

Modern Love, the newsletter of the

RWA CHAPTER

CONTEMPORARY ROMANCE

Writers

ContemporaryRomance.org

June, 2014

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- 2nd Quarter 2014 book covers from our members
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*Scoot on down to the Alamo Ballroom
Salons D-F of the Marriott Riverwalk*

Thursday, July 24, 2014

7:30 – 9:30 p.m.

for the

Stilettoes & Cowboy Boots Contemporary Romance Panel & Texas Dessert Bar

Presented by

RWA-CR Contemporary Romance Chapter

Panel:

**Writing & Career Advice from NYT Bestselling
Contemporary Romance Authors**

Featuring

Jennifer L. Armentrout

Lexi Blake

Catherine Bybee

Monica Murphy (aka Karen Erickson)

Laura Kaye

\$10 members / \$20 non-members

[Register Here!](#)

Save the Date!

June 25, 2014

On the [Chapter Blog](#)

Q&A and Pitch Contest with

Angela James,

Executive Editor, Carina Press

Contact the board!

President: Laura Kaye

Vice-President: Lisa Siefert

Treasurer: Celia Lucente

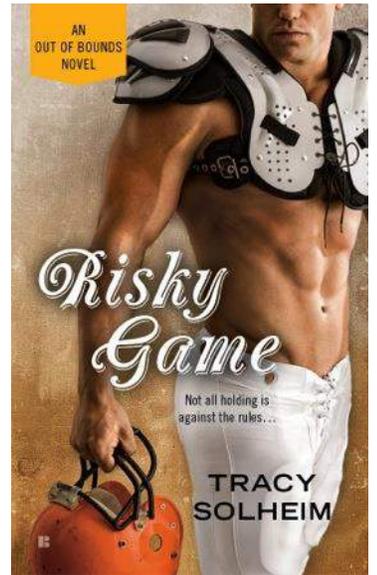
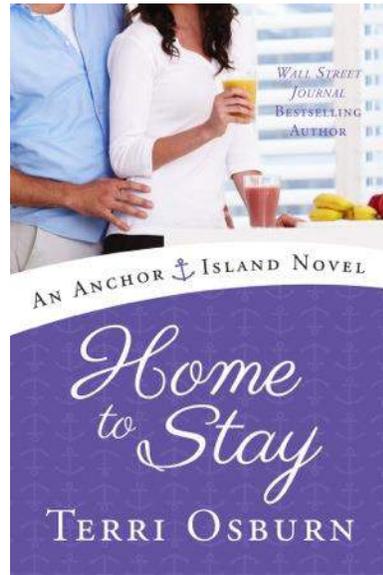
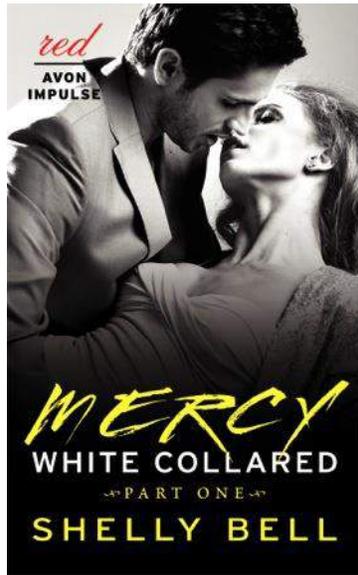
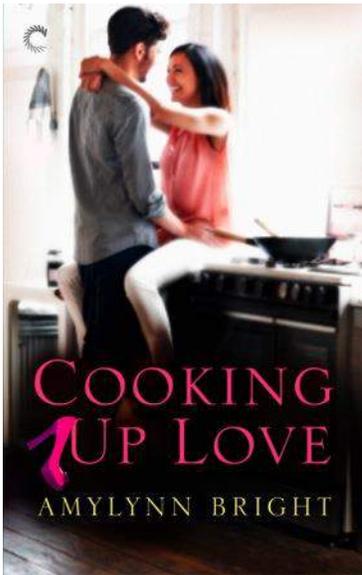
Secretary: Veronica Forand

Membership Liaison: Becky Lower

PAN Liaison: Robin Covington

PRO Liaison: Melanie Cremins





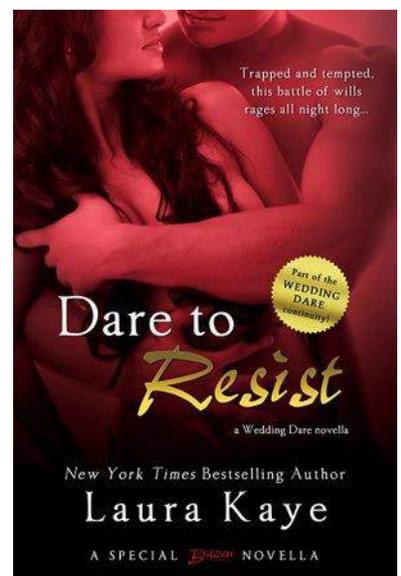
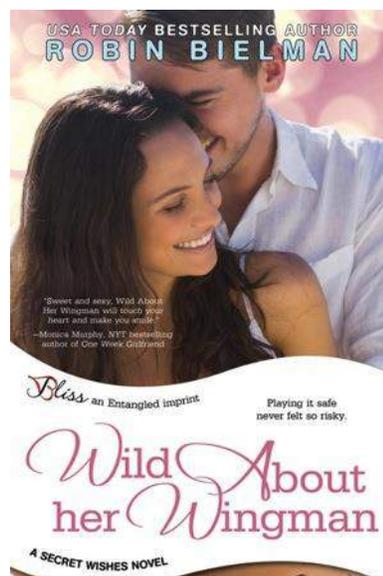
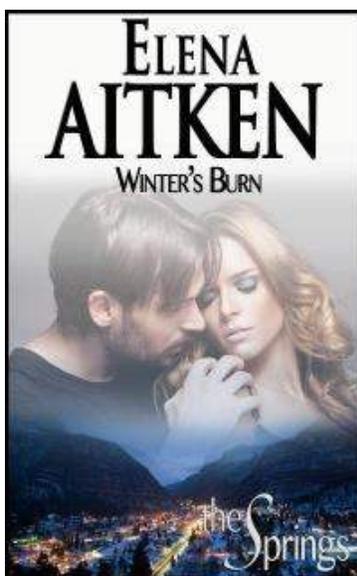
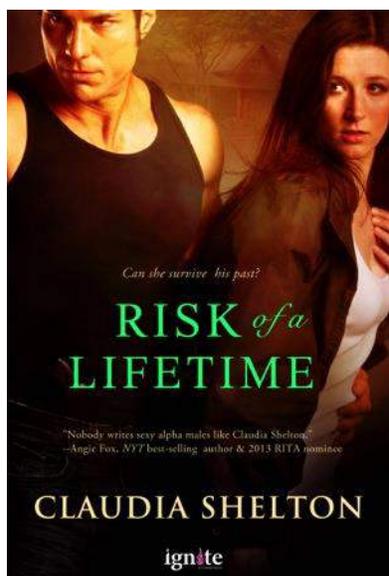
From the President, by Laura Kaye

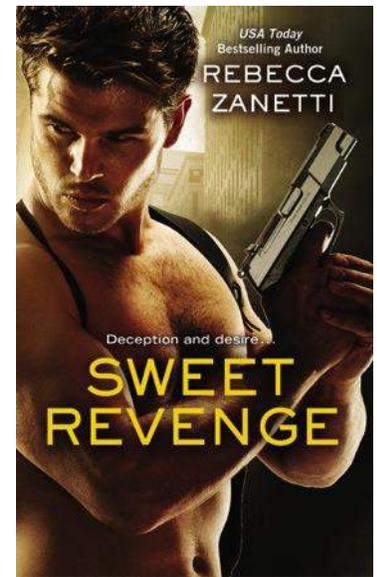
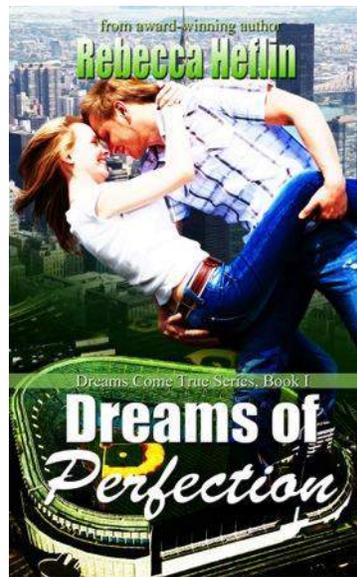
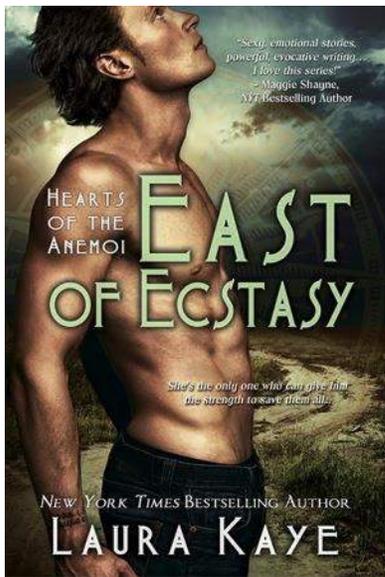
Summer has finally arrived, and that puts us square in the middle of conference season – the RT Booklovers Convention and Book Expo America were in May, RomCon and Lori Foster’s Reader and Author event are both in June, RWA Nationals is in July, and Authors After Dark is in August, just to name a few. So which should you attend and how can you get the most out of attending a conference?

Which to attend depends on a lot of factors – your personal finances (conferences aren’t cheap!), your writing deadlines, your family plans and having child care coverage, releases you want to promote, etc. In general, there tend to be writer-focused events (RWA Nationals) and reader-focused events (RT Booklovers Convention, RomCon, AAD). So the first question is, what do you want to get out of the experience? Do you want to immerse yourself in workshops that help you perfect your craft and business? Or do you want to gain exposure to and meet lots of readers? All of these conferences do at least some of both, but they tend to have a heavier emphasis on one side or the other.

How to get the most out of a conference also depends on a lot of factors – where you are in your career, the kind of conference you’re attending, your personal comfort level with being in front of a roomful of people, and more. Here are some tips that might help you make the most of your conference time:

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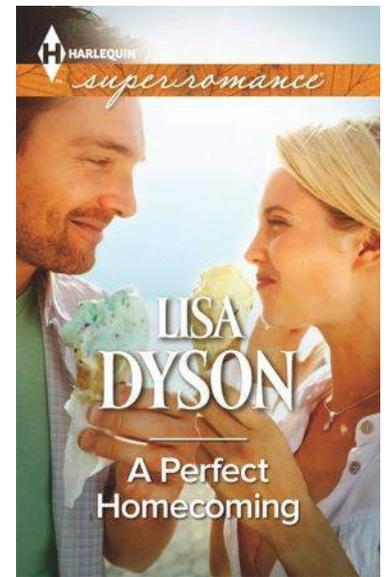
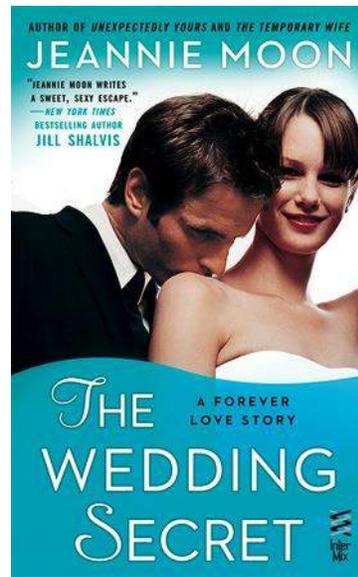
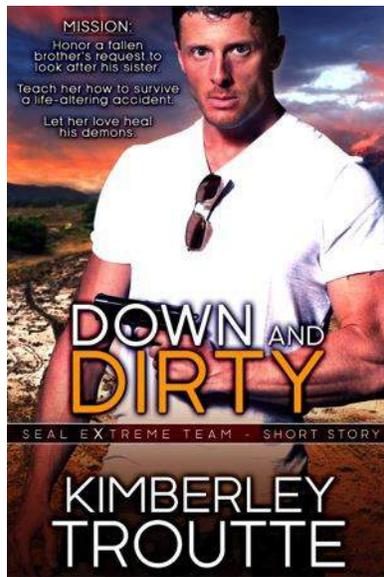
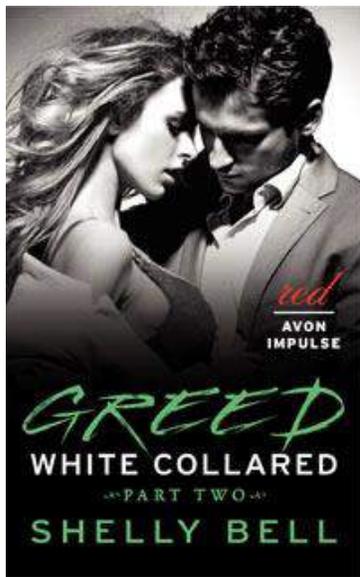
President's Column, continued....

- Schedule some meals with writer friends or groups of readers before you go. Knowing you have set meal plans can take some of the stress out of finding people in the craziness of the moment at the conference itself. If you schedule these at the beginning of the conference, that means you'll have some familiar faces to find in the big crowds the rest of the time.
- Don't feel pressured to pitch to agents and editors if it makes you too nervous to do so. You can always query them after the conference and you'll receive the same consideration – with one exception: If you don't have an agent and you can get an appointment with an editor at a house that doesn't usually accept unagented submissions, take that appointment!
- Relative to the last point, remember that agents and editors are just people. More than that, they're people who LOVE books and authors. They *want to love your book idea!* They are rooting for you and hoping to fall in love with what you have to say. So if you see an agent or editor at the bar, wandering around the goodie room, or in the elevator, strike up the same normal ice-breaker conversation you would with anyone: How are you enjoying the conference? Have you ever been to x-city before? Isn't this elevator system weird??? (if you were in New Orleans at RT, you'll understand this last one!) Before you know it, they'll be asking what you write... (which means you should be prepared to discuss your work even if you don't sign up for formal pitch appointments).
- If you can, submit a proposal to be a presenter or event host at the conference. If you're newer in your career, you will probably have to team up with more established writers, so reach out by email and invite people to join your great-idea-for-a-workshop. You'll be surprised how many will say yes, especially if you're spearheading the proposal paperwork! Having at least one set time you know you'll be in front of readers or presenting your expertise to other writers will give you a greater sense of purpose in attending. And it's also a great way to meet people because those attendees will find you afterward and tell you how much they enjoyed the event. Suddenly, you have lots of new friends and familiar faces aside from the promotional boost you'll get, too.
- Hang out in the bar. Even if you're there with your regular group of friends, the bar at conferences ends up being this fluid place where people float from group to group so you can meet lots of people and actually spend some time chatting with them.

Most importantly, if you get out to any conferences this year, have fun! These are a great opportunity to actually meet your social media friends in person and be amongst "your people"! What could be better than that?

Here's to you writing ALL the words!

Laura Kaye
RWA-CR President



Call for Workshop Proposals

The Contemporary Romance Chapter of the Romance Writers of America is accepting proposals for workshops for any time during the 2014 or early 2015 membership years.

We are interested in workshops in ALL possible topics that fall under the following broad categories:

- Genre or Category romance
- Plotting
- GMC
- Deep POV
- Queries/Synopses/Pitching
- Business side of writing
- Craft
- Character Development
- Story Structure
- Planning/writing sequels/series
- Marketing/Social Media/Branding
- Self-publishing

All our classes occur on-line, via a private Yahoo loop or website forum. Classes can range in length from 1 day, 1 week, 2 weeks, or more. The chapter splits the net proceeds (after all expenses and processing fees have been paid) of each class 50/50 with the instructor.

Please submit all proposals to RWA-CR Vice-President [Lisa Siefert](#) with the following information listed in the body of the email:

Name and Email of Instructor:

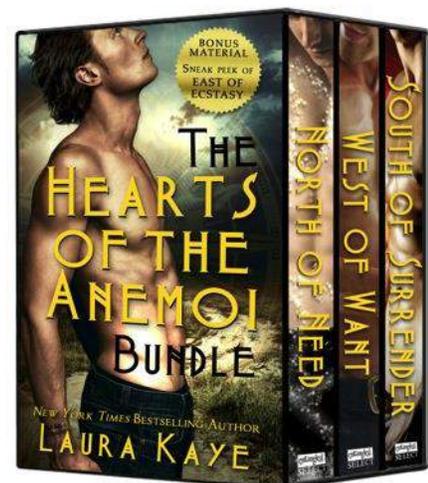
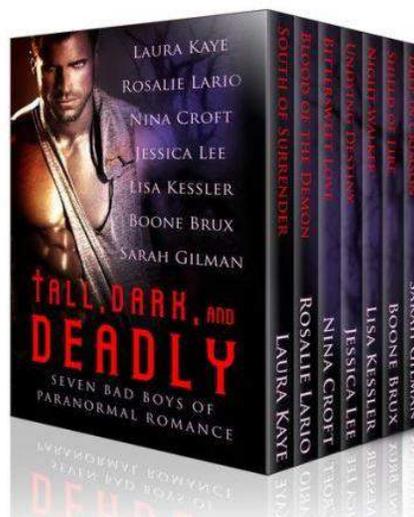
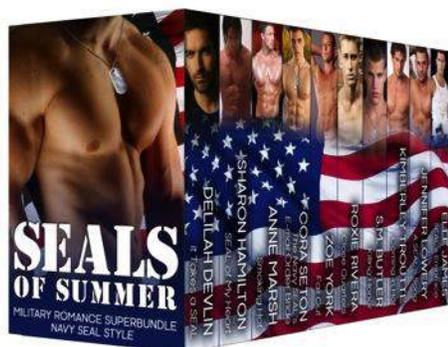
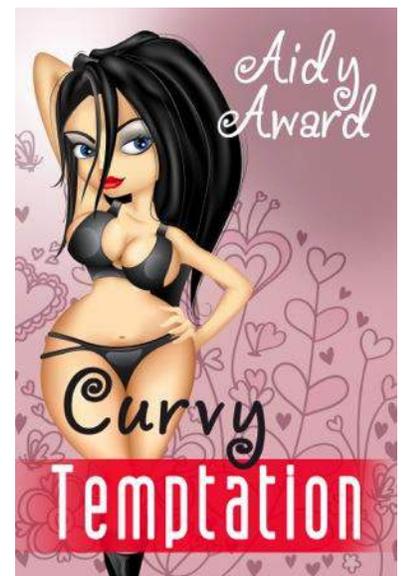
Title/Brief Description of Workshop:

Bio:

Months/Dates you are available to teach the course:

Thank you for considering
RWA-Contemporary Romance!

Permission to forward granted.



PAN Corner: Layering Tropes, by Lea Nolan

My latest book, *His Billion Dollar Baby* is a category-length contemporary romance that is chock filled with tropes that romance readers love. So I thought this would be the perfect opportunity to discuss how I layered those tropes, not just to set up the story, but to build backstory, further character development, and propel the plot.

What exactly is a trope?

A trope is simply a common literary or thematic device used in storytelling. Sometimes the word *trope* is used derisively, to insult a work or its elements that appear to be cliché or overdone. For example, the young blonde woman in a horror movie who tiptoes toward the strange noise in the garage, rather than running for her life. Granted, we've see that one a bajillion times, but not all tropes are bad, and can in fact help readers/viewers quickly categorize a story. You know what to expect from a friends to lovers story, or a vigilante revenge fantasy (note: these two tropes may or may not appear in the same book).

"There are no new ideas. There are only new ways of making them felt." Audre Lorde

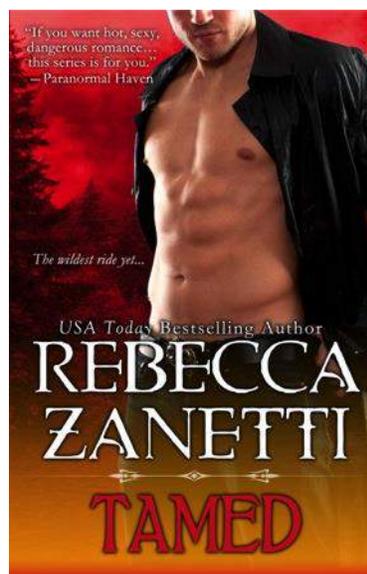
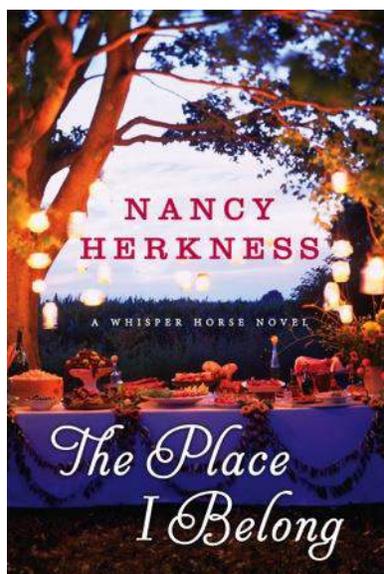
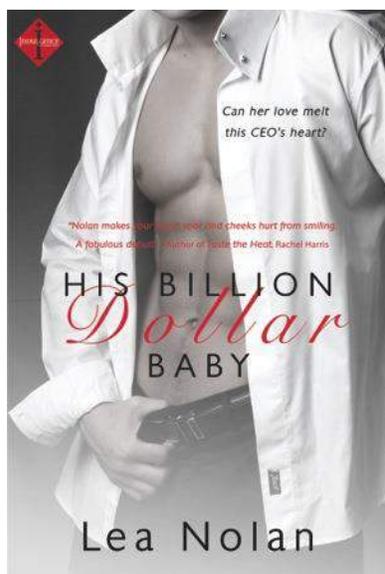
In other words, tropes can be viewed as merely another way of presenting a similar story or theme. And really, that's what storytellers have been doing for ages, ever since the Greeks invented the three-act structure. So tropes aren't to be feared so much as employed and riffed on to make a story fresh and feel new.

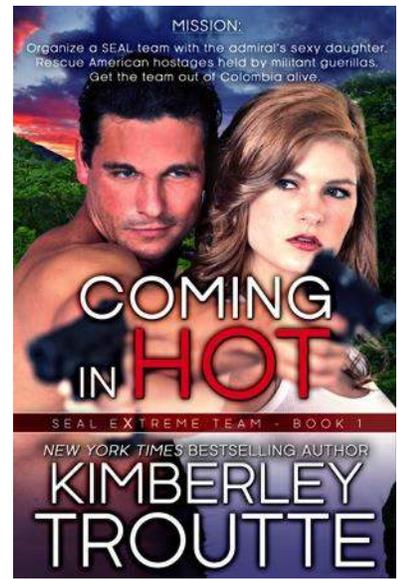
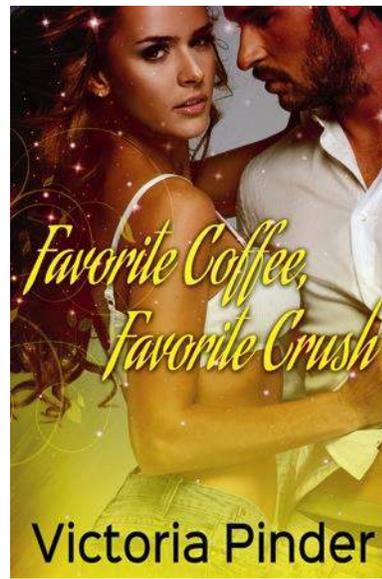
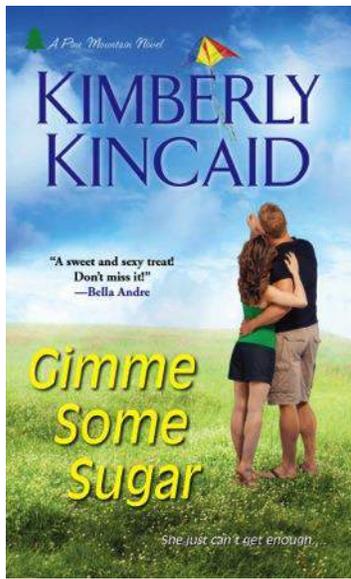
Common Tropes

By way of illustration, here are a few common tropes found in romance books:

- **Cinderella Story/Wrong side of the tracks** – This is your basic Pretty in Pink set up where a poor/social outcast ends up with the wealthy, socially connected character.
- **Bait and Switch** – Here, the hero/heroine pretends to be someone else and has to keep up the ruse after falling in love.
- **Boss/Employee** – Anyone else love *The Proposal* with Sandra Bullock and Ryan Reynolds? Yeah, me too.
- **Fake Engagement** – A relationship of convenience, where neither the hero nor heroine expects their arrangement to go any further. Until it does.
- **Friends to Lovers/Best Friend's Brother** – I think this one is self-explanatory.

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PAN Corner, continued...

Layering Tropes

One way to make a common trope feel fresh is to layer it with others and interweave them together. For example, in *His Billion Dollar Baby*, I use the following tropes: unexpected pregnancy, enemies to lovers, wrong side of the track, damsel in distress, bachelor playboy, and tortured hero. Whew! Now that I've written them out, that's a lot.

I'm not suggesting that all stories need this many, or more. In fact some tropes can generate enough conflict to sustain an entire book on their own. But for my money, layering multiple tropes helps to create a richer and more complex story, even at the category length.

The trick isn't to toss in a bunch of arbitrary tropes salad-bar-style, but to weave your tropes together to create depth and an interconnected plot. What do I mean by this? By ensuring that every one of your tropes contributes in some way to your hero and heroine's backstory; current goals, motivations and conflicts; and provides rationale for/propels your plot.

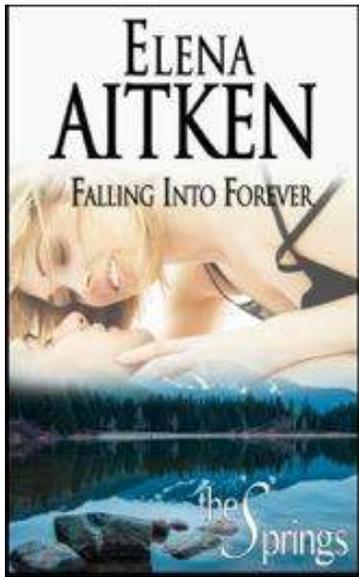
For each trope you select, ask yourself: what does this mean for this character? How has it shaped his/her past? What does it mean for what they think today? How will it impact their future actions/what they want? What plot point will challenge their assumptions and force them to change? Does this plot point relate to the other tropes I've already selected?

For example, my hero, Carter Anderson starts off as the quintessential billionaire playboy. As the CEO of his family's multi-national athletic company, he's got it all—money, power, prestige—and, thanks to his conniving ex-wife, a seriously broken heart that leaves him suspect of any woman who might be interested in his family's vast fortune.

Enter, Gwen Radley, the spunky heroine, an army physical therapist and former foster child, who definitely comes from the wrong side of the tracks. When she shows up, pregnant, to his brother's funeral, Carter immediately assumes she's a gold digger, only there for her baby's inheritance. His suspicions mount after a series of events land her homeless, and lead her to move into the Anderson family estate. After the two begin to collaborate on a shoe for wounded veterans, his tortured past and present misgivings, conspire to keep them apart, even after Gwen's actions prove her good intentions.

Over the course of this enemies to lovers story, Carter and Gwen parry, and every new plot point rifts on these larger themes to challenge Carter's assumptions, push his limits, and ultimately teach him to trust Gwen's intentions and actions.

Thanks again for having me, this was a lot of fun! I hope I've inspired you to play with multiple tropes, layering them to create deeper and ultimately, more fulfilling stories.



PRO Corner: When Giving Up is Not an Option, by Celia T. Lucente

Maybe you've heard: what you think about you bring about (remember *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne?) the little choo choo train puffs and puffs but makes his destination and *Do What you Love and the Money will Follow* by Marsha Sinetar.

Yet as hard as we try, we might feel we should to cut our losses before we bankrupt ourselves financially and in particular, with writing, spiritually.

As for my writing and finding a home for four completed books in four years of full time writing, well, the 'ole shotgun approach didn't work. You know, when you pitch everyone one who might be remotely interested in the material and hope one will bite. They didn't. Five hundred agent rejections, twelve conference requests that turned into nothing, numerous editor requests unpublished—well, you get the picture. And may have experienced the same yourself.

Then the debilitating self-doubt sets in. Maybe I'm not meant to do this. The other writers I'm competing against have MFAs, have written their entire lives, have an inherent talent that I could only hope to duplicate.

Ah, and there we have it. Comparison to others. Didn't your mother, guardian, or teacher tell you that you shouldn't compare yourself to anyone else? To do the best you can do. Well, then, why are the accolades given to the highest score receiver? Why is a # 1 NY time's bestselling author considered better than a self-published one?

Today I read a Florida conference blog and here's a quote from Joanne Lewis, murder and historical fiction writer: "*There will be more rejections, I promise. Success in your writing has to come from within first, and then you can worry about what the outside world thinks.*"

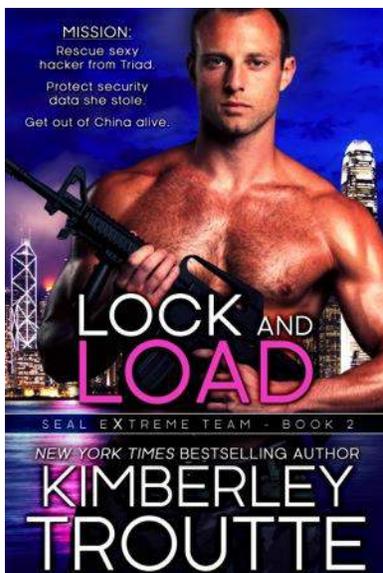
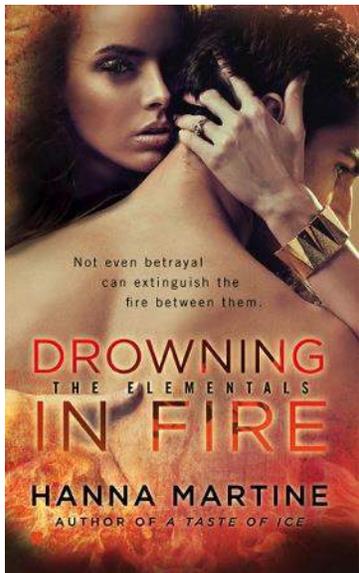
If you asked yourself why you write I'll bet there are as many answers as there are book ideas. The reasons are personal and unique to us. For me, I wanted to reach people, comfort them, offer encouragement, and escape from problems in their lives. I remember reading through all the stages of growing up and looking to the heroines and main characters as a reference for my moral barometer and for solutions to solve similar problems. To me, living vicariously through those characters provided an escape from teenage angst, college grade worries, young executive insecurities, and later on many personal levels.

So, you see, I can't give up. Even if I take a side job, as I'm currently considering as a licensed insurance agent, I can't give up on the writing. I have people to reach, characters who want to be born; ideas brimming inside of me that are dying to come out on the computer. Sure, it's scary, all the social networking, possible bad reviews, jealousies that might surface, but if you don't take the risk then you'll live to regret having not done it.

So giving up isn't an option for the aspiring author or even for the publishing author who is creatively stuck. Together we can encourage each other, cheer each other on and help one another make the goal of writing a publishing reality. Recently I signed with a medium-sized press for my first novel series. So, progress is in the making.

I wish you luck with your writing endeavors, as I know you will me!

Celia T. Lucente



Upcoming Online Workshops with RWA-CR

The Contemporary Romance chapter has a couple of great online workshops coming up this summer. Both workshops are \$20 for RWA-CR members and \$30 for non-members, and will take place on dedicated Yahoo loops.

Enrolling now:

Add Variety to Your Writing with 10-Sentence Recipes

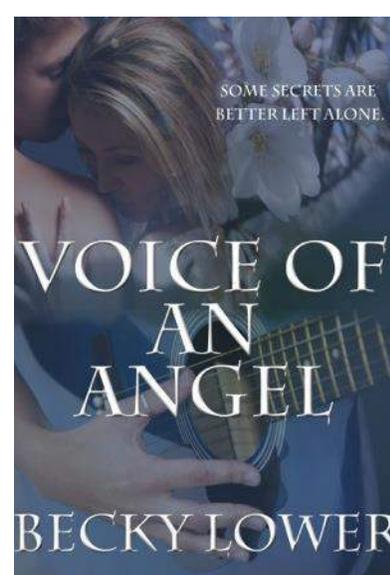
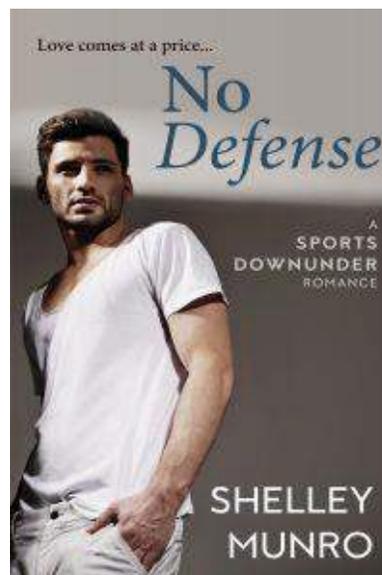
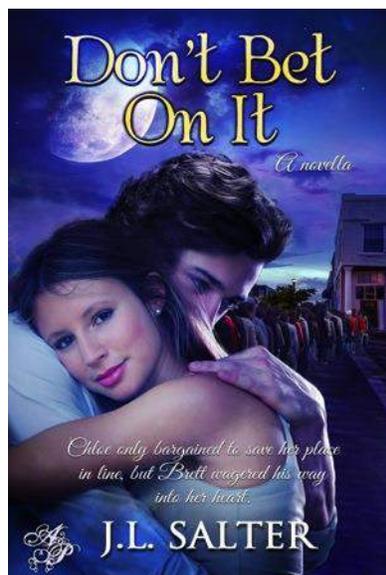
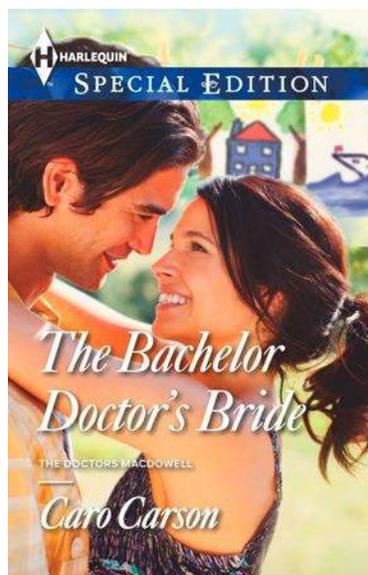
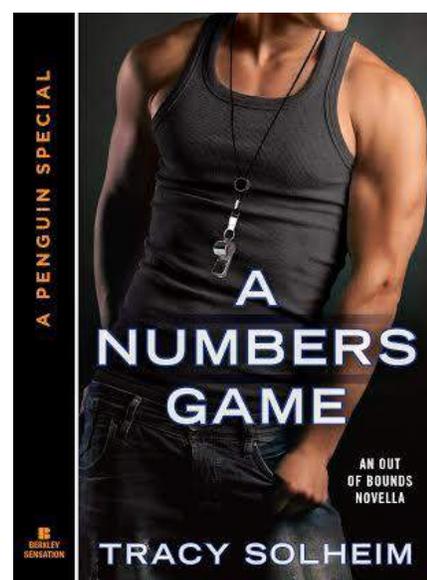
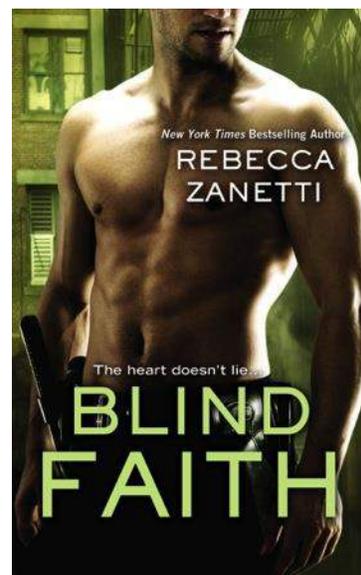
- Dates: July 7 – August 1
- Instructor: **MM Pollard**
- **Description:** In this workshop you will learn how to “doctor” your writing by trying different sentence recipes and then adding variety to the new ones as well as to the ones you usually use. During the four-week workshop, MM Pollard, acquisitions editor, BVS, will present ten sentence patterns and introduce ways to vary basic sentence structure. You will have homework so that you can practice using the patterns with MM looking over your shoulder (in a good, not creepy way). Your reward for doing your homework: MM’s personal feedback. Think of homework as opportunities for mini edits.

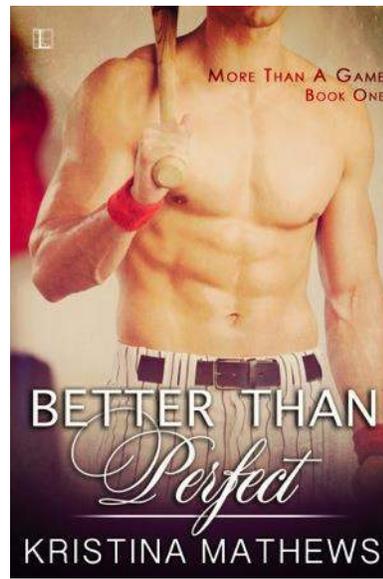
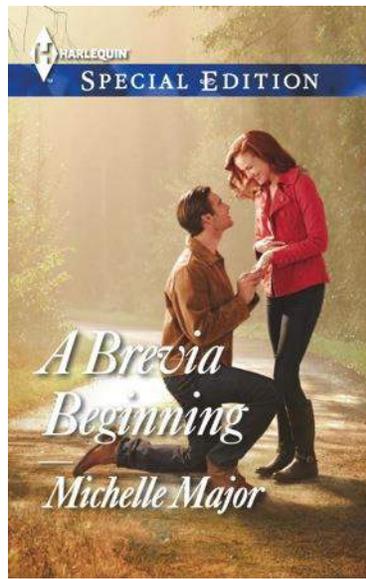
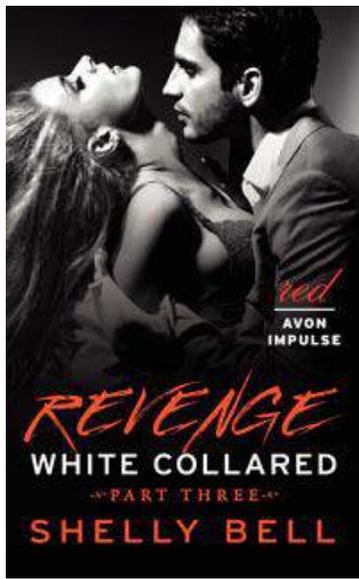
Show & Tell: An Interactive Workshop

- Dates: August 1 – 31
- Instructor: **Shannon Donnelly**
- **Topics we’ll cover:** 1) Definitions — what is showing, what is telling, 2) Telling: Use of the Narrative Voice, 3) Breaking it down part 1: Showing to Pull a Reader into Your Scenes, 4) Breaking it down part 2: Better Narrative (so a reader doesn’t skip this), 5) Going Deeper in Viewpoint to Better Show a Character’s Inner World, 6) Transitions & Word Count—Where Telling Really Helps, 7) Showing and Telling—Mixing it up Again

Find out more about both of these presenters and enroll for either or both courses on our [Chapter Events](#) page.

Permission to forward granted





RWA-CR Member-Led Workshops at RWA Nationals 2014

Come say 'hi' in San Antonio and attend these fabulous workshops led by RWA-CR Members. (And if we missed you on this list, be sure to mention it on the Yahoo Loop!)

Thursday 7/24, 8:30-9:30 a.m.

Juggling Two Careers: Strategies for Keeping All Your Balls in the Air (CAREER)

Speakers: Jennifer Lohmann and Kelly Maher

Two authors with day jobs as librarians share strategies for balancing two careers and multiple identities including career planning, increasing productivity, pen names, when or should two jobs intermingle, and what to do when they can't be kept apart.

Thursday 7/24, 11-12 p.m.

The Six Goals of Online Book Promotions (and the Tools to Achieve Them) (MARKETING)

Speaker: Laura Kaye

A best-selling author discusses a new perspective on online book promotion, offers concrete advice, and shares the approaches that allow authors to use social media more effectively.

Thursday 7/24, 11-12 p.m.

Untie Your Tongue: How to Lead Successful Workshops and Author Events with Confidence (CAREER)

Speakers: Asa Maria Bradley and Rebecca Zanetti

Two authors pull on their vast experiences as college professors to show how to successfully plan and lead any workshop or author event. Learn how to make the event fun, for both the author and attendees, as well as how to enhance social media interactions with readers.

Thursday 7/24, 3:15-4:15 p.m.

Brand Smart: Your Guide to Creating an Author Brand (MARKETING)

Speaker: Kristin Wallace

An author and 15-year veteran of the advertising industry will teach participants how to use marketing tools to develop an author brand, identify target readers, and develop a marketing plan to reach them.

Thursday 7/24, 4:30-5:30 p.m.

Paranormal Romances: Dead, Soft, or Rearing Up to Bite? (INDUSTRY)

Speakers: Kate Douglas, Cynthia Eden, Justine Willis, and Rebecca Zanetti

Join best-selling paranormal authors and a national account sales director for a frank discussion regarding the paranormal market. See what it takes to make your book stand out in a crowded market and how the different paranormal species are selling in different formats.

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RWA-CR Member-Led Workshops, continued....

Friday 7/25, 12:45-1:45 p.m.

The Hybrid Author: How to Stay Diversified (and Keep Up!) in Today's Constantly Changing Market (CAREER)

Speakers: Bella Andre, Jennifer L. Armentrout, Lauren Blakely, Lisa Renee Jones, Laura Kaye, and Monica Murphy
Best-selling authors who are published in a variety of formats/publishing models discuss and answer questions on the many options available to writers in today's changing publishing market.

Friday 7/25, 2-3 p.m.

A Global Affair (CAREER)

Speakers: Donna Alward, Sun Chara, Jennifer Hayward, and Lynn Marie Hulsman

Discover how to take charge of your product and launch your book onto the world marketplace and build name recognition, readership, and sales.

Friday 7/25, 4:30-5:30 p.m.

A Tale of Four Houses: Lessons Learned on Divergent Paths to Success (CAREER)

Speakers: Alyssa Alexander, Tracy Brogan, Kimberly Kincaid, and Jennifer McQuiston

Join best-selling and award-winning authors for a discussion on the trials and tribulations of getting that book contract and what to expect during the first year of publication. Learn how four authors, each at a different publishing house, carved their own path and benefitted from each others' experiences and knowledge.

Saturday 7/26, 11-12 p.m.

Managing the Modern Romance Career (CAREER)

Speakers: Jennifer L. Armentrout and Laura Kaye

Two *New York Times* best-selling authors reveal how they manage their careers and protect their interests when working with multiple publishers, writing in more than one romantic subgenre, and publishing the frequent releases that readers expect.

Saturday 7/25, 12:45-1:45 p.m.

Bifocals, Air Conditioning and Depends®: The Challenges and Benefits of Being a "Mature" Author (WRITER'S LIFE)

Speaker: Nancy Fraser

Explore the challenges and benefits of being a mature author in the sometimes youth-oriented world of romance publishing, including recognizing the pluses maturity brings to your work and the marketplace.

Saturday 7/26, 4:30-5:30 p.m.

Cooperative Marketing: Get More Bang for Your Buck with Less Work (MARKETING)

Speakers: Robin Covington, Avery Flynn, and Kimberly Kincaid

A panel of authors discusses how they work together to reach beyond their individual readerships, broaden their audience through social media, and get more for their advertising dollar.

