?

But back to work. Yes, it's going well with the hero's POV. You're right into it – when the phone rings again. Damn! Forgot to put the answering machine on and you had better pick up in case it's something really important. It is! Your mother wants to know why you haven't called her recently.

You tell her you can't talk right now because you're writing. She says it will just take a minute to fill you in on how the rest of the family are doing. So, half an hour and a chocolate bar later you tell her you must really go now. You sit back down at the keyboard when you hear rain on the roof. Great, that'll save watering the garden again later. Now, that's right, your hero is just leaning in to give the heroine the slowest, sexiest kiss she has ever had in her life and...

Hang about! Rain! Crikey, your clean clothes, that you desperately need, are hanging on the line. You race out and frantically grab the washing, throwing it any which way into the basket and dropping pegs everywhere. You run back inside, just as the sun breaks through again. That'd be right.

The cat follows you inside and decides to help you write. You sit

Resolutions to A Muse

I resolve to acknowledge my Muse
not to lose
opportunities provided
the potential inside me.

I resolve to work with my Muse
not to confuse
imagination with procrastination
wanting with being,
to pay my dues
with practice and persistence.

I resolve to hear my Muse
to use
my surroundings
and all within me,
to cruise
through myriad imagery
and chaotic word choice,
finally to choose
that which touches my Soul.

I resolve to believe in my Muse
to defuse
negativity and doubt,
not to abuse
myself and my gifts
or to disavow them.

I resolve to be my Muse
not to bruise
the delicate balance
that is creation,
but to fuse
the best that I am
with ink and paper.

Martina Taeker

down and he jumps onto the desk and lies down on your notes to lick himself dry. Yelling, just a little, you ask him to leave and he does so, knocking your notes everywhere. The dog comes in to find out what the fuss is and helps you by walking all over your now muddy, crumpled notes.

You clean up the mess they have made and finally remember to turn

continued on page 12...

Continuation of a theme . . .

What do I do now?

continued from page 9...

choose my contests more carefully. I'm in them to win, to get my work before an editor, a quicker way than via the slushpile.

Judging is very subjective. Most judges will give you an honest and fair critique which you may or may not agree with. Choose the suggestions you feel comfortable with, consider the rest or discard them altogether. You know your work best and sometimes it's hard for a judge to get a feel for a whole novel from one chapter or piece of work in isolation. Occasionally you may have someone judge your work unfairly or unprofessionally with little or no constructive feedback. Thankfully those people are rare, and their opinions can be discarded, particularly when that judge's score is way beyond the bounds of the others for a particular piece of work.

So get writing, and get your novel out there!

Bringing it home

continued from page 8...

suburban street at dusk is described, in detail, you mentally search through your own memories until you find something similar that you have experienced too. This is how we relate to characters, situations and settings and how a writer hooks us.

It is the writer's own passion on a particular topic or a character which is the driving force to draw a reader in to the story. A good starting punch, sorry point, may be to write down some of the strongest reactions you have ever had and draw some inspiration from there. You don't have to experience everything

you write about, but if the imagination and passion is there, it's a fantastic start for good emotional punch.

Avid readers . . .

continued from page 4...

and writing are opposite sides of the same coin. They go together. To write without reading is as silly as cooking without eating. Sooner or later you're going to starve.

Martina Taeker is a published writer, and teaches writing at the Adelaide WEA and to community groups.

Grammar Genie

continued from page 10...

consider doing the same - *when it is right for your story*. But until you know and understand the guidelines, it's difficult to bend them in an appropriate and effective manner. Why do you think Picasso spent years painting the 'normal' way? Because, until he understood with his painter's soul why and how the 'normal' way worked, he was not ready to break through and achieve success.

I can't promise that grammar will always be easy and entertaining. However, I can promise that if you learn grammar - understand with your writer's soul how to use its guidelines, and when and how to bend them - your writing will improve. For that to happen, you need to stop hating and fearing grammar. *To create story magic you must make grammar your servant, not your master.*

A day in the life . . .

continued from page 11...

off the hose you left trickling onto the roses. The cat and dog are now playing chasey around the house and you know the only way to settle them is if you feed them - so you do. Watching them eat you decide to have an early dinner. Yes that's a good idea and you can watch that program on TV while you eat. It's not cheating really, after all you *do* have to eat and you're sure there will be something that will help you with your story. Let's call it *research*.

Before you know it, it's eleven o'clock and you're falling asleep in front of the TV, with the cat on your lap. You get stiffly to your feet and go and turn off your bored computer which is endlessly playing your screen saver.

As you climb into bed, another day gone, you promise yourself that tomorrow will be different. Tomorrow **YOU WILL WRITE!**

Back to Basics

continued from page 8...

O.K., O.K., so it's a bit over the top but you get the general idea. So go on... get yourself a big bowl of ice-cream and give it a try. After all, this is serious research you're undertaking!

Lucy Clark has published numerous books. Her current release, **Emergency: Deception**, is available in July.

More Fun Websites

www.vistaprint.com - for funky, free business cards

www.sirenbooks.com - for reasonably priced romance novels. Operating out of Melbourne, this website adheres to US release dates. Therefore, if you want a book that is released in June in the US, Siren Books will have it!

Did you know?? Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or "upper crust." Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock them out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait and see if they would wake up-hence the custom of holding a "wake."

Emotional Punch



So you are still trying to get your head around 'emotional punch'. What does it really mean? While you are pondering the problem try this drink recipe – *if you dare!*

CHOCOLATL

- 2 cups cold water
- 3 heaped teaspoons PURE cocoa
- 1/4 teaspoon ground chilli
- 2 teaspoons honey

Place all ingredients into a saucepan and stir until it comes to the boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes – stirring occasionally.

This will make 2 serves. Pig out or share it with a friend. Adjust the levels of chilli or honey to taste, but leave enough chilli to warm the back of your throat. Use best quality pure cocoa, not drinking chocolate.

Chocolatl comes from Mexico, where it was drunk by Aztec warriors before going into battle.

As a 'pick-me-up' for romance writers, Chocolatl is perfect: chocolate for the emotion and chilli for the punch.

Flirtini

Something with a little more kick . . . this will definately get your muse talking! It may not make sense, but hey, it'll be worth it!

- 6 fresh raspberries
- 1 cup ice cubes
- 30ml vodka
- 15ml Cointreau
- 15ml cranberry juice
- 15ml fresh lime juice
- 15ml pineapple juice
- 60ml brut champagne

Crush raspberries in base of chilled glass; top with half the ice.

Combine remaining ice, vodka, Cointreau and juices in a cocktail shaker. Shake vigourously then strain into glass; top with champagne.

recommended glass: 300ml highball

garnish extra fresh raspberries threaded onto a toothpick and balanced on rim of glass

coat the rim in sugar for an extra special touch!

Devil's Food Cake

- 2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/3 cup cocoa powder
- 1 tablespoon instant coffee powder
- 250g dark chocolate
- 200g butter
- 1 cup castor sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- whipped cream
- chocolatetopping*
- 75g dark chocolate
- 75ml cream

raspberry coulis

- 1 packet frozen raspberries
- sugar to taste

Method

Preheat oven to moderately slow 160C. Oil and line a deep cake tin (approx 20cm).

1. Melt chocolate, sugar and butter together.
2. Sift the dry ingredients into a large mixing bowl. Make a well in the centre. Pour chocolate mixture in, stir with a whisk until just combined. Add eggs and milk, mix well but don't overbeat.
3. Pour mixture into prepared tin. Bake 2 hours or until skewer comes out clean. Leave cake in tin until cold before turning onto wire rack.

4. To make chocolate topping.

Combine chocolate and cream in saucepan. Stir over low heat until melted and mixture is smooth. Remove from heat. Pour mixture over the cake. Serve wedges of cake with cream and raspberry coulis.

5. To make raspberry coulis

Allow raspberries to thaw. Push raspberries through a sieve so that a liquid forms. Add sugar to taste. Can be made with any type of berry.

Emotional Punch - take two

For those who dare to indulge, here's the 'hard' version of emotional punch - numbs the pain of the dreaded rejection letter!

- ice
- pineapple juice
- apple juice
- orange juice
- mango pulp
- guava juice
- watermelon juice
- raspberries
- strawberries
- mint

- lime juice
- vodka
- cointreau
- barcardi

Combine juices, pulp, berries, mint, ice and alcohol in a blender.

Whizz on high for 30 seconds.

Pour drink into a chilled glass.

recommended glass

350ml pina colada

garnish

pineapple wedge, halved strawberry on rim of glass and pineapple leaf on side

Industry News

Harlequin - Harlequin is offering two new category lines. The first is entitled '*Silhouette Bombsell*', where the stories feature strong, savvy action heroines who always save the day. These stories should be action-packed where the heroine finds herself in precarious situations but always, *always*, gets herself, and every one else, out of them. This ability should drive the story and provide a thrilling and unexpected climax. Featuring a romantic sub-plot, harlequin suggest Lara Croft in *Tomb Raider*, Sydney Bristow in *Alias* or Jinx in *Die Another Day* as models for the heroines and cite the works of Janet Evanovich, Lindsay McKenna and Maureen Tan as examples.

The second new line is *Luna Books*. This line delivers compelling fantasy with vivid characters, fantastic worlds and strong, sympathetic women. Your book should feature a romantic subplot that enhances the story, but does not take over from the main drive and focus of the main female protagonist's quest. *Luna Books* want 'emotionally complex, sweeping stories that highlight inner female power' (Harlequin website). Word length is between 100 000 - 150 000.

If this sounds like your style, go to Harlequins website for more detailed guidelines, www.eharlequin.com

Harlequin are also offering "Book In A Year", a month by month guide to help you write and complete that damn book! Go to Harlequin's website for more information.

Pocket Books - Pocket are always looking for new spectacular romances. They are interested in fast-paced stories, both Historical (up to the turn of the 20th century) and Contemporary (mystery and suspense subplots are encouraged). One man, one woman story lines are preferred. Visit their website for more information, www.simonsays.com/subs/index.cfm?areaid=173

The third Harry Potter film, **Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban** is halfway through filming and already there is talk of the fourth. **Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire** is such a long story that producers are looking to split the book into two films.

Dorchester publishing are currently accepting submissions to the following lines - Historical Romance, Futuristic Romance, Time-travel and Paranormal. The submissions should contain sensual romances with strong plots and well constructed characterisation. For more detail and submission guidelines, go

to the Dorchester website at www.dorchesterpub.com/guidelines_01.htm.

Avalon Books are looking for Contemporary and Historical Novels which feature fresh, contemporary plots and story lines. The heroine should be an independent young woman who is can take care of herself, yet remains feminine and loyal to traditional values. Heroes should be warm, likable, realistic and sympathetic men who treat the heroine as an equal. Avalon will accept outlines and the first three chapters for historical romances of every genre. The manuscripts should be between 50,000 to 60,000 words. The books shall be wholesome fiction, without graphic sex, violence or strong language. For more information and details of guidelines, go to www.avalonbooks.com.

The **2003 RITA Award Finalists** have been announced. The RITA is Romance Writers of America's highest award. The novels have been judged by peer

authors to be the best of romances published in America in 2002. The winner in each category will be announced at a black-tie Award Ceremony, to be held at RWA's national conference in New York City on 19 July 2003. For finalists and more information, go to RWA's website, www.rwanational.org.

Imajinn (pronounced Imagine) Books publishes supernatural, paranormal, fantasy, futuristic, and time travel romances. Imajinn are looking for fast-paced, action-packed stories involving ghosts, psychics or psychic phenomena, witches, vampires, werewolves, angels, reincarnation, futuristic in space or on other planet, futuristic on earth, time travel to the past, time travel to the present, and any other story line that will fall into the "new-age" genre. All novels should be atmospheric according to the chosen subject. Make sure the "new-age" element is strong enough to carry the story. The manuscript should be between 70 000 and 90 000 words. For submission guidelines and more information, check out Imajinn's website at www.imajinnbooks.com.

Nora Robert's JD Robb series, the . . . in Death books, have been optioned for a film by Mel Gibson's Icon Productions. Hanna Weg will be adapting the first two novels, *Naked in Death* and *Glory in Death*, into one script. A futuristic, romantic suspense series, the best-selling novels follow *Eve Dallas*, a homicide detective in 2047.

Our Mission . . . should we choose to accept it

* we will provide relevant, interesting information and news to our members

* we will pursue excellence in romance writing and further the industry's growth in South Australia, Australia and internationally

* we will provide support and encouragement to writers

This newsletter will self-destruct in five seconds . . .