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Publisher Cathy Teets Talks

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IFW: Tell us about your company; what you publish.

CT: **Headline Books** has been a traditional nonfiction publisher since 1988. In the last five years we have added two imprints: **Publisher Page**, which publishes fiction, and **Headline Kids**, a children's book division. In the last two years we have reprinted four titles and released nearly 40 new titles. All of our titles are national releases.

IFW: What type of query letter captures your attention? Are there any "key" items that make you want to request a manuscript?

CT: Working title, experience of the author, knowledge of the subject, target market and suggested marketing plan. I tend to look for books that have a broad market interest, as most publishers do.

One of my authors submitted a complete innovative marketing plan for his political novel. It was so intriguing I called in the whole manuscript and sent it to three of my readers. One reader commented, "...reads like a Grisham novel...does he have more?"

With this kind of response, I arranged to meet with Rick right away. His novel had been accepted by two larger houses but they couldn't promise him a publication date sooner than 18 months. It was April and I knew I could release it in September in plenty of time for the election last year.

I signed him immediately. His novel was released in September, 2007 and has won two national book awards since then. It has also hit the Top 100 Best Seller List for Political Fiction on Amazon.com six times.

IFW: Are there any specific mistakes that make you whip out a rejection letter?

CT: No cover letter, bad grammar, handwritten letters and submissions.

IFW: What can an author do to increase his or her chances of attracting a publisher?

CT: Target market research and a suggested marketing plan. I am not interested in signing couch potatoes, no matter how good the book may be. First I look at content,

then I look for an active, knowledgeable, well-spoken author.

Most publishers don't want a one-book author. Once money is invested in the first book, a fan base builds and the publisher wants to capitalize on his investment with a second, third, fourth book, etc. Be sure to mention in your query and submission that you have other books ready in the wings.

Regional authors are an excellent draw for publishers, too. They already have a following, which can be an attractive asset to the publishing house.

IFW: What does an author NOT know?

CT: This is a great question because you can never ignore chance, fate, kismet—whatever you want to call it—being in the right place at the right time. An author doesn't know the interests, hobbies, life events, etc. of the publisher, the publisher's readers, or the publisher's secretary who opens the mail.

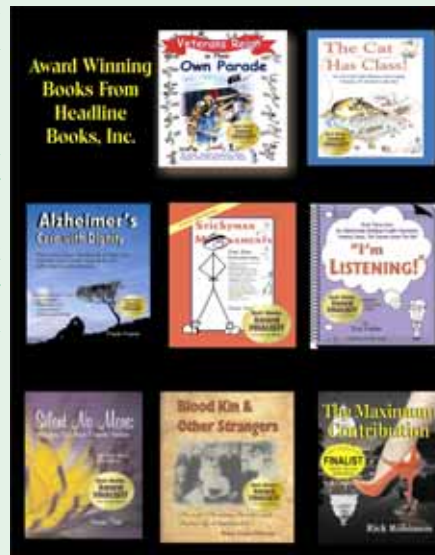
For example: I recently had a query from an author who was not only involved in the space program, but who was one of the top 100 teachers selected to go into space. Her book was about the Challenger crash and subsequent events that allowed another teacher to become an astronaut. What

the author didn't know is that I have always been interested and involved in working with kids and the space program. This book is a perfect fit for Headline Books.

A lot of the books I publish touch me personally or support a cause I have been active in—or they are intriguing to the point I want to know more. From the opposite point of view, you could submit a manuscript about religion to a publisher who is an atheist, and it would be rejected but you would never know why.

My point here is never be afraid to submit. The worst that can happen is you receive a rejection letter. Never take it to heart as a reflection of your abilities as an author. Put that letter on your wall as a badge of honor and go on to obtain your goals. There is the right publisher for the

(continued on page 8)



Writing Technique

Point of View

The first three major elements of a story are plot, characterization and setting. The fourth element is **point of view** and it's just as important, as it controls the story's **voice**. Many writers and even writing professionals interchange the terms *point of view* and *viewpoint*, although they are two distinct things. The **point of view** establishes the boundaries under which the narrator will abide, as well as the "head" or "camera angle" from which the writer will filter the action. From the very first paragraph of the story, the writer must establish the point of view, and unless the author engages unusual devices, the point of view should never change throughout the story. The **viewpoint**, on the other hand, is the eyes through which the readers will experience the story, and depending upon the point of view used, it may change multiple times throughout the story. **The viewpoint character should be the first character mentioned in a scene.**

Every story has a **narrator**, although at times the narrator is more obvious than at others. For example, in First Person Point of View, the narrator is an actual character, the "I" who tells the story. Likewise, in true Third Person Controlled Consciousness, the narrator is the viewpoint character—the "he" or "she" through whom we are experiencing the story. In other cases, such as in Third Person Omniscient Point of View and its variations, the narrator is an entity of its own with supernatural abilities that looks down on the action from afar or that can swoop into any character's head. As in point of view, unless unusual devices are used, the narrator of the story never changes, even though the viewpoint character may.

Hand-in-hand with the narrator is the **voice** of the story. The voice of the story decides how formal or informal the writing will be, if any regional inflections or word choices will be used, and the level of vocabulary that will be used. And through whose voice is a story told? The narrator's. It is through understanding

exactly who your narrator is that you understand what point of view you are using and how to control that point of view. I strongly recommend you imagine the narrator as a character, a breathing entity with a physical body, so you can visualize your narrator and know exactly where he is at all times. It is by controlling the narrator that we control point of view. **The writer must make it obvious exactly who the narrator is from the very first sentences of the story.**

It is through understanding exactly who your narrator is that you understand what point of view you are using and how to control that point of view.

Depending on which source you study, there are a variable number of points of view to choose from. However, I have selected the five I think writers use most often.

First Person Point of View - The narrator is the character "I." Writers should only reveal things that the narrator experiences in some way (things seen, heard, thought, felt, etc.) or that he knows. For example: *I knew I shouldn't have let Grandma go down there. She isn't too steady on her feet to start with, and then she gets those dizzy spells. But she insisted, and the next thing I know, she's tumbling down those stairs like a gymnast . . .* In first person point of view, the narrator and the viewpoint character are one and the same. First person point of view is a good point of view for a beginning writer to use, as it's fairly easy to control—your "I" is your narrator, you already know exactly where that little guy is.

Third Person Point of View, Panoramic - The narrator sees all the action, but is not privy to any character's

thoughts or emotions. Imagine the narrator as an audience member watching a stage play or as a movie camera recording the action. The narrator is independent of the characters, can see and hear everything, and may even see or hear things individual characters don't. However, the narrator does not have the ability to go inside any character's head. Therefore, in this point of view, there is no viewpoint character—the only viewpoint is that of the narrator, who is not a character within the story but an outsider. *Mrs. Smith stood at the top of the stairs, her grandson John next to her. Clinging to the handrail, she planted her trembling foot on the first step. But her other foot caught on the carpet and . . .*

Third Person Point of View, Controlled Consciousness - This is probably the easiest point of view for a beginning writer to use. The narrator is the viewpoint character (and therefore, the **voice** is the voice of the viewpoint character). Like first person, we see all the action through the eyes of a single character, and we can only see what our viewpoint character—our narrator—sees. The difference is we use "he" or "she" instead of "I" or "we": *John knew he shouldn't have allowed his grandmother to go down the stairs alone. She wasn't steady on her feet and sometimes she grabbed onto the nearest object when dizziness overwhelmed her.* In this case, since John's name is the first name mentioned, we expect that we will be in John's viewpoint and that John will be our narrator. Also note that since John is our viewpoint character, we see the other character's through John's eyes. Instead of calling Mrs. Smith "Mrs. Smith," we call her "his grandmother." Everything and everyone is in relation to John and how John views them.

Third Person Omniscient - For some reason, this is the point of view many amateur writers choose. After all, being an author is like playing God, so

why not take all the power you can? Well, for starters, controlling those God-like powers is extremely difficult and if it isn't done correctly, you may as well write "I AM AN AMATEUR" at the top of every page. The omniscient narrator sees everything and knows everything. The omniscient narrator has the power to jump to any location, to any point in time, at the snap of a finger. The omniscient narrator has the power to pop into any character's head and know what that character is thinking. The omniscient narrator is GOD. So what's the problem?

Well, if you don't control this power by the use of transition and invitation, the reader can feel like the ball in a ping pong game, bouncing out of control. And if the narrator suddenly jumps to a different location, the reader is lost. To show the omniscient point of view will be used in a story, the story should open by exercising omniscient powers, such as by stepping outside the characters and looking down on them, then slowly moving into the action. For example: *The Smith house was like any other house on Julian Street, its elegance long faded and its best features eroded by time. A widow since the Big War, Mrs. Smith fought for her independence on a daily basis. Even though her grandson John wanted to do everything for her, she reminded him often she was not yet an invalid.*

Without a word, she quietly walked out of the living room and went to the kitchen. Apple pie would sure be good for a change. And not any apple pie, but her made-from-scratch pie with apples canned from the fruit trees in the yard. She opened the kitchen cabinets. Flour, sugar, nutmeg, cinnamon, Crisco. Everything was there. All she needed was the apples. She hummed as she put on her apron and walked toward the cellar. The door creaked as she opened it. She switched on the dim light, although it didn't help much.

Footsteps sounded behind her. She

turned. John. She should've known. "I don't need your help," she said.

"What do you need down there? I'll get it for you."

"I can get it myself."

John rubbed his forehead. "Granny, please."

But his grandmother planted her feet on the landing.

John hesitated. He never knew exactly what to do—if he should disregard her feelings and physically move her out of the way, or if he should allow her to continue, knowing she could easily fall and break a bone

If we were actually writing a story, we'd probably have more of a transition, but note what happened in this example. First, we started from outside, slowly moving into the house, making it obvious that our narrator was an independent entity and not one of the characters. We slowly moved toward the characters (transition). Then, we hovered over Mrs. Smith and eased our way into her head before we stepped back and hovered between her and John (the dialogue served as this transition). Then, when John rubbed his forehead, we took this opportunity to move into his head. Whew! A lot of things happened in this small section.

The writer must make it obvious exactly who the narrator is from the very first sentences of the story.

It is critically important for the writer to imagine the omniscient narrator as a physical entity. Even though he has superpowers, the omniscient narrator still must physically move from one location to another and from one character to another, and we as writers must account for this movement. We must always know exactly where our narrator is. Is he floating near the ceiling, looking down on the action? Is he

standing in the corner? Is he right next to a character, ready to pop into his or her head at the first opportunity? Realize the omniscient narrator has the power to jump from inside the room to outside the building, but controlling that power means you move him there gently, step by step, creating a transition. One word of caution: although third person omniscient allows the most flexibility, it is difficult to manage. Besides visiting the heads of different characters, we can also see into the future or see things that none of the characters can see.

Even within third person omniscient, we should have only one viewpoint character at a time—only one character whose thoughts and mind we visit. We have the option of changing viewpoint characters, but we must do it carefully, preferably at a scene or chapter break. However, if we must switch "heads" within a scene, we should clue the reader to what we are doing and allow for a **transition**. You can do this by ignoring the previous viewpoint character for a sentence or two, then have the new viewpoint character touch his face—rub his forehead, scratch his ear, speak—any action involving his face or head to **invite** the narrator to read his thoughts. Once the writer makes the switch, he needs to stay with it, and if it's absolutely necessary to change viewpoints, the transition and invitation process should be repeated. "Head-hopping" is confusing for the reader and makes prose feel choppy and amateurish.

During the late 19th century and early 20th century, the omniscient point of view was popular and many books were published using this method. Most notable may be Charles Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities*. "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness . . ." Today, most readers have little patience for editorializing and want to get one with the action. Most writers who use the omniscient point of view do so with little control, which makes their writing rough and unprofessional. Bottom

line: unless you thoroughly understand how to control this point of view, DO NOT USE IT.

The viewpoint character should be the first character mentioned in a scene.

Third Person Controlled Omniscient—This point of view is used quite often, yet most writers aren't aware of it. Instead, they believe they are either using the omniscient or the controlled point of view. However, the controlled omniscient gives the writer the power of the omniscient, yet it controls and limits that power greatly.

Mrs. Smith dusted off her bony hands. Her long fingers that once had played piano for Wednesday night prayer meetings were now crooked and arthritic.

She went to the top of the basement stairs and looked down. The stairs were steeper and narrower than she recalled. A shiver coursed up her spine, but the only way to get the apples were to put one foot in front of the other and go down those stairs

Note in our example that the narrator is hovering right next to Mrs. Smith, shadowing her in all she does. He describes her hands and fingers (something a narrator who is not omniscient wouldn't do, because a character would not think of herself in that way) and he easily steps into her mind. In this controlled omniscient point of view, the **narrator** shadows the viewpoint character and is an invisible character who sees and hears everything **IN THE ROOM OF YOUR SETTING FROM WHERE THE VIEWPOINT CHARACTER IS STANDING**. He doesn't bounce around from one location to another and he doesn't bounce around from one character to the next. He cannot go into the future or into the past. He has the same limitations as any human,

except he has the power to go inside characters' heads.

In the strict use of this point of view, the viewpoint character can change only when a new scene or a new chapter begins. To do otherwise is to borrow more of the attributes of the omniscient narrator, and the same **transition and invitation** required there would be required.

Using a controlled omniscient point of view will allow you to see all the character's expressions and actions without using cheesy tricks like looking into the mirror or having him examine himself, because **the narrator is NOT the viewpoint character**. He is the viewpoint character's **shadow**.

Oftentimes when we get a vague feeling that something isn't right but can't quite put our finger on it, the problem is a breach in point of view. This means we have inadvertently changed viewpoints or switched from one type of point of view to another. Or sometimes it means we have failed to give the proper clues in the opening paragraphs that clarify the point of view we're using and the identity of our narrator. If you're not happy with the way your story reads, try changing the point of view—or try changing your viewpoint character.

Remember also the **voice** of your novel or memoir is the voice of the narrator. If any form of the omniscient narrator is used, the voice should be consistent throughout the manuscript; it should not change even though the viewpoint character may. Within first person or third person controlled, the voice should be the voice of the viewpoint character, since the viewpoint character is the narrator.

So study point of view. Once you've mastered point of view, you've mastered the art of writing.

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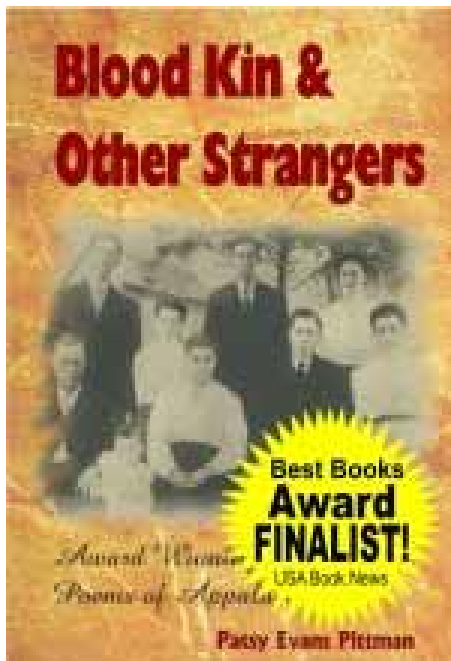
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*"... characters who jump right
off the page and into our
hearts"*

These accolades by writers, editors, publishers and readers describe *Blood Kin & Other Strangers*, a new collection of award-winning short stories and poems by author Patsy Evans Pittman.

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Q: How do I format a manuscript for submission to an agent or publisher?

A: First and foremost, review the submission requirements for the agency or publisher. Those will always supercede generic recommendations. If the agency or publisher has no requirements listed, then format as follows:

- Indent each paragraph 1/2 inch.
- Use 12-point Times New Roman font.
- Doublespace.
- Do NOT skip an extra line between paragraphs.
- Do NOT use the space bar to indent paragraphs. Instead, set the indent.
- Do NOT use two spaces between sentences.
- Do NOT right-adjust or full-adjust. The left margin should be flush and the right margin jagged.
- Use the Heading function to put the name of your manuscript and your last name on the upper left and to put the page number on the upper right.
- On the first page, put your name, full address, telephone number, and email address on the upper left. On the right, type the total number of words

Fiction First Aid

in the manuscript (not just the number of words being submitted).

- On the center of the first page, type the name of the manuscript. You may use a larger size font for this, if you wish.
- Begin each chapter on a new page. Start a new page by using the “insert page break” function, not by spacing.

Q: What about a synopsis?

A: A synopsis should be formatted the same as a manuscript, except if a synopsis is no more than one or two pages, it should be single-spaced. A “first page” is not used. Instead, the name of the manuscript should be centered on the first line, the word “SYNOPSIS” on the second line, and the author’s name on the third.

Q: What about a query letter?

A: A query letter should follow the basic business block format: your name and address on the top left, skip a line and put the date, then skip another line and

put the name and address of the person you’re sending the letter to. The salutation line should say “Dear Mr. (or Ms.) Writing Professional:” and should be followed by a colon. The body of the letter should be full-adjusted (flush on both the left and the right). Then “Sincerely” or some other appropriate ending should be used, with your full name underneath, leaving room for a signature.

Q: If I submit my manuscript to an editor for a critique before sending it off, do I need to follow all these rules?

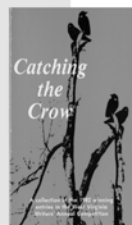
A: Yes! One of the things an independent editor will look for is the correctness of your formatting. If you have at least come “close” to formatting your manuscript and query package correctly, your editor can make the final adjustments for you and make sure your package appears professional.

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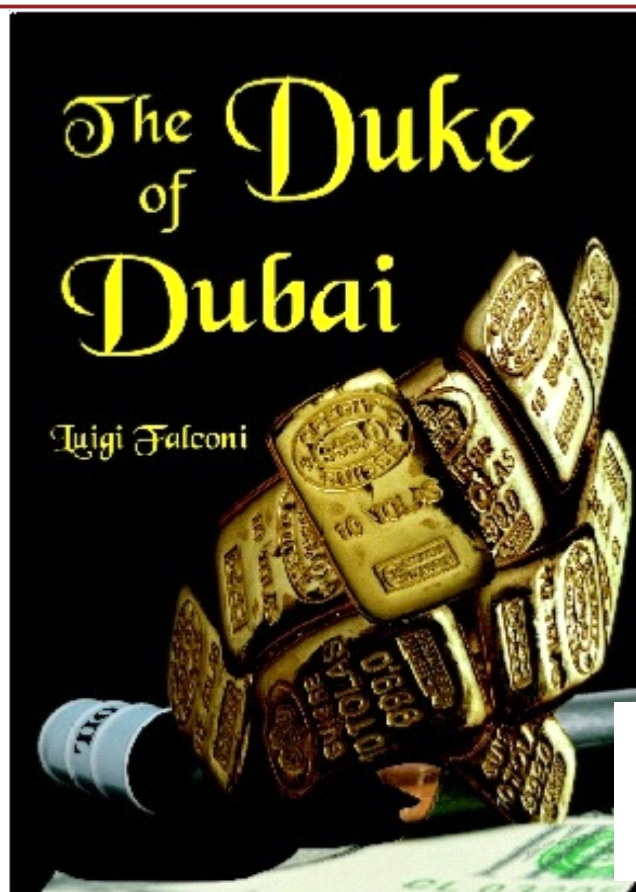
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- Teach you better writing techniques. Unlike most editors, we consider ourselves to be coaches, encouraging, teaching and correcting in equal parts. Instead of just telling you what is wrong, we explain how to correct the problem and we work with you to teach you how to write effective prose.
- Treat you with respect and compassion. All criticism will be of the “constructive” sort. Our purpose is to improve your writing, not destroy your confidence.
- Stay in communication with you. We like to have an open dialogue with the writer during the editing process; we view our relationship as a partnership, not a “do it my way and don't ask questions” dictatorship. We believe open and easy communication is the key to a successful writer/editor relationship.
- Mark your manuscript, correcting grammar, spelling, and punctuation. We will also mark sentence structure, passive voice and other technique errors. We use the Chicago Style Manual for reference, but use our experience as editors and writers to override the “proper” way when appropriate.
- Where appropriate, offer suggestions for plot development, character development, or other areas that could be strengthened, and point out inconsistencies in style, facts, or plot.
- Return a two-to-six page written analysis of your work (for book-length manuscripts only). This will include evaluation of plot, setting, characterization, dialogue, voice, point of view, and any other areas particular to your work.
- If appropriate, recommend reading or resources to strengthen your areas of weakness.
- Answer any questions you may have via email.
- Provide a telephone number for a personal follow-up, if you desire. We believe that you have the right to ask questions or discuss the manuscript and its future.

- Use the Microsoft Word Tracking Feature on electronic submissions to make editing suggestions, and use the Insert Comment Feature to advise or to explain the suggested changes.

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VIA REGULAR MAIL:

- Send a clean, typed, readable COPY of your manuscript. Must be double-spaced, 12-point or greater font, 1" to 1 1/2" margins, approximately 250 words per page, printed on one side of the page only. We prefer COURIER or TIMES NEW ROMAN font, but we'll accept any clearly readable font. It isn't necessary to bind in any way (staple, paper clip, etc.).
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Meet the Editors



Sandi Rog has spoken at a number of Christian writer conferences both in the United States and Europe, and her writings have appeared in several national and international publications. She is a member of Romance Writers of America (RWA), the American Christian Fiction Writers (ACFW), His Writers and Colorado Romance Writers (CRW).



Wendy Chorot has been an editor for Inspiration for Writers since 2004. Her special interests are children's and young adult novels (including fantasy), Christian fiction and nonfiction, commercial fiction, political and historical fiction, tell-alls, and memoirs. Her children's stories have won awards and been published in literary journals.



Rhonda Browning White has received numerous awards for her prose and poetry, including an award for her first novel, *Birthright*. Rhonda has edited a wide variety of published books and professional papers, ranging from thrillers and romance novels to children's books, university textbooks and doctorate dissertations.



Sandy Tritt is the founder and CEO of Inspiration for Writers. She is the author of two nonfiction books and one novel, and her short stories have been published in several literary journals. Sandy teaches creative writing and has given fiction workshops throughout the Eastern and Southern U.S.

Learn more about the editors and what they can do for you by going to www.InspirationForWriters.com/eCritique.html or by phoning Sandy at 304-428-1218

“Lazy bum, get a job!” Avis, perched on the couch in the living room, was in a snit as usual.

Harry winced. That voice! Might as well have your ears scrubbed with steel wool. The trailer baked in a late September heat wave, and he eased his sweaty back away from the plastic chair.

“Get a job,” she repeated, but Harry didn’t answer, just turned down his hearing aid and went on working his crossword puzzle. He had learned that was the only way to handle her tirades. That, or wring her scrawny little neck.

She sounded just like his boss at the mill. Always giving orders. Do this. Do that. He had finally taken care of that problem by getting himself fired, but now he had Avis to contend with.

He couldn’t figure out how to get rid of her, couldn’t remember what had possessed him to take up with her in the first place. Loneliness? Sure he was lonely after Helen died, but it was something more. Maybe a hunger for the exotic. Maybe knowing he didn’t have that much longer to do something wild and crazy.

And Avis was different then, gorgeous, dressed in shimmering blues and greens and golds. “Hello, there,” she had said in a sultry voice as he prowled the aisles of his favorite pet store, looking for something special for his cat, Mitzi. Avis blinked slowly, moved toward him with seductive little steps. She was flashy. Exciting. Maybe that was why, when he left the store, Avis went, too.

Right from the start there was trouble. Avis hated Mitzi, and Mitzi was scared to death of her. Mitzi, poor little thing, tried to be friendly. But whenever she came within range of those beady eyes, Avis screeched at her in language so vile the air turned blue.

Within a month Mitzi was dead. Harry found the pathetic lump of black and white fur huddled behind the couch. There wasn’t a mark on the body, but he knew Avis had something to do with it. He should have ended it right then.

Sweat glued him to the plastic chair, and he shifted uncomfortably. God, he hated this heat. Avis, on the other hand, thrived on it. The hotter the better. Well, he had news for old Foul Mouth. He’d had enough of this weather; he was heading north, to a fishing camp he remembered. Cool breezes, lazy waves slapping against the shore. Peace and quiet. Maybe if she had to fend for herself for a while, she’d be a little easier to get along with.

He threw a few necessities into the homemade camper and hitched it to his rattletrap truck. But before he could make his getaway, Avis, furious, came flying

out of the trailer, making such a racket that he finally opened the door and let her in. Goodbye, peace and quiet. Yet, with his hearing aid turned down and the old truck headed north, he was almost happy.

By the time they crossed the Pennsylvania border into New York, black clouds were boiling up in the northeast. The radio crackled with static, and Harry turned up his hearing aid just in time to catch a weather advisory. “Hear that, Avis?” he said with a nasty grin. “It’s gonna get colllld. Might even snow. You’d like that, wouldn’t you?”

But there was to be no peace that night. Avis’ complaints went on and on and on. She was cold. She was hungry. Poor Avis. Always poor Avis. Her voice, that voice that had once fascinated him, rubbed his nerves like sandpaper.

Avis, shivering in the passenger seat, made a rude noise and huddled deeper into her tropical colors.

Let it snow, Harry thought, watching her discomfort with pleasure. *Don’t make no never mind to me*. It wasn’t far now, and the camper had a good heater.

He turned onto a dirt road, rutted and overgrown. As the old truck rattled deep into the tunnel of trees, he searched for familiar landmarks, but found none. Darkness fell like a curtain. Then the engine sputtered and died. Sleet stung Harry’s face as he climbed out of the truck and dashed for the camper. Silent for once, Avis clung to his arm.

They were hardly in the door, though, when she started in again. “Stupid. Damned stupid man.”

He lit a lantern and went to work on the stove. It smoked a little, but it would keep them warm. Might as well make the best of it. Avis glared at him as he took out his crossword puzzle and lit a cigarette. Seven down . . . Iranian coins. Five letters. He thought for a minute, shook his head, then went on. Twenty-two across . . . Rare bird. Eight letters. His mouth twisted in a wry smile as he penciled in the letters . . . R A R A . . .

But there was to be no peace that night. Avis’ complaints went on and on and on. She was cold. She was hungry. Poor Avis. Always poor Avis. Her voice, that voice that had once fascinated him, rubbed his nerves like sandpaper.

Finally, he couldn’t take any more. “Shut up!” he yelled, grabbing her. “You think you’re cold now, do you? Well, see how you like this!” He opened the door and threw her out into the freezing darkness.

For a while, even with his hearing aid turned off, he could hear her hoarse cries, hear her thumping against the camper, trying to get into the truck. Then he heard nothing.

John Duffy was a big beefy man, built low to the ground like a basset hound. In more than thirty years as coroner, he figured he had seen it all. He wedged his bulk through the narrow door of the camper and stood with hands on his hips. Harry still sat in the chair, the crossword puzzle in front of him. Duffy picked it up, slapped it against his hand, and stuffed it into his jacket pocket. “He’s dead all right,” he said to his assistant, a first-year intern named Kelly. “Dead as a mackerel.” He bent over the stove, hands on his knees. It had long since run out of fuel. “Gotta be carbon monoxide,” he said, looking at the flue running through the ceiling.

Outside he hoisted himself up the ladder at the rear of the camper. Reaching the top, he realized he hadn’t seen anything until now.

“Hey, Kelly, get up here. Bring the camera.”

His short legs hit the ground, and he stood chomping on an unlit cigar as Kelly scampered up the ladder. Kelly stared at the bizarre scene on top of the camper, looked down at his boss in disbelief.

Avis sprawled atop the flue, her bright colors shimmering through a crust of ice. “A parrot?” he said. “A parrot offed the old geezer?”

“Appears that way. Must’ve roosted on the flue, trying to keep warm.”

“A parrot?” Kelly repeated. “Where’d it come from?”

“Damned if I know,” the coroner answered. “Probably somebody’s pet.”

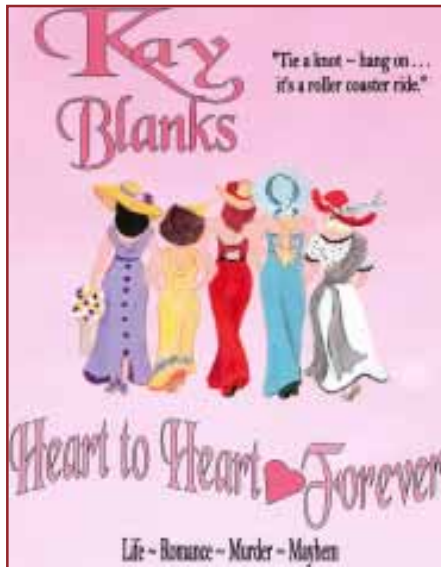
Headed back to town with Kelly driving, Duffy pulled the crossword puzzle from his pocket. “I must be addicted to these things,” he said, grinning sheepishly. “Can’t stand to see one unfinished.”

Seven down, Iranian coins. R I A L S. Twenty-two across, Rare bird.

R A R A . . . That was as far as the poor old codger had gotten. Slowly, as if he were carving stone, Duffy completed the block . . .

A V I S.

© 2007 by Patsy Pittman. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission. “Crossword” is one of more than two dozen short stories included in the award-winning collection, *Blood Kin & Other Strangers* by Patsy Evans Pittman.



Five women. Fifty years. And it's still the heart-to-heart chats that keep them sane. With the upcoming fortieth high school reunion and a new scandal with an old husband, the gals are sure things can't get any more bizarre. When one of the ladies is accused of murder, the Heart to Heart gang links together as never before. You'd better tie a knot and hang on--it's a rocking roller coaster ride!

I loved *Heart to Heart Forever* and can't wait until Kay's next book is on the market. *Heart to Heart Forever* kept me laughing and crying—and it had a wonderful ending, which we all need. Hope to find many more in years to come.

Glo Wimpey, Former Book Reviewer

Kay Blanks is a multi-talented woman who is overflowing with talent and a percolating personality. It is hard to believe she is just starting her writing career. We will all be in for a treat—as long as Kay's imagination is turning out such entertaining works. *Heart to Heart Forever* is a delightful easy-read; I'm looking forward to being a forever fan. Aileen Wilkerson, Retired Banking Administrator



I just finished reading *Heart to Heart Forever*, and I could NOT put it down. Just the jacket cover alone will make you want to run out and get the book! Kay is a delight and lives up to the saying on the cover:

“Tie a knot—hang on—it's a roller coaster ride.” Your club/organization should book this lady because she has real talent.

Penny Terk, Book Reviewer and Dramatist

Kay would love to attend your event and present her book, *Heart to Heart Forever*, sharing a little about her background; what drives her to write; and what it takes to get to print. Email Kay at kayblanks@hotmail.com to schedule a presentation. Kay welcomes your email: “Hey, don't be a stranger!”



Publisher Interview

(continued from front page)

right book and you should continue to send out your work until you get the response you want.

IFW: How do you market books? Why is this important?

CT: With no marketing or distribution, books would never sell. Headline Books is competing with large and small publishers. We get our authors out in the public through personal appearances, talk radio, television appearances, and book signings. The author is always the best salesman of his book. An active website is important, too. I have several authors who use their websites to “blog” with readers. This adds a personal touch—and it sells books. MySpace is also a great way to reach readers and some of the independent wholesale market.

We currently have a fundraising program for schools and groups to sell our books and accessories to earn money. This is a great change from selling wrapping paper and candy.

Every title has a “hook” of some sort to engage the public and pique their interest in purchasing a good book. Our children's books have peripheral products like stuffed animal characters from the story, coloring and activity books, audio books, travel kits,

Cathy Teets Talks

art kits, etc. Our middle school and adult level books have promotions that include treasure chests, giveaways pertinent to the subject of the book, t shirts, etc.

My personal goal for every title is to also win a national award. We are having great success at this, too. Just this month (November), Headline Books had seven titles named Award Winning Finalist in the 2008 National Best Books Awards sponsored by USA Book News. One author's first novel garnered two national awards this year, so I am a very happy publisher!

Winning an award gives the book a step up as far as sales are concerned. It gives us a reason to issue press releases, not only to local and national media, but to our distributors as well. We work with national distributors like Ingram Books and Baker & Taylor, and awards carry weight. Sales agents meet with national chain buyers and an award can put a title in the “you need this book in your store” pitch.

IFW: What do you wish authors would do before sending a manuscript for publishing?

CT: Have it professionally edited. If a manuscript is poorly written or the cover letter is awful, it goes right on the rejection pile. If you can't afford a professional editor, find an English teacher/professor to proof and

Publisher Interview

edit your work. Some will do it for free, some will charge a fee.

It is also helpful if the author scopes out the publisher and looks at their frontlist. This will indicate what the publisher is currently looking for. There is no use in sending a children's book to a publisher who does not publish juvenile fiction. I turn down a lot of manuscripts because they are not a good fit with Headline Books' current list. An excellent source for this research is Writer's Digest Writers Market and the publisher's website.

IFW: What is the biggest mistake authors make?

CT: Expecting to get rich once they become a published author. Don't do this for the money. The second biggest mistake is thinking the book will sell itself. This will never happen. It takes a lot of time and effort; sometimes it takes five years or more to become an overnight success.



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