



SF AND FANTASY

WORKSHOP

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THE CHAOTIC STORY MAKER

by Fran B. Giuffre

Recent articles in this newsletter have offered excellent advice and personal experiences about writing novels and short stories using structures such as diaries, outlines, 3x5 cards and other aids. This article is for people like me who partner with chaos instead.

I did not choose this method, at least not consciously. I tried using writing aids when constructing my novel and some of my short stories; cards were especially useful for tracking names, places, occupations and other immutable facts. But I have yet to find a process of writing which short circuits the roundabout way I find my characters and construct a plot for them.

Take my latest story. For two weeks I had only one sentence. My protagonist entered her hotel room on an alien planet and was confronted aggressively by two of the locals. All I knew about my aliens was that they were a hybrid species. I left the keyboard to read about the theory of evolution of the Jurassic epoch and the Paleozoic era to get a scientific underpinning for my highly speculative tale. I love it when I have a story that requires research because it provides a welcome step-aside from the (almost) empty page. If nothing else, I will return to my writing with a few hard facts to work into the plot. I will feel less intimidated by the act of creation.

I returned to my keyboard, stared at my sentence and wondered what it portended. I did not try an outline because this story wanted an unencumbered space to grow. I liked the science fiction trope of inter-species conflict and wanted to concoct an original plot. I threw myself into the unknown world. I wrote free form to see what my alien intruders said to my heroine as she poured herself a brandy to steady her nerves.

Their interrogations and accusations provided me with the plot: my protagonist had voyaged to their planet to attend an academic conference only to be drawn into a criminal investigation the results of which could have serious implications for interplanetary relations. The hybrid nature of the aliens was a factor in the crime. Information in the first few sentences gave me all I needed to develop the rest of the story.

I did not want my lack of detailed planning to slow me down, so I assigned my characters romantic albeit, temporary - European names: Claude, Raoul, Carlo, and Michelle. Such names gave me a sense of who my characters were, at least to my subjective ears. Claude with the hard "c" and "d" sounds fitted my assertive alien while the softer "r" and "l" in Raoul suited a quieter character.

When it came time to change the names, to make them alien, I searched the dictionary for words with similar onomatopoeia. I may never know if my readers will "hear" the names as I do. Nevertheless, this method got me into my characters quickly.

I wrote more of the story than I would use for the finished product, as I followed my characters through action scenes, dialogues, and descriptive segments. That's how I uncovered the plot. An outline might have pinpointed exactly what I needed to write to create my drama. But having chosen not to pre-plan, I decided it was okay to go down a few dead ends. Once I wrote everything I needed to know to tell the tale, I cut everything that did not move the story forward, the gorgeous scenes and beautiful prose I had spent hours creating that now stalled the plot. All was not lost. I kept them in my database or as hard copy, filed away for the sequel.

For this story, I had written two dead endings. They were not bad, simply inadequate responses to the buildup. I re-entered the plot and had my protagonist meet one of those pesky alien intruders at a place that made sense for their paths to cross. She walked with him back to town. An action scene followed that set up a much better denouement. Once again, the characters led me where they needed to go.

Chaos was sorting itself into order. When I had a complete draft, I prepared it for an important next step, having another writer critique it.

I edited the story until I could not find any problems. I did not want a potential reader to get stuck on anything I could have corrected with a little effort. I wanted them to find the mistakes that I might never see because I am too close to the work. I needed a different mind to help me learn if I had transferred the vision in my head to the page. It did not matter whether the reader was a science fiction buff or not. Plot is plot and characters have the same needs as in non-genre fiction. I had specific issues I wanted that person to address. Did the structure work? Should I have added some element earlier or not until the very end? Did my reader understand what was going on? One person said she was confused by my story's opening scene because the first paragraph suggested my heroine was heading toward a sexual rendezvous, not a visit by hostile aliens. (I had backed up the story a bit to provide an introduction.) The description of my protagonist's trip from the spaceport to her hotel was not only unnecessarily mysterious, but misleading. I was happy to straighten out a confusing beginning. My ultimate goal is for people to enjoy, understand, and finish reading my stories. I welcome any advice to help clarify the plot, realize the characters, or

illustrate the scenery.

Many writers say that stories write themselves. I find that to be true, to some extent. My job is to pull from the ether a series of related events and mold them into a page-turning story. That's why, sometimes, thinking things through and outlining ideas feels counterproductive. Too much planning turns writing into a task like washing the dishes. I prefer entering the story as if I were a character who had no idea what was going to happen next. Eventually, I will check for plot consistency, logic and all of that. I use chaos as a tool for creating my world. Order comes later.

This method of writing a short story may sound like a waste of time. Believe me, I do not have time to waste. The way I figure it is that as long as I find some way to get a story onto paper or disk, I am better off than not writing at all. To the old saying "there is no right way to write" I would add: if organizing your thoughts beforehand has not worked for you, you're not alone. See what happens when you give your fingers free rein. Start with one sentence. It may hold the secret to the rest of the story.

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101 WAYS TO SHOW THAT
YOUR CHARACTERS ARE IN LOVE
(in honor of Valentine's Day)

by Diane Turnshek and the members of
the Young Writers: Speculative Fiction Forum*

What is love? Use this list to "show, don't tell" that your characters are in love. 101 outward signs, inner feelings, actions and different life perspectives that express love clearly, touching on first sight, unrequited love and hidden passion, up through true life partnership.

Clichés about love are rampant. Use common tropes with caution and avoid standard phrasing when selecting examples for your writing. Whenever possible, bring your own experiences to bear to convert these generalizations into specifics. No character should exhibit all these traits (unless, perhaps, the story is about schizophrenic obsession). Isolate the ones that fit your particular characters or choose any three to begin a writing exercise.

This list was written with input from fifteen, teenaged speculative fiction writers from around the world, members of the Young Writers: Speculative Fiction Forum on writers-bbs.com. Who better to know the effects of love's angst and joy than young writers?

Gender has been assigned heterosexually for simplicity and semi-randomly in an effort not to encourage sexist stereotyping. For many of these, the reverse is a good indication that your characters are not in love. Overtly sexual indications of love interest are not included--otherwise we'd be getting into a whole different market. Enjoy!

1.) Thinking about him frequently (her thoughts tend to drift his way, unbidden).

2.) Reminders of her are ubiquitous (songs, foods, places, clothes, turns of phrase, sports teams, the weather).

3.) She notices that other people have his characteristics and mannerisms (physical or otherwise).

4.) Being alone doesn't feel lonely.

5.) She goes out of her way to see him, sometimes plotting elaborate strategies.

6.) He wonders what would please her (what he can do, cook, wear, learn, accomplish).

7.) Time dilates when they're apart and contracts when together. (Einstein?)

8.) He worries about his appearance.

9.) She body-maps him (memorizes every freckle, dimple, laugh line and the color of his eyes in different light).

10.) He's more forgetful (his mind is elsewhere).

11.) She may or may not realize that her mood is up, but she wears a goofy smile, hums to herself, and becomes aware of the beauty around her.

12.) She wants to show him off in front of her friends, family, and even total strangers.

13.) Sometimes he thinks he sees or hears her in a crowd, only to be embarrassed and saddened when he finds out it isn't her.

14.) The timeframe in which he thinks expands. He's not thinking about next week, he's thinking about next month, next year, next decade . . .

15.) She wants to talk about him to her friends (ad nauseum), to share her feelings (shout it from the rooftop, carve names in a picnic table, get a personalized license plate or tattoo).

16.) Without noticing, she runs her fingers across things (a wine glass rim, her lips, a chair back, railings), subconsciously thinking about touching him instead.

17.) Anime characters start to look like him.

18.) He gets angry and protective when she's threatened. A slightly uncomfortable feeling that, should the need ever arise, he would drag up something darker and more primal than he would normally show to the world, and fight to the death to protect her.

19.) She writes about him.

20.) Her joy is his joy; her pain is his pain.

21.) She plays with her hair when he's around.

22.) He is unselfish, willing to compromise and sacrifice.

23.) Nothing else matters.

24.) He trusts her so deeply that he believes her, over his own eyes and ears.

25.) Her heart jumps when she first sees him and beats faster when he's around. Her palms sweat. She enters a state of high nervousness.

26.) There's a feeling that he'd never run out of things to say.

27.) She realizes people like her better. (All the world loves a lover.)

28.) He's in a state of selfish selflessness (making his love happy makes him happy).

29.) The room brightens when he enters it.

30.) They experience physical pain at being apart. Their love-high becomes a physical addiction.

- 31.) She's delighted at any infinitesimal amount of attention she gets from him.
- 32.) He wants to hold her glance, extending it to a lengthy look.
- 33.) She studies his handwriting, even if she doesn't believe it's possible to analyze.
- 34.) She's thinking about weddings, planning things out right down to the color of the shoes.
- 35.) He feels a swell of energy from their love.
- 36.) She can't deny that she loves him.
- 37.) He exhibits a willingness to try new things.
- 38.) He'd do anything not to cause her suffering; he'll do the dirty jobs, so she won't have to.
- 39.) They make up pet names for each other.
- 40.) She signs his name, and then signs her name as if married to him, over and over.
- 41.) He reads poetry (the mushy stuff) and memorizes it to use at appropriate times.
- 42.) She tries to hold off the feelings of jealousy and possessiveness that surface.
- 43.) They identify their song.
- 44.) She buys or makes him a gift.
- 45.) Alone, he returns to reminisce at a location where they enjoyed an experience together.
- 46.) He inhabits her dreams at night.
- 47.) She wants her kids to be his.
- 48.) He notices everything about her (clothing, perfume, choice of colors, favorite food and music, measurements).
- 49.) She tries to like something because he likes it.
- 50.) He looks up her zodiac sign and her horoscope (even if he thinks it's stupid, just to laugh at how far off it is).
- 51.) Grand gestures are fine, but it's the little kindnesses that make up the day-to-day (performed without fanfare) that show love most clearly.
- 52.) He wants to know everything about her: her birthday (and birthstone), her cat's name, what she eats for breakfast, her heritage. If possible, he'll ask her parents about her childhood.
- 53.) There's a fluttery feeling inside.
- 54.) He finds himself ending her sentences, knowing what she's going to say before she even speaks ("telepathy" from being close).
- 55.) He's overcome her fear of sharing herself emotionally with someone else.
- 56.) He could listen to the sound of her voice forever.
- 57.) She finds all his incredibly irritating traits more endearing than annoying.
- 58.) He puffs with pride when others praise her.
- 59.) On occasion, she feels near to him as if they were touching, even when they aren't, (including when he isn't even around). There's warmth and a tingle, but without the actual physical contact.
- 60.) He wants to get to know her friends.
- 61.) She is curious about how he reacts to altered states: drugs, alcohol, lack of sleep, immersion, oxygen deprivation, micro gravity, spin dizzy (amusement park rides), sleep state, fever. Note: she doesn't want him to force him through these, but she is curious.
- 62.) She collects remembrances of their time together (ticket stubs, pressed flowers, program books).
- 63.) He wants to create something together (art, a recipe, music, poetry, prose, a home, children).
- 64.) He wants to dance with her.
- 65.) She may find herself attracted to someone else, just because the new guy reminds her of the one she loves.
- 66.) She aches that she may not be giving him the same hope and encompassing light she has.
- 67.) What affects him sometimes isn't what she says as much as how she says it. She may say "Hello there," but he hears "I love you" in her voice.
- 68.) She wants to hold off doing something fun or new so they can do it together. Shared experiences are so much more fun that they seem incomplete without him.
- 69.) She's giggly around him.
- 70.) He sees her name jump out in print on a calendar, a billboard, a newspaper across the aisle on a bus....
- 71.) "You make me want to be a better man." (Melvin Udall, AS GOOD AS IT GETS)
- 72.) No matter how hard she hugs him, she can't diffuse herself into him (but she tries anyway).
- 73.) Talking to him for just a few minutes can turn a bad day into a good one.
- 74.) He enjoys playing games with her.
- 75.) She feels completely centered, in harmony with the world.
- 76.) Unconsciously, they lean together and brush into each other.
- 77.) He's more tolerant, less irritable.
- 78.) An exchange of greeting cards brings disproportionate joy.
- 79.) Parting is such sweet sorrow. "You hang up first." "No, you!" (Shakespeare)
- 80.) Lovers sometimes argue to make the ride seem worthwhile. Viva la make-up afterwards.
- 81.) Everything is thought of in pairs; he thinks of himself as one part of a whole.
- 82.) She can tell if he's hiding something.
- 83.) Love enhances selective memory. Although she can't remember what she ate for breakfast, she can bring to life the memory of each time his hand brushed into hers.
- 84.) How they met takes on special meaning. Anniversaries and other important dates are flagged chronologically.
- 85.) A companionable silence is all that need be said.
- 86.) He is solicitous about her creature comforts (too hot/cold? bright/dark? quiet/loud? hungry? thirsty? tired? need another pillow?)
- 87.) The love feels right, as if it were destined to be.
- 88.) If he sees her accidentally, without time to prepare, wild beasts suddenly tear at his chest.
- 89.) He overcomes all obstacles that keep them from being together.
- 90.) She wants her family and her pets to love him, too.
- 91.) He dismisses the opinions of others to be with her (heedless of social convention, willing to face community

censure).

92.) All or nothing: overwhelming feelings that she must either have it all or wrench herself away from the love.

93.) When something extraordinary happens, he's the first one she wants to tell.

94.) When she nears, he tenses like a plucked bowstring; the nearer she gets, the faster his body experiences a vibrating resonance.

95.) At certain times, when the light hits her just right, his breath whooshes out.

96.) She hungers for pictures, drawings, and videos of him, and any other way imaginable, to capture and replay her memories.

97.) She wants to grow with him.

98.) Shattering of illusions doesn't lessen his love.

99.) She can't help but smile when she sees him.

100.) He wonders why no one else realizes she's the greatest woman in the world.

101.) She has an overwhelming urge to count the ways she loves him. (Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

* blue, Caveman_Joe, Diatryma, Donnie Ink Well, Hirilmelen, Isrovai, Lockheed, Lyra_Mary, Mr_White, Musmanno, Outlaw, Pendragon, Timprov, tmseay, Vermillshiar

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CREATIVE ELECTRICITY PART 2: GO BEYOND SPARKS WITH CREATIVE Q&A by John Brown

In the last article, I talked about how the principles I learned in Card's boot camp opened the floodgates to my writing. The first principle I learned was that I had to collect sparks--snippets of characters, settings, and situation that carried a current for me.

However, I also learned I can't do much with sparks. I can't do much with a cool face, image, magic system, or fascinating society. They're interesting, but they're raw materials, not a story. So how do I develop sparks into story?

I ask myself questions and come up with solutions; it's a creative Q&A. In fact, that's what creativity is--asking questions and coming up with solutions.

Notice I didn't say "solution." I said "solutions," plural. I've found that I usually need to come up with a number of solutions until I get one that turns me on. Sometimes I go with that one. But some of my best answers come when I go beyond the first right answer to get the second and third right answer. I've found when I stretch for seconds or thirds, I'm likely to draw more lightening bolts.

The problem is you've got to ask the right questions. So what questions should you ask?

This is what I found. These questions stem from my model of what story is, how it works, and what I go to stories for. Your model is going to be a bit different from mine. Each pro has a slightly different model. The

important thing is to start building your own model.

One of the primary parts of my model is that a story describes how someone resolves a problem. Main characters want to attain something that would make them happier or evade something that wouldn't and they face substantial obstacles in their efforts. Mysteries are about people solving the problem of finding a killer. Thrillers are about people solving the problem of some external threat. Romances are about people solving the problem of finding someone to love. The problems usually involve some type of danger or inequity. Sometimes the problem is a dilemma--a choice between two awful alternatives or between self-interest and principle. And there are lots of smaller problems and inequities along the way.

When I talk about danger, I mean more than physical threats. I see three types of human needs. Having these things makes one happy. Danger, in my model, is a threat to one or more of these types of happiness.

a. Physical joys and security needs are threatened

by death, hunger, thirst, pain, etc.

b. Social joys like being accepted, loved, and valued and enjoying satisfying relationships are threatened by humiliation, ridicule, ostracism, being a loser, rejection, etc.

c. Inner joys like being principled and having meaning in your life are threatened by choices where you seemingly have to do or become something immoral or abhorrent to survive, or where you have a choice to be quiet while an Injustice is being performed or risk all by standing up for what's right; these joys are threatened by a life of drudgery, failed dreams, climbing the ladder of success only to find it was leaning against the wrong wall. Sometimes someone has already fallen and stories revolving around these problems become ones where second chances and redemption are on the line.

When we see someone inflict pain in one of these areas, it evokes our sense of justice. Such inequity is a situation we want to see rectified. So because stories are about people facing problems of danger or inequity, I've found that I need three things before I can really start writing in earnest: a character, a problem, and a rough (sometimes very rough) idea of the obstacles and how the character will solve the problem. If there's no character with a problem, then there's no story. Even in comedy.

It's possible for the reader and character to worry about different problems. For example, the hero in movie The Man Who Knew Too Much really has no idea what's going on in the story. He's got all sorts of spies trying to kill him and doesn't know it. But the audience does. So the audience worries about that danger and laughs as the hero tries to solve his problem and inadvertently foils the plans of all the spies sent against him. However, even though the character and audience worried about different things, both were faced with a problem. Without problems, there's no story, no purpose to the events we see.

That's my model. Yours may be different. The point is that before I can begin writing the story in earnest, I have to take my sparks and tease the basic elements of the situation out of them.

To identify these elements, I begin asking questions. What's the problem facing the character? What's the danger? Who has something to lose? Who would have something at risk? Who might be suffering? What problems might arise from this milieu? What could go wrong? How can I make the stakes higher?

I list as many answers as I can think of. And I list all of them, even the ones I immediately reject. I've found I get far more traction when I list those "dumb" ideas, than if I don't. The same thing happens when brainstorming in groups. I suspect it has to do with letting your imagination run free. All I know is I'm far more productive when I capture the dumb ideas.

There's no magic number of options. Some lists are long, some short. Sometimes it takes a few days to come up with two options. Sometimes I have twenty-six in a matter of minutes. The key is not the number of options you generate. It's letting your imagination run free answering the "what if" question. And when you think you have something that works, asking "what else" to come up with the second and third right answer.

Another part of my model is that I like to read and write about characters that draw me. So I take my original sparks and ask questions like: what's larger-than-life about this character? What's something particular or eccentric? What's delightful or cool about them or their history? What would be a fun or interesting skill, attitude, or characteristic to give to them? My answers might take the form of lists, scenes, snippets, descriptions--anything. The point is that I pile up answers until I find something that carries a current.

Along with character and situation, I begin thinking of possible ways the character might go about solving the problem. When I'm done with this, I usually have a rough idea of the plot. It always changes as I write. But I've found I can't write unless I have an initial idea of where I'm going.

There are many more questions about situation, character, scenes, structure, milieu, description, dialogue. Questions that arise as I write. How can I build suspense here? What's cool about this place? What's an interesting way to begin or end this chapter? Hundreds of questions. All are based on my model of how story works.

Principle 2: Develop story from sparks by asking questions and coming up with solutions, including the dumb ones, until you get those that zing.

Principle 3: The questions stem from your model of what story is and how it works.

Of course, you may be thinking: I don't know what questions to ask. How does one go about building a model of story? That's the subject matter of the next part in this series.

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ADVENTURES IN MARKETING INTERPRETING REJECTION by Varda One

The assumption of this article is: (1) you researched the market before you submitted; (2) you received a (form or personal) rejection and you can't tell why you weren't accepted. This has happened to me many times so I devised a method to help me interpret rejections.

At a certain point, I knew I could rule out craft as a reason for rejection. Since then, I've evolved a three-fold scale: Taste, Timing, and Special Needs. I can't verify my system is accurate, but at least it's a way to resolve my speculations.

Taste: I'd submitted several stories singly to a market and one was accepted immediately. I can't prove this but I think the reason was taste: the theme was ecology and it might have been the editor's pet cause. Yesterday, I received an acceptance for a story which had been rejected by another editor. I suspect that the reason for each decision was belief systems since the markets are on opposite sides of the political spectrum.

Timing: All writing relies on timing. I have to: (1) incubate ideas; (2) know when to take an idea from its incubator (this may mean decades) and write a first draft; (3) incubate the first draft and revise it; (4) end the revision phase and polish it; (5) find a market or wait for a receptive one to emerge.

I write far-out ideas. This is okay for science fiction (although styles change in this genre too), but not essays. I have to wait sometimes for receptive editors who are waiting for receptive readers.

Special Needs: An editor rejected a story because "we have now changed to a theme issue format." My story didn't fit her theme so I sent her one that did. She rejected it. (It was just printed by another editor because it worked with his different theme.) I then tried a third story that matched her other theme. She printed it. Themes, by the way, can be tricky, especially if they are broad ones like motherhood. I Remember Mama and Mommy Dearest are about mothers, but very different books.

Special Needs can also include tight deadlines. If the editor is short on material because a writer didn't come through, then the person with: (1) known reliability (craft and speed); (2) pertinent, camera-ready, material of the right length; and (3) ability to send it with the least hassle and most accuracy will be chosen. Least hassle, nowadays, frequently means compatible technology. I prefer to be accepted because of taste, but I'll be glad to pinch-hit anytime.

After I have interpreted the rejection, I place the stories in a Delayed Acceptance file. Some of my "survivors" have seen battle many times. I used to get irrationally mad at them for returning home, however, that's unfair. They're good soldiers and they don't need revising. They just need the right editor with the right taste at the right time. Then they can retire to the Veteran's Home with honors.

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MARKET REPORT

by Kathleen Dalton-Woodbury

Ralan.com reports that Fantasist Enterprises' BLOOD AND DEVOTION: EPIC TALES OF FANTASY anthology deadline has been extended to March 1, 2006. Complete guidelines are on their website at www.fantasistent.com/submissions/ and email queries (but no submissions) may be sent to b&d@fantasistent.com

They are also holding a short fantasy fiction contest "for a chance to earn cash prizes and have your story published in the fifth volume of Fantastical Visions." The rules (which may also be found on their website, www.fantasistent.com) are as follows: "1) Legal Information: Entry must be unpublished. All entries must be original and the sole work of the entrant and the sole property of the entrant. Fantasist Enterprises purchases the following rights to winning and honorable mention stories: First world publication rights in the English language. Payment will be made after receipt of signed contracts and the acceptance of a final draft-we may require some editing work before a draft is considered final. All federal, state, and local taxes are the responsibility of the winners. Entrants under the age of 18 will need a parent or legal guardian's signature for publication contract. 2) Theme: Stories must be of a fantastical nature. This is a broad description, but basically keep the nature of the stories magical and not technological. A successful entry could be high fantasy with elves and powerful wizards, a supernatural thriller set in the modern day, a tale of magic in ancient Egypt, or any other form of fantasy. Make sure the "fantasy" plays a large part in the tale. An allegorical story in which some mundane aspect of our world is different (such as the reversal of gender roles) is not quite fantasy enough. While the Fantastical Visions series is directed toward adults, it should still be suitable for a mature young adult reader-so please keep content somewhere between the movie ratings of PG-13 and R. The editors reserve the right to disqualify stories that contain content that does not fit this criteria. 3) Format: The contest is open to stories of up to 10,000 words. Manuscripts must be typed or machine printed, double-spaced, on one side of 8 1/2 x 11 white paper. (No other colors, please! Be kind to our eyes.) The author's name, address, and e-mail address (if available) must appear in the upper-left-hand corner of the first page of the entry. If the author is under the age of 18, please note that here as well. The word count should appear in the upper-right-hand corner of the first page. The name of the author, the name of the story and the page number must appear on every page after the first, in the upper hand right corner. Include a #10 SASE (Self-Addressed-STAMPED-Envelope) for correspondence. 4) Entry Fees: There is no entry fee for one manuscript. If

you are submitting more than one manuscript, please remit \$5.00 for two and add \$3.00 for each manuscript thereafter. Example: if you send in four manuscripts, the cost would be \$11.00. Make checks and money orders payable to Fantasist Enterprises or send a PayPal payment to `payments@fantasistent.com.` Entry fees are non-refundable. Manuscripts mailed separately will be considered multiple submissions and fees will apply (if a check is not included with the subsequent manuscripts, we will only read the first entry). 5) Mailing: Mail all entries to Fantasist Enterprises, Fantastical Visions V, PO Box 9381, Wilmington, DE 19809. Submit each entry only once. You may submit more than one story, but only one of your entries can win (see section "3" on fees for multiple entries). Entries must be postmarked by October 15th, 2006. Fantasist Enterprises is not responsible for lost, late, stolen, postage due, or misdirected mail. 7) Prizes: Fantasist Enterprises reserves the right to not award prizes if no suitable entries are received. One First Prize Winner will receive \$150.00 and pro rata share of 25% of the net revenue from sales of the book. One Second Prize Winner will receive \$100.00 and pro rata share of 25% of the net revenue from sales of the book. One Third Prize Winner will receive \$50.00 and pro rata share of 25% of the net revenue from sales of the book. All Honorable Mention winners will receive 3 cents per word, as an advance on pro rata share of 25% of the net revenue from sales of the book. All winning and honorably mentioned stories will be published in Fantastical Visions V. Authors of winning and honorably mentioned stories will receive one free copy of the book and the right to purchase additional copies of the book while it is still in print at a 50% discount." 8) Notification and Publication: All winners will be notified by mail by December 31st, 2006. Prizes and payments will be mailed upon receipt of signed contract and final draft of story, as accepted by the editors. If contracts are not returned by February 1st, 2007, entry will be assumed to be withdrawn. 9) Where to get the book: The book will become available in Spring of 2007. Copies of the book will be available through the Fantasist Enterprises website, your local bookstore, or your favorite online bookseller. Please check back at FE's main page at www.fantasistent.com for updates on availability of the new book."

Another short fiction contest from Ralan.com: THE DAME THROCKMORTON SHORT FICTION CONTEST is for fiction of all genres up to 3500 words long. There is a \$15 entry fee--payable through PayPal if you submit via email (see the guidelines), but prizes are good: first--\$500, second--\$125, third--\$75, and fourth--\$50. Deadline is 30 April 2006, and submission guidelines are at www.coffeehousefiction.com/submission.html Regular mail address for the contest is Coffee House Fiction, P.O. Box 399, Forest Hill, MD 21050. Be sure to read the guidelines because they are quite explicit, and entries that don't follow them will be disqualified. Critiques are available for an additional \$15 fee. "A list of winners will be posted at Coffeehousefiction.com ninety days after the contest end date and will remain posted on this site for a minimum of

four weeks."

Also from Ralan.com: Former print-on-demand anthology publisher, Tim Lieder, of DYBBUK PRESS, 516 W 188th Street # 25, New York, NY 10040, has issued an "Open Call for Novel Submissions, Beginning 1 February 2006 and ending 31 March 2006. Dybbuk Press is open for novel/novella submissions from 20K - 200K manuscripts. We are looking for new experimental works either in the horror, dark fantasy or literary categories. Up until now we've concentrated on multi-author anthologies (Teddy Bear Cannibal Massacre and the upcoming BADASS HORROR) with an eclectic range of stories. We are seeking unique, strange works that defy categorization. Please no vampire or crime fiction. We can only offer a small advance (in the \$100-\$500 range) but competitive royalties. Please send query letter, synopsis and first 40 pages via earth mail to the above postal mail address. Please note that all email submissions will be deleted unread. Please include an SASE if you want a response." Email address for "Info/Queries Only - NO E-subst!" is tim_lieder@yahoo.com and URL is www.dybbuk-press.org/

Other news from Ralan.com includes a new response time for INTERGALATIC MEDICINE SHOW (please wait three months before querying), and a new publishing schedule for Baen's Universe (they're now bimonthly, with the first issue coming out in June).

Also, Ralan.com reports that WEIRD TALES has reopened to submissions. WEIRD TALES (ralan reports that they have reopened to submissions). "Editors, George Scithers, Darrell Schweitzer, and John Gregory Betancourt, 121 Crooked Lane, King of Prussia, PA, 19406-2570, are "looking for the best in fantasy-based horror, heroic fantasy, and exotic mood pieces-plus the occasional odd story that won't fit anywhere else. No min. length, but less than 10000 words. Pays 3 cents/wd on publication."

SFFW SALES:

James S. Dorr's story "The Dollhouse Family" is on the web in the January/February issue of THE LATE LATE SHOW and "Copper Sulfate" is in the January DAWN SKY, while "Ole Bubba and the Forty Steves" is out in print in the Yard Dog Press anthology INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF BUBBAS. Also to come are "The Tree" in DEVIL'S WORK, tentatively set for early April, and reprints "Stealing Candy" in CHAINSAW MAGAZINE, "Invisible People" in SpecFicWorld's FEATURED FICTION, "The Dragon Tattoo" in the Yard Dog Press anthology FLUSH FICTION, and "Labyrinth" in Simian Publishing's GODS AND MONSTERS. Also, in poetry, "Annchuck Rising" is set for issue 2 of SPIDERWORDS.COM and "Cold Haven" and "The Drowned City" have been accepted by THE MAGAZINE OF SPECULATIVE POETRY.

If you have news of a SALE (that means someone has paid you money for your story--no news of reviews or awards or other recognition please--we're only interested in money here), send your name, the story's name, the publisher and date to Kathleen at Dalton-Woodbury@sff.net

WRITING GROUPS by Anthony M. Corliss-Smith

I'm here to tell you how great it is to join a writing group. Some of you are like I was before, giving such reasons as, "I don't know how to start one," or "I can't find one," or even "I work best alone" (in other words, you are scared to share your work). I gave all those excuses myself. But all of them, in the end, were just that: excuses.

You don't need to start your own group, unless there are absolutely none around where you live. And is it that you can't find one, or that you aren't looking hard enough? Also, we are all humans, and humans need companionship in what they do, and writing is no different. Sure, when you are in the middle of writing The Great American Novel, you are often locked away in a room with music playing to drown out noise, but if you starve yourself of company, you will find it hard to continue.

Plus, here is a possibility you may not have considered, or even considered and discarded: an internet group. "Gasp! How can you suggest that?" you say? "You need to see the people in person to have a good enough relationship to carry on a writing group!" "You can't trust people over the internet, many of them are out to steal your identity, or even your life!" Phooey! Rubbish! Hogwash!

I myself am a member of an internet writing group. We're a nice little group of people who... well, let me start at the beginning, sorta.

A man named Rich Cacioppo craved to have people read his work and see him as he is, and to do so for other people. So after being a member of other online writing groups, he started one of his own. He named it WritingAddicts, to describe what he wanted the group to be all about. And he based it on principles of freedom, friendship, understanding, and of serious writing. In other words, you are not compelled to participate in any of the assignments if your situation in life won't permit it. No penalties will be doled out. Then he began inviting people from SFFW into his group. I was one of them, though I came in a few months after it started, when he was trying to revive it after a few members had left/gone inactive. The other members who have joined since and I have gotten the group up to where Rich wanted it to be. In fact, the way he talks, I'm guessing he thinks it's even better.

We have simple assignments every month. Basically, a topic is chosen by the next person in line (figured alphabetically), and we get two weeks to write a 2,000 word story on whatever the topic inspires us to write, give or take. (Poems, songs, and scripts are welcomed, and the length is figured out on a case by case basis). Then we get a week to critique each other's stories. It's really quite fun: getting to write your own stuff, and seeing what other people think about it; then reviewing other people's stories. Having to figure out something based on a chosen topic is

challenging for me since I've never before done anything like that. I've always just come up with topics on my own.

In the last few months of this group, we've grown really close, and through the yahoo group's message service we e-mail each other constantly. In one month we average over 1,000 messages, with only 12 members. 4 of whom are inactive, for whatever reasons they have. We're understanding.

Sure, it ain't all tea and crumpets (is that a real saying?). Over the group's one year lifespan, we've lost 3 or 4 people to the reason of "this group isn't what I was looking for," and 2 were unfortunately removed from the group for severely abusing our policy of understanding and all that. I, of course, will not mention any names.

However, despite the few down points, the group has survived and even thrived. And do you want to know what I have gotten out of it? Experience in writing (as I said, I'm not used to writing on someone else's topic and on demand). Sure, I have skipped some assignments, too many in my opinion, but it has helped. Plus, I've gained a bit more discipline in my writing, something I desperately need. But you know what the greatest thing I have gained? Friends. Friends whom I will have for the rest of my life, and remember as long as I have the ability to. I owe a great deal to them, more than I could ever repay. And all this over the internet, never seeing these people in person, or ever hearing their voices? Yes, and so much more.

I urge you to find a writing group to join, even if it is only on the internet. And, if you still can't find one, why not drop by WritingAddicts? We're always open to more members, whether they're novice or veterans in the world of writing.

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THE ICE PICK
by Diana Carolyn Ice

NEVER BE LIED TO AGAIN : HOW TO GET THE TRUTH IN 5 MINUTES OR LESS IN ANY CONVERSATION OR SITUATION, by David J. Lieberman. New York : St. Martin's Griffin, c1998. ISBN 0-312-20428-0. \$12.95.

To accurately portray characters in your stories, books on popular psychology are always valuable. You can use such books to create believable stereotypes to populate your story's background or to make more rounded major characters whether the books are on body language; handwriting analysis; male- female differences; the effects of divorce, adoption, birth order, or a nomadic life on children; or some other hot topic of the day.

This book is particularly helpful. In many stories someone is trying to hide something, and someone else is trying to find it out. Whether it is your hero or your villain who is trying to learn the truth, you can use this book to set up dialogue, to create credible body language, and to make your stories more realistic.

For example, among the forty-six clues to deception that

he offers in the first part of the book, Lieberman states that a person being deceitful "will rarely touch the other person.... Touch... is used when we believe strongly in what we're saying."

You can use such information either to help show that your character is lying or to help your character throw off other characters.

In addition to showing how to tell whether someone is lying or not, Lieberman provides ways to find out the truth "without beating it out of them," tactics which may be useful to your characters whether alien or human. He also includes sections on self- deception and tricks used by people to block your ability to detect deceit.

And while creating aliens or other creatures and different societies, you may want to invent your own signs of deceit for your worlds.

With a book like this it is important to know the credentials of the author. Lieberman is a board-certified hypnotherapist with a Ph.D. in psychology, who offers programs, training, and workshops to governments, businesses, and law enforcement personnel and who represents corporations in various negotiations.

The book is clearly and simply written and loaded with scenarios and examples. The table of contents is very complete, but the book lacks any kind of an index, which is frustrating and means that you are better off owning your own copy, which you can mark up.

It is a fascinating book, and although you may upset your friends and family if they see you reading it, I recommend it highly.

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The Science Fiction and Fantasy Workshop Newsletter exists to provide participants with a communication link, a way to exchange ideas, information, and news pertaining to the writing of science fiction, fantasy, and horror fiction. There is no one way to write, and nothing presented within these pages is intended to be taken as that one way, but as one of the many thousands of options available to each of us and as a guide to finding our own way to write; the way that works best for us. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the SF&FW staff or of the group as a whole.

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