

Modern Love, the newsletter of the

RWA CHAPTER

CONTEMPORARY ROMANCE

Writers



ContemporaryRomance.org

September 2014

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Judge our Contest!

Please help our wonderful chapter contest by [SIGNING UP TO JUDGE the Stiletto!](#)



Contact the board!

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PAN Liaison: Robin Covington
PRO Liaison: Melanie Cremins

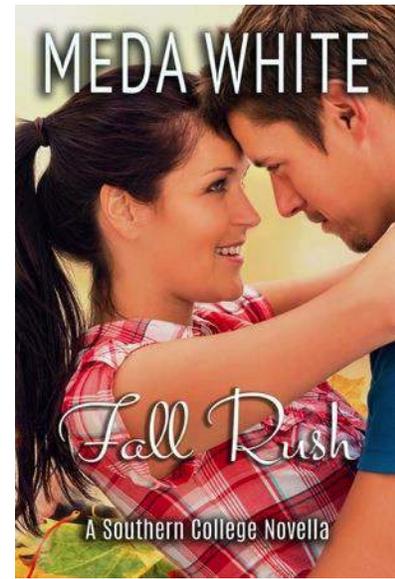
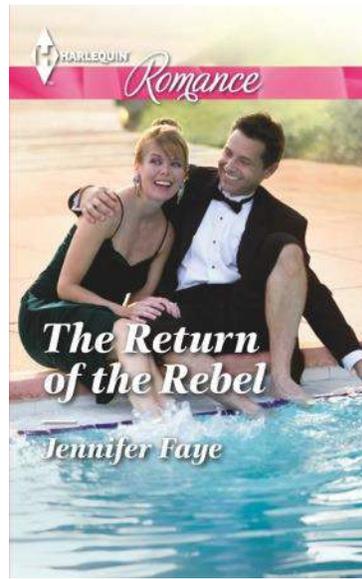
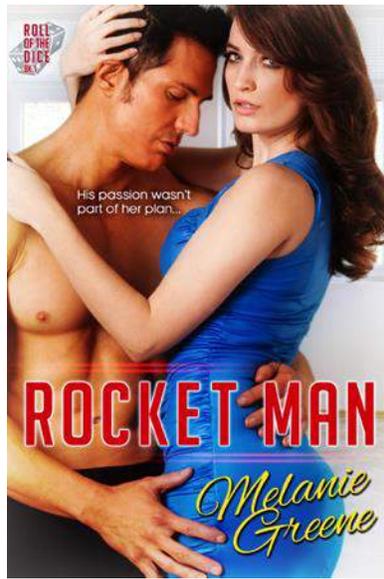
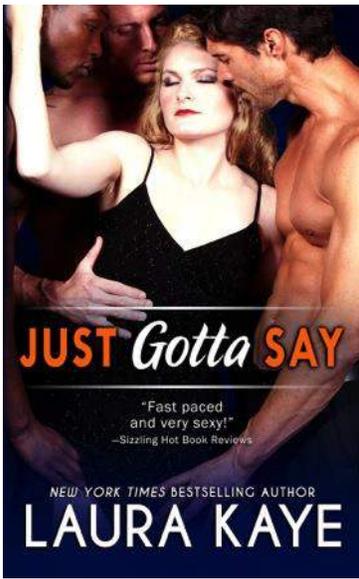
REGISTER for our October
Online Workshops:

Scene-by-Scene Writing

October 6-31
\$20 for members

Collaborative Writing

October 13-20
\$10 for members



From the President, by Laura Kaye

You haven't written your best book yet.

Just think about that phrase.

It reflects that as writers, we're always learning and improving our craft. The more we read and the more we write, the more we perfect our voice, our mechanics, and our style. When I look back at my earliest published works, I see all kinds of things I do better—and that come more naturally—now than I did then. And that's exciting, because it means no matter how much we love the book we're working on now, we're bound to do something even better in the future.

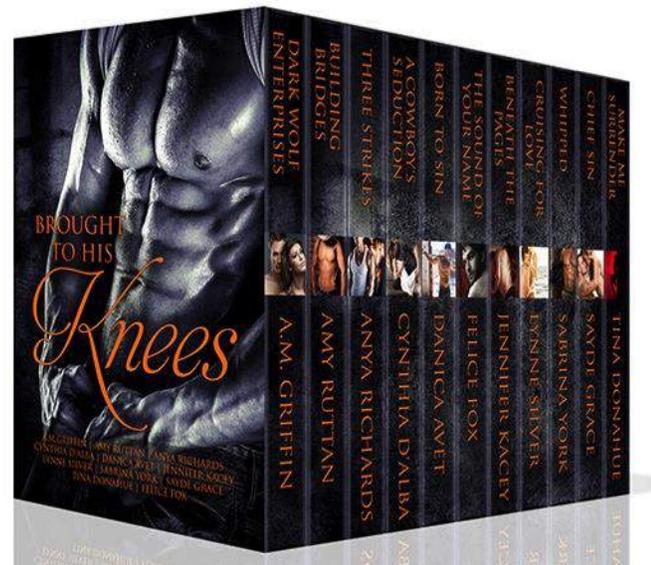
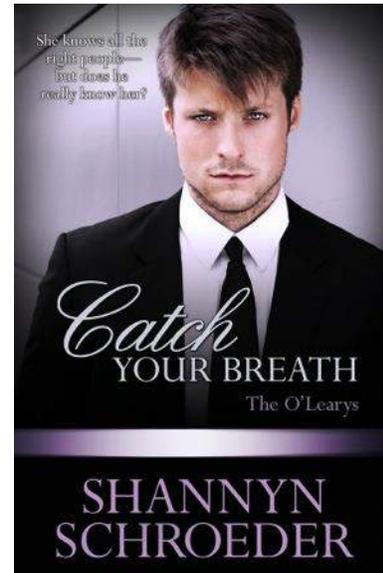
There are a number of ways to actively work to improve your writing. You can take in-person or online craft workshops, like the ones our chapter and other chapters provide. You can read how-to writing books. You can submit your manuscript to critique partners for feedback. And you can critique (or judge in a contest) other writers' work.

That last one might be a surprise on this particular list, but often it's easier to identify problems in someone else's manuscript than in your own. The more familiar you become with identifying problems of structure, grammar, point of view, etc., in other people's writing, the more you start to see where you're making similar errors in your own writing.

So, with less than four months left in 2014, I ask you: what can you improve in your own writing? What can you do to make your current manuscript your best...so far? Because you can totally do it! And we'll all be here to cheer you on all along the way!

Here's to you writing ALL the words!

Laura Kaye
RWA-CRW President
laurakayeauthor.com



PAN Corner: Cooperative Marketing - Getting More Bang for Your Buck with Less Work, with Robin Covington, Avery Flynn, and Kimberly Kincaid

Finding Your Partners in Crime

Successful group marketing means finding the right partners in crime, a task easier said than done. While it's impossible to consider every variable, there are a few biggies that are important to factor in.

Reader Base: Is your reader base similar with that of the author/s you're looking to partner with? Please note that the question isn't whether or not you write the exact same subgenre, nor is it whether you've got the same reader base as your proposed partner/s. In fact, you'll want to vary that reader base a little bit in order to hook new readers from your partners' fandom to yours (and vice versa). However, it's important to ask yourself if your readers will cross over easily from one of you to the other/s. If one of you writes gritty paranormal romance while another writes sweet contemporaries, that's got the potential to be a hurdle.

How Many Partners?

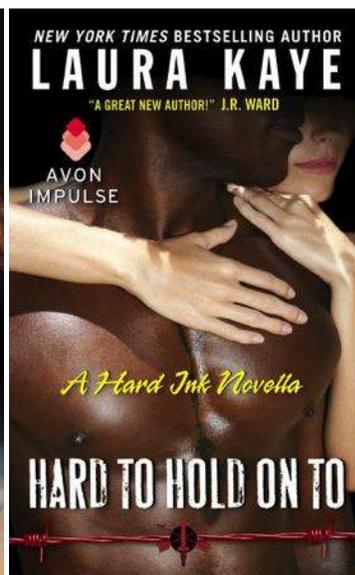
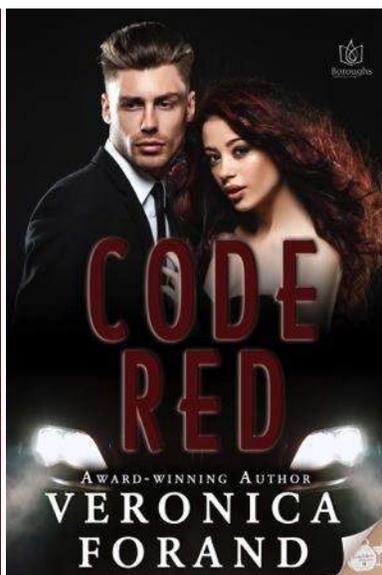
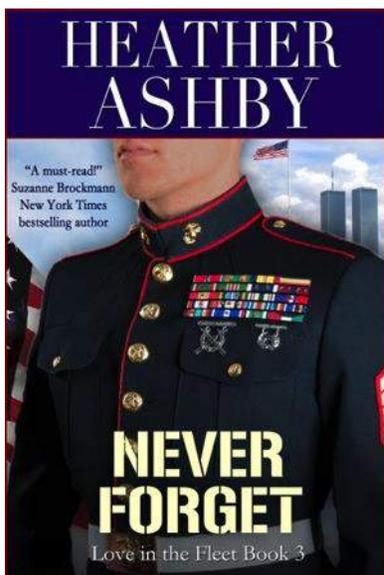
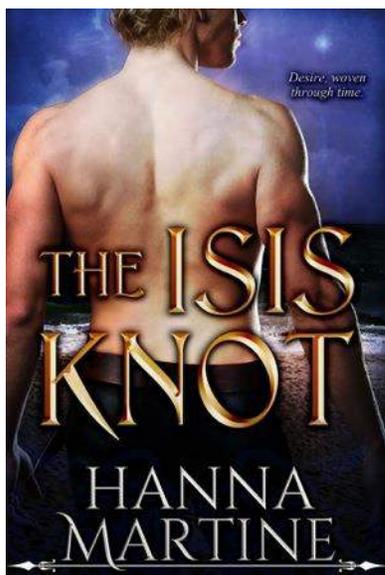
While not enough members in a group make it tough to split responsibilities, too many chefs spoil the soup. So what's the magic number? Well, your answer will depend. How much work load are you able to take on? What areas of marketing are comfort zones for you (or hot buttons)? How much financial responsibility can you take on? These are all factors you'll need to consider when forming your group. Everyone in the group should have an area of expertise (Twitter guru? Graphics goddess? You get the idea) as well as be willing to share the knowledge.

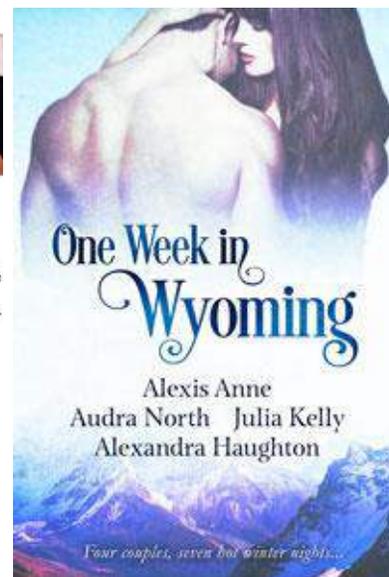
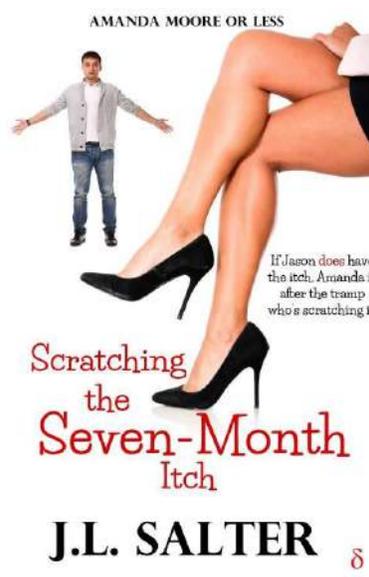
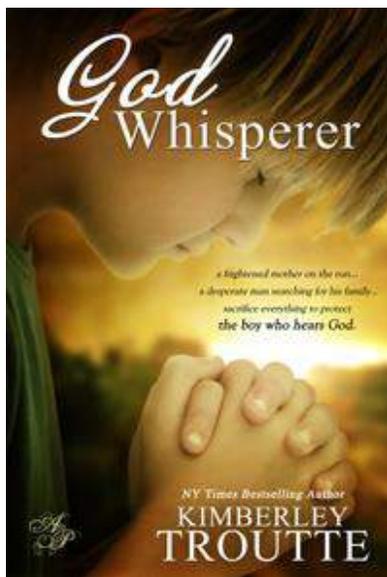
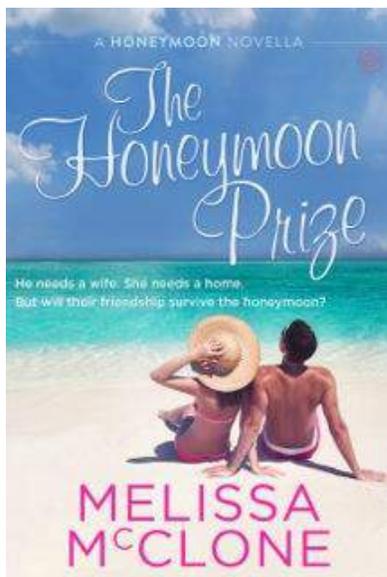
Group Newsletters

There are several things you need to discuss before starting a group newsletter. Here are big five.

1. How often will it go out. - We decided on monthly.
2. What will be in each issue. - We went with a 100 to 150 word blurb from each of us about our latest news and a contest.
3. What will it look like. - The one color each of us uses in our branding is red, so we have a red background. Also, we found a funny picture of a Chihuahua with hearts on his eyes. We made him our motto and had a contest where our readers got to name him. He is now Cupid McLovin.
4. How does the work get distributed. - We use Mail Chimp. It makes creating a unique newsletter template easy and quick. We have a newsletter template and then rotate who is responsible for gathering each month's newsletter information, putting it in the template and e-mailing it out
5. Will you combine mailing lists or create a new one from scratch. - We decided to combine our mailing lists. We started off with around 1,000 newsletter subscribers and now have more than 2,700.

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PAN Corner, continued

Setting Up a Standard Operating Procedures

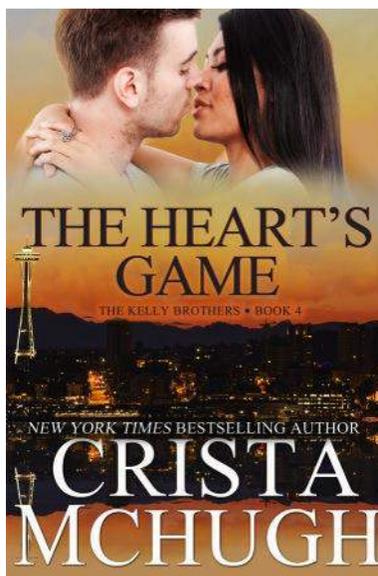
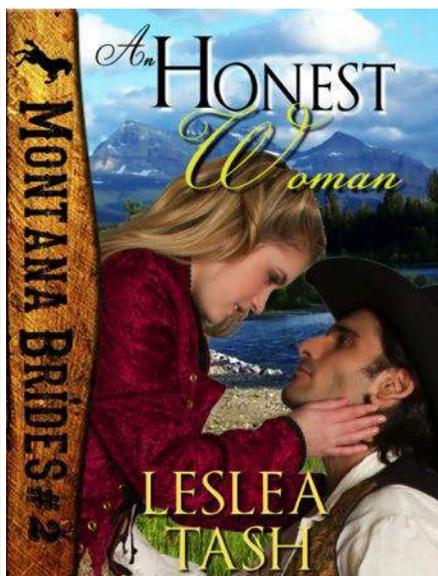
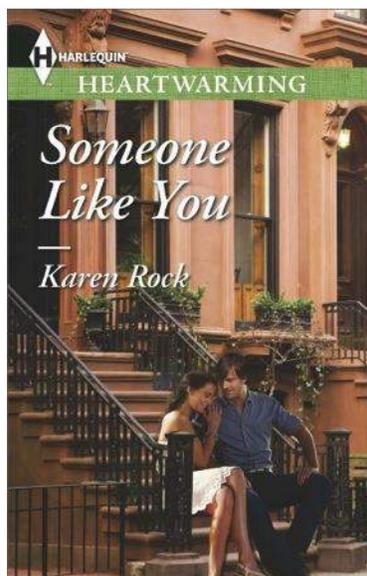
Dividing up the work means that everyone has to do their part and to ensure success, you need to know what's expected. We set the ground rules early but we also keep it fluid - we let it evolve and change as our careers grow. Here are some of the things that we discussed:

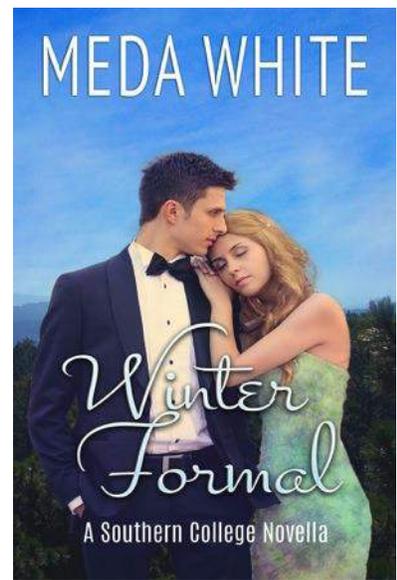
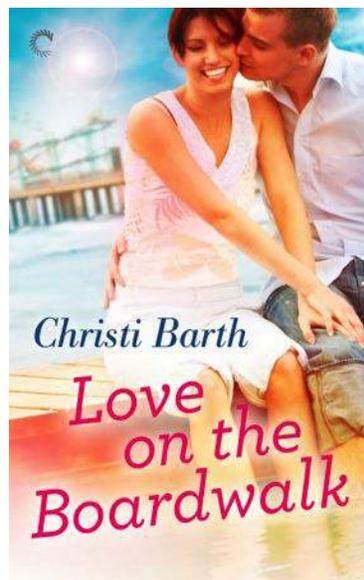
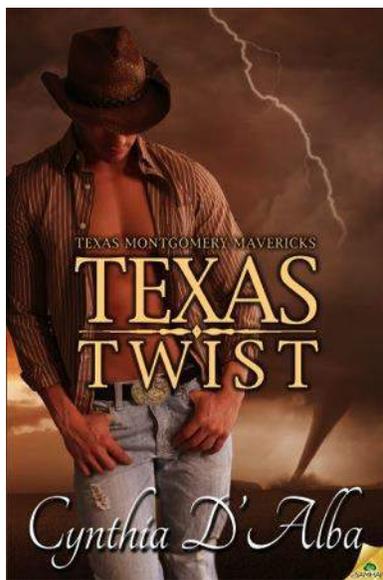
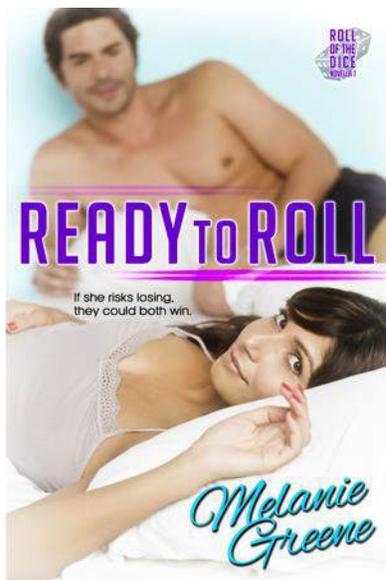
1. How much time will it take? We candidly discussed our priorities and our short and long term goals. Once we had those figured out, we designed a strategy that we could fit into our busy lives.
2. How will you divide up the work? We trade off newsletter duties and the mailing of prize packs to winners. We also take on tasks based upon our expertise - for example, Avery is better with graphics and we let her be awesome.
3. How will you break up? We didn't draw up a pre-nuptial agreement but we had to think about the day when we might outgrow the benefits of cooperative marketing. The basics of making sure that everyone got access to mailing list and ensuring that we could exit gracefully.

Robin Covington, *PRO Liaison* - www.robincovingtonromance.com

Avery Flynn - www.averyflynn.com

Kimberly Kincaid - www.kimberlykincaid.com





PRO Corner: Being Career-Focused, by Melanie Greene, PRO Liaison

I've been pondering what becoming a career-focused romance writer means, both to me personally and as a general rule. (Side note: when the October RWR comes out, every one of us should carefully read the article about membership classification.)

My home chapter has an annual award they present to the person who earns the most points for various career-focused achievements over the prior year, and I thought it would be of benefit to our Contemporary Romance PROs to think about how we would hit those metrics ourselves. So, with thanks to West Houston RWA, I encourage you to rate yourself!

In the past year, have you:

- Attended workshops?
- Finaled in or won chapter contests?
- Finaled in the Golden Heart or RITA?
- Gone to book signings?
- Started a manuscript?
- Pitched or submitted a manuscript?
- Gotten rejections? (It's all part of the process!)
- Signed with an agent?
- Joined or participated in a [critique group](#)?
- Entered chapter contests?
- Entered the [Golden Heart](#) or [RITA](#)?
- Attended the national conference?
- Taken [writing courses](#)?
- Finished a manuscript?
- Gotten editor or agent requests?
- Sold your first book?
- Written craft articles or [blogs](#)?
- Read books on the craft of writing?

I am one of many in my home chapter who won this prize one year and published the next. Most of my points were from all the chapter contests I entered, which both thickened my skin and opened my eyes to the ways my oh-so-perfect manuscripts were being read. Of course I didn't agree with all of the feedback, but I find those critical perspectives enlightening and useful.

And then there's the actual writing. Writing consistently can both improve craft and feed the desire to write more! I've recently discovered the 'targets' function in Scrivener (which I use for both chapter targets and for overall manuscript targets – I tell it how many words the book should be, and when I want to finish, and it tells me how many words I need to write that day to stay on track) and have learned to love the feeling of closing in on that goal. Of course, because writing is generally so solitary and self-directed, I also find a little outside accountability a good thing, which is why I started the [PROductivity Challenge](#) for our PRO and near-PRO members here. Stop by and try it for a week or two; I bet you'll find it helpful to know there's someone out there wondering how many words you wrote that day.

Melanie Greene - www.melaniegreene.com

Who Wants to Write Fast & Clean? by Sally J. Walker

From October 6 through October 31, I will be teaching an on-line course for RWA's Contemporary Romance Writers Chapter titled "Scene-by-Scene Writing." Though it truly is a fundamental approach to structuring the unfolding events or plot of any story, in the past I have also had experienced storytellers take the course to tweak and adjust their plotting process. Why? Such a microscopic examination of what NEEDS to happen results in a logical plot. The writer can see BOTH the forest AND the trees. The elements are easily identifiable. When the structure is so simply broken down, the writing flows much faster. The imagination gets in the habit of seeing plot events in this simplistic manner until it becomes natural habit and not painful second-guessing.

A recently in vogue term for one type of writer is "panster" for the seat-of-the-pants writer who never pre-plans either character or plot. This is in contrast to the "planner" who does character profiles and plot outlines. I have long been a "planner" although when I sit down to spew my daily page count I let my "panster" loose on the computer page. I have achieved a creative balance that makes me prolific enough to juggle several projects at one time (usually one novel and a couple of screenplays). I can do this efficiently and satisfactorily because I have incorporated the "Scene-by-Scene" concepts. They work. Because they work, I have created this course to teach HOW they work.

Certainly some people have resisted this kind of nearly obsessive structure. They claimed it confused and even subverted their creativity. Methinks these people were a bit resistive to change. The vast majority of people who have used the principles have repeatedly proclaimed that their stories easily flowing no matter how complex the plot gets! These risk-taking writers and their readers have ended up more satisfied . . . because the plot unfolds logically without extraneous side-trips. The truly insightful, THINKING writer works in control and with purpose rather than randomly "hoping" the day's writing will be logical. Using this approach does not inhibit, but FREES the mind to possibility and choice. Another bonus is, when revising material spewed in an intense write-a-thon, the "holes" in logic are much easier to identify.

When we are so close to our stories, rarely do we see the problems. Our brain is ecstatic to just get words on paper. Frequently, that brain will slide right by what is missing with the mental assumption it is there. Analyzing a Scene (and its Sequel-bridge to the next Scene . . . as well as the break-away to a subplot) slows the writer down to look for the progressive beats of logic. Making the concepts part of your writing habits builds confidence and makes spewing a whole lot easier.

So, if you want to learn how to write fast through logic and feel your creative energy exploding with exciting possibility, come on down and take "Scene-by-Scene Writing."

A Bit Extra

This course comes just in time for NaNo. How fortuitous. As a bonus, at the course's midpoint, I will provide participants a file of daily prompts titled "A Novel in 30 days" that can march you through NaNo! So, this is a 2-for-1 deal!

Sally J. Walker - www.sallyjwalker.com

