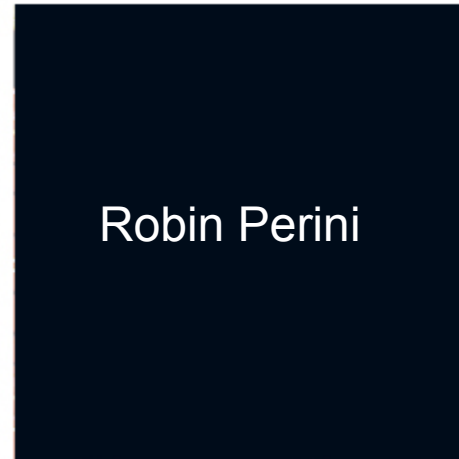
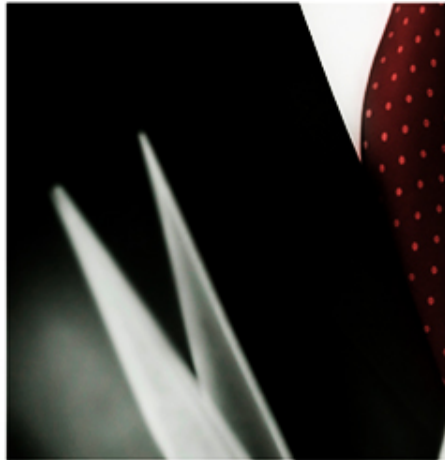


# Secrets to Selling and Staying Sold: Writing Techniques for Making a Good Book Great



# Introduction

- **Take what you want and leave the rest!!!**

– *What a writer ... "wants is a set of rules on what to do and what not to do in writing fiction...."when one begins to be persuaded that certain things must never be done in fiction and certain other things must always be done, one has entered the first stage of aesthetic arthritis, the disease that ends in pedantic rigidity and the atrophy of intuition.*  
— John Gardner, *The Art of Fiction*

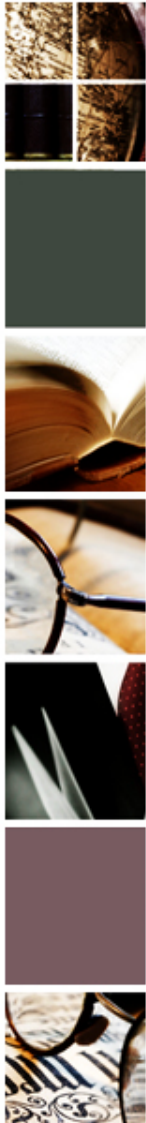
# Introduction

- **Non-Craft**
  - Intangibles that matter
- **Craft**
  - Elements I knew
  - What I learned





# Non-Craft

- 
- Life-long learning (you, your critique group) – challenge yourself.
  - Discover **your** process
  - Creative Goal Setting
  - Make writing a priority...decide what's important.
  - Write regularly...discover how fast you can write a book, and what it takes.
  - After you complete one book, take a short break then start another

# Elements that I already knew

- You each have your own journey
- I knew:
  - Deep Character
  - Turning Points
  - Romantic Conflict
- I didn't \*know\* why I wasn't selling...so here's what I learned...

# Lesson 1: Discover YOUR Story

- Uncover YOUR Emotional Cues
- List your 3 most powerful childhood memories
  - Define three key emotions in each memory
- Identify your favorite ‘keeper book’
  - Identify five key emotions of your favorite character

# Aha Moment

- Are there similarities?
- Consider the book you have been UNABLE to finish?
- Take Away:
  - Embrace YOUR story
  - Embrace YOUR emotional cues



# Lesson 2: One Liners – A Hidden Test of Story Strength

- **Finding Her Son** (Harlequin Intrigue, March 2012) - a woman who is determined to find her kidnapped son and suspected in her husband's death and is forced to team with the embattled SWAT cop who is assigned to prove her guilt.
- **Cowboy in the Crossfire** (Harlequin Intrigue, July 2012) - A woman desperate to protect her young son after he witnesses a murder is forced to team with a disgraced Texas Sheriff who her family framed.
- **Behind the Lies** (2013) –A woman discovers her 'perfect' husband is a cold-blooded, international assassin and is forced to put the lives of her and her young son in the hands of a man who lives behind his own lies.



# The One-Sentence Blurb


- **Internal and External Conflict in One Sentence**
  - The more clear, the easier the book will be to write and the stronger the book will be

Story Question Will Guide Your Writing

|  |             |                             |           |                                 |
|--|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|
| <u>                    </u>  | <b>MUST</b> | <u>                    </u> | <b>BY</b> | <u>                    </u>     |
| Your<br>Protagonist  |             | Critical Plot<br>Goal       |           | Conflict with the<br>Antagonist |
| <b>ONLY TO<br/>REALIZE</b>   |             |                             |           |                                 |
| <u>What the Character Learns about life that helps<br/>him/her change his goal during the journey of<br/>the book.</u> |             |                             |           |                                 |

**Example:** Jacob Marshall **must** avenge his father's honor  
by implicating Serena Jones' father, **only to realize** revenge  
often hurts the innocent.

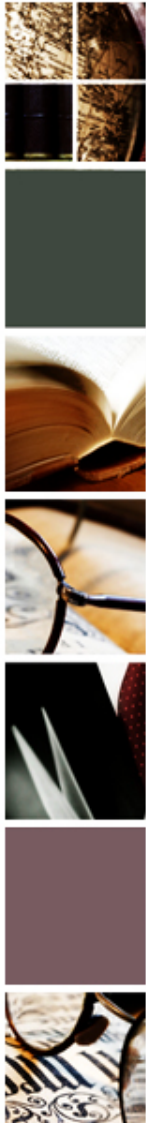
# The Story Question: The Wizard of Oz



|                         |  |                           |    |                                     |
|-------------------------|--|---------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|
| _____                   | must   | _____                     | by | _____                               |
| <b>Your Protagonist</b> |  | <b>Critical Plot Goal</b> |    | <b>Conflict with the Antagonist</b> |
| Only to Realize         | <hr/>  |                           |    |                                     |
|                         | <b>What the Character Learns about life that helps him/her change his goal during the journey of the book.</b> |                           |    |                                     |

• Dorothy must get help from the Wizard of Oz to find her way home by defeating the Wicked Witch, only to realize that she had the power to go home all the time (there's no place like home).

# Marketing Fragments

- 
- Power of High Concept
    - Sells your book
    - The stronger, the better
  - In Her Sights – A female SWAT team sniper who is being stalked
  - Behind the Lies – A woman on the run from her assassin husband
  - Game of Fear – Dozens of brilliant kids who mastered a video game are disappearing—and no one noticed. Until now.



# Lesson 3: Know and Use Your Theme

- Step 1: Identify the protagonist's flaw
  - My protagonist will [now or eventually] have to face and get past that he/she NEEDS/ BELIEVES/FEARS \_\_\_\_\_.
- Step 2: To overcome the flaw, the protagonist must REALIZE \_\_\_\_\_
- Step 3: The realization/epiphany of the protagonist is the THEME of your book

# Use Your Theme

- Villains
  - Exploit protagonist's flaw
- Secondary Characters
  - Mirror and echo protagonist/antagonist
- Subplots
  - Mirror and echo main plot
- Imagery

# Lesson 4: Deep Point of View

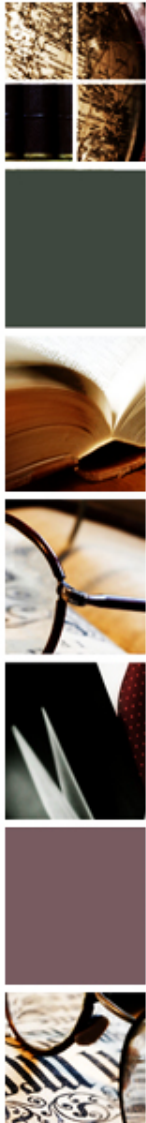
- The character tells the story, not the author
- Imagery based on character

*Finally reaching the landing, Deb slipped her key into the lock and opened the door. Ashley better have a good reason for being here and not at her Air Force Academy dorm where she belonged.*

*Deb shoved the door open. Her sister jumped up from the beige corduroy couch **like a gun had exploded in her ear.***



# Examples of 'Telling'



"You think that matters to Tower? He wants to bring you down."

Sarge tossed down her folder on a desk so pristine the dust didn't dare settle there. "Be careful, Jazz. This file doesn't go into a lot of detail, but he claims he can prove you're not fit to be a cop."

~~A frisson of disquiet quivered through her.~~ She clutched the candy in her pocket and squeezed the ~~feelings~~ frisson of disquiet into submission. Emotions were weak, and she would never reveal even the smallest crack in her armor. She forced her voice steady. "He's bluffing."

Sarge leaned forward in his chair. "A smart cop doesn't make a move like this without an ace in his hand. Do you have any idea what he's latched onto? What he can use against you?"

Her mind flashed to the angry runaway she'd been, a child forced to do anything to survive. Twelve years had passed since then. Her juvenile records had been expunged, erased as if they never existed. She pushed away the thoughts. No. It was impossible. Tower couldn't know.

She met Sarge's look, and forced her face into a calm, ~~her gaze fixed mask~~. "He's grasping at straws. I've done nothing to dishonor my badge."

Sarge nodded as if reassured, but she could detect the underlying concern.

"He'll fight dirty. He's got a lot to lose."

"I can stand up for myself." ~~Her mouth tightened and she set her jaw.~~ She was good at her job. She protected her team. She never failed. She was Jazz Parker, one of the boys in blue who could thread a needle with a bullet.

# Examples of Showing....



The trigger felt right.

The sight was zeroed in, the balance perfect. The Remington 700/40 fit her body and her mind like an old friend she could trust, and Jasmine "Jazz" Parker didn't trust easily. **But she and this rifle were connected in a way a lover, friend or family could never be. The Remington would never let her down.**

The only hitch--she didn't have an ideal shot at the kidnapper. Not yet, anyway.

Sweat beaded her brow in the Colorado midmorning sun. **Without taking her gaze from her target, she wiped away the perspiration. Every second counted and she had to stay ready.** Negotiations had fallen apart hours ago and the ending seemed inevitable. To save the Governor's daughter, Jazz would excise the five-year-old girl's captor.

**Jazz shifted, relieving the pressure against her knees, the stiffness in her hips, but the rifle remained steady.** She centered her sight on the small break in the window.

# Watch Out

- 's/he felt,'
- 's/he thought,'
- 's/he saw,'
- 's/he wondered,'
- 's/he realized...





# Lesson 5: Show, Don't Tell Emotion

- Identify a key word from Step 1.
- Write a few sentences **SHOWING** this emotion, without using the word (or a form of the word)

# Lesson 6: Make Narrative and Description Count

- Significant Detail based on emotion, not research
- Choose a setting
  - Choose an emotion from Step 1
  - Choose the opposite emotion
- Write a paragraph illustrating emotions through significant details

# Lesson 7: Take Advantage of Arcs

- Character Grid
  - Inciting Incident
  - Long Range Goal
  - Short Range Goal
  - Character Flaw
  - Relationship Barrier
  - Black Moment
  - Realization

- Story = Change

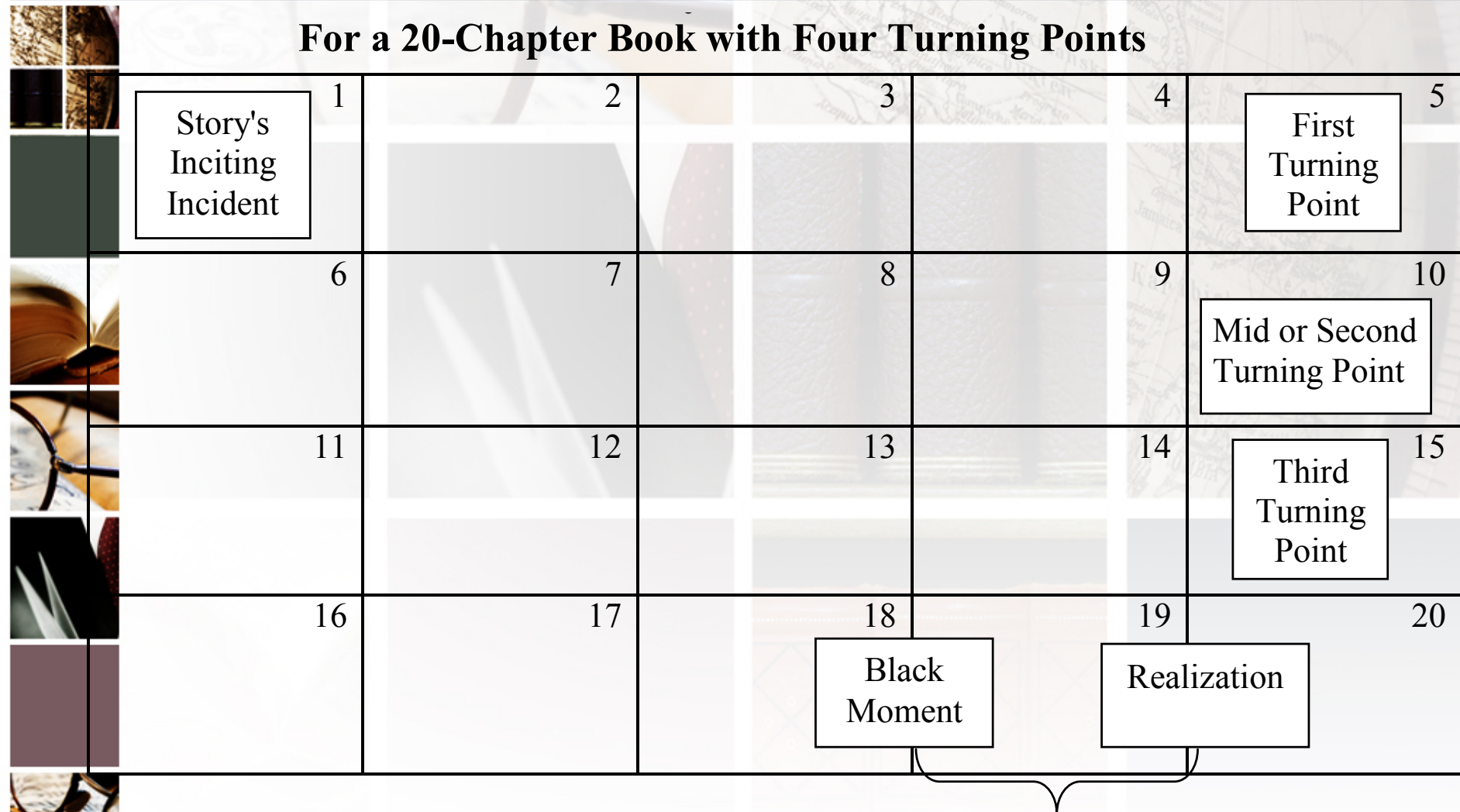
- Plot
- Emotion
- Character





# Character, Book, TP, Chapter Scene Arcs

## For a 20-Chapter Book with Four Turning Points



# To Write A Scene

- **Identify the Beginning of the Scene:**

- Emotionally where your character was
- Where your character is presently in the plot
- Emotionally where your character is going by the end of the story

- **Identify the End of the Scene (before or after you write):**

- Emotionally where your character is
- Where your character is now in the plot
- Emotionally where your character is going by the end of the story

# Lesson 8: Avoid Repetition

| Chap. & Start Pg | Time                                | Plot Points by Scene  | Conflict (with focus on Romantic Conflict)   | Jazz Knows (Plot-Tower, Ray, Past)  | Luke Knows (Plot-Tower, Ray, Past)                                 | Lisa Knows (Plot-Past, Tower, Ray,)  |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|--|
| Prol.            | Day 1--AM (midmornin g)-Friday      | Jazz saves Gov's daughter.  | He leveled her defenses 2 years ago, and he's the last person she should ever be involved with.  | Nothing   | Nothing  | Nothing  |
| 1-p.4            | Day 2--AM-Saturday                  | Sarge calls Jazz in. Tells her about Tower investigation.   | We know she had feelings for Luke and for some reason believes he has something she can never have.  | No promotion. Tower is investigating her. Worried about past coming up.                     | Nothing  | Has Seen Article, Furious, Plans Revenge (List done). Heard Tower's rant re: Jazz, Article. Use him. |
|                  | Day 2--AM                           | She comes out. Tower is in there sitting at her desk with Luke's article. Lisa has been there, too. Shows her Luke's article. Use some of interaction from workout room. What are you trying to do, be the only star? | Luke wrote the article and it's compromised her promotion and hiding her identity.   | Tower is trying to instigate something. Some forced laughter by team.                       | Nothing  | Lisa Sabotages Gun (goes with Tower)   |
|                  | Day 2--PM (Almost end of work day.) | Start with him and how important the truth is. Jazz confronts Luke about the article. (Does she lie to him about the reason--white lie)   | Unwanted attraction. Confrontation about 'You're the last person I wanted to see. You're the last person I wanted to write an article about. You made it clear you didn't want me. She sees Joy's picture. (dagger to the heart) | Doesn't want attention focused on her for 2 reasons: team and past. (she must be cautious). | Luke knows something about article, and questions has spooked her. |  |



# Lesson 9: Activate your Writing

- **Read for pacing and compelling storytelling**

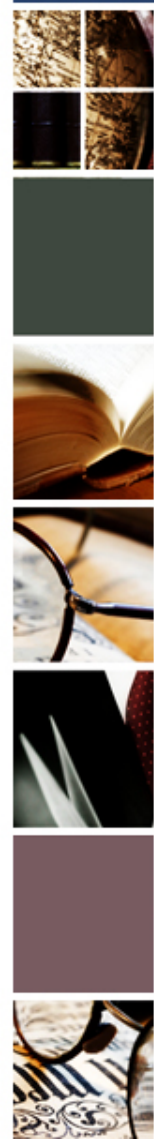
- Dialogue is the best way to show character and emotion. Get rid of introspection if possible.
- Is there a "zinger" on every page?
- Is the POV character the right one?
- Can you tell whose POV character it is on every page?
- Symptoms of Lack of Conflict
  - Is there repetitious dialogue? (no conflict development)
  - Tack on other issues
- Have I braided internal and external conflict (do they lead to each other?)

- **Three Versions (Activate the story (from telling to showing))**



# VERSION 1

## (The Cerebral Version)

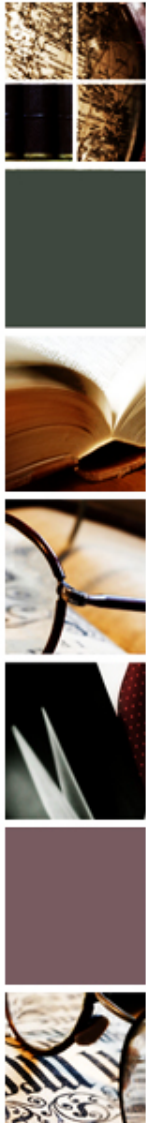


***"Remind me again why you thought spending Thanksgiving with them would be a good idea?" Josh Wentworth grumbled, as he flipped on the windshield wipers to batten away the snowflakes that were coming down faster. The SUV curved through the Denver traffic and he took the Quincy exit. "It'll be a disaster. It always is. I don't want Joshua's first Thanksgiving to be more like a root canal than a celebration."***

***Emily Wentworth shot her husband a frustrated glance. "Our one-month old won't be warped. Besides, your parents deserve to get to know their new grandson." An overwhelming sense of rightness filled her as she glanced at the baby in the backseat, his cheeks rosy with warmth as he slept. "With Ryan deployed overseas, your family's all he's got."***

# VERSION 2

## (Honing in on More Important Details)



*Eric Wentworth was dying. He didn't have to see the stop sign's shaft penetrating his chest or the blood pulsing from the wound. Strange, though. He felt no pain, but he could feel his life slipping away as surely as the ravaging winter wind whistled through his crumpled car.*

*He wasn't ready to die. Not yet. He had a wife who loved him and a new baby boy he'd just met. He couldn't leave them alone and unprotected.*

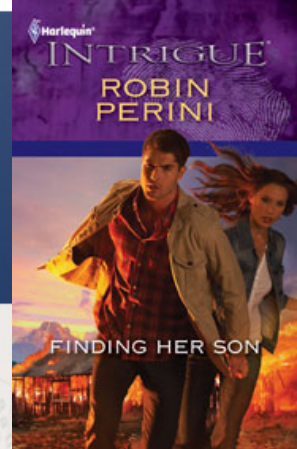
*"Eric?"*

*He struggled to turn his head toward his wife's weak cry.*



# VERSION 3 – Final Version

## (Active Writing Utilizing Deep Point of View)



This is the prologue that won the Golden Heart in 2011 and sold to Harlequin Intrigue.

*Icy wind howled through the SUV's shattered windshield, spraying glass and freezing sleet across Eric Wentworth's face. He struggled in and out of consciousness. Flashes of memory struck. Oncoming headlights on the wrong side of the road. Skidding tires on black ice. The baby's cries. Emily's screams.*

*Oh, God.*

*Why couldn't he focus? Above the wind, he heard only silence, then an ominous gurgling sound from his lungs. He shifted his head slightly to check on his wife, and a knifelike pain seared his neck. He stopped, staring in horror at the shaft of metal guardrail penetrating his chest. Blood pulsed from the wound, but he couldn't feel it. He couldn't feel anything.*

*Eric was dying. And it was no accident. He hadn't taken the threats seriously, hadn't told Emily what he'd done. Why they were all in danger.*

# First Draft - The Cerebral Version

## Weakness

- Distance
- Telling



**Damn Richard St. James to hell. He'd slaughtered them--he'd them all.**

**Jaw clenched with fury, Jonathan Price urged the horse he'd commandeered at the last posting stop forward. His hands and cloak were soaked with blood. He had to get home. He could only pray he wasn't too late.**

**The sky billowed with black clouds, and little light illuminated the old Roman road he raced down. His heart pounded, and agony ripped through his chest.**

**He'd witnessed carnage during the war. Waterloo had been a bloodbath, but Anne should never have witnessed the massacre she'd seen tonight. Until a few hours ago, his fiancée had known nothing of the brutality of man.**

**St. James had changed her--forever. The bastard.**

**Anne's family--murdered in cold blood. All of them, down to her young sister barely out of the crib.**

**Jonathan's stomach wretched at the memory of the Cavanaugh's laid out in front of their home like some gruesome message, their throats torn open as if an animal had feasted. But even that hadn't shredded his heart like Anne's mewing cries as he'd cradled her in his arms. He just prayed her family in York would be able to heal her mind, even if her heart were forever broken.**



# Second Draft

## Weakness

- Distance
- Telling
- Happened in past

**Damn Richard St. James to hell.**

**He'd slaughtered them. He'd slaughtered them all save one.**

**A mist of night smoldered the burning remains of the Price family home, and Jonathan blinked through the soot streaking the land that had once been the family's pride and joy. He breathed in, willing the nausea churning his stomach to not desecrate this place. They deserved better.**

**Jaw clenched, he forced himself to stare into their sightless eyes one by one. His father, his mother, his young sister. Lined up in a row, their bodies were darkened with ash, the only color, the red seeping from their shredded throats.**

**But that wasn't the worst of it. St. James hadn't just killed them--he'd tortured and humiliated them. Jonathan couldn't bear the thought of what the bastard had done. His young brother, Edward, by happenstance still at Eton, would never know, Jonathan vowed.**

**With care, he covered his young sister's bare body, and concealed his mother's naked torso with her decimated gown. As for Jonathan's father, St. James had emasculated him, the blood soaking his pants.**

**Deep fury, like Jonathan had never imagined, even on the bloodiest Waterloo battlefield, skewered his gut like a thousand splinters of glass.**



# Activated Draft

## Weakness

- A few telling phrases
- Small Stuff Editing

Jonathan Price hurled himself through the fiery hallway, clutching his limp body close to his heart. "Don't give up, Elizabeth." His despair was swallowed by the hellish roar of the inferno crackling around him. Blistering heat seared his hands and face. Black roiling smoke scorched his lungs.

Maddened with grief, he kicked the flaming debris from the doorway and burst into the rainy night. He staggered across the muddy yard, and coughing and hacking, fell to his knees before laying his sister on the sodden grass.

The fire illuminated the vicious wound on her neck, and then her sightless eyes.

Dear God, what manner of beast had done this? Torn the very skin from her throat, killed her with no mercy?

He whirled toward Price Manor. The blaze erupted from every window and door, scarlet serpents of flame devouring all in their path, engulfing everything.

Where was the rest of his family? The servants, the butler, even the scullery maid? Had they escaped or had the beast killed them, too?

"Please." He raced back toward the house, only to be grabbed and flung to the cobblestones. Dazed and gasping for air, Jonathan peered up at the cloaked shape looming over him.


"You cannot save anyone, you fool. They're all dead. Your family, and Lady Anne's as well."

# Activate Your Writing

- Use powerful, picturing-forming and image-making words
- Evoke emotions with your word choices
- Excuse me, your research is showing....
- Interpreting scenes through the genre and the viewpoint characters' emotions
- Deep Point of View – critical to active and emotional writing



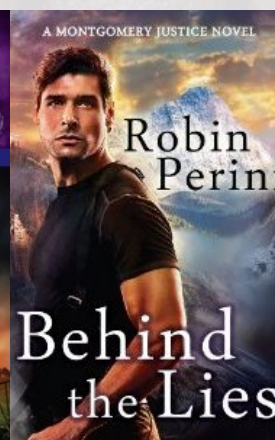
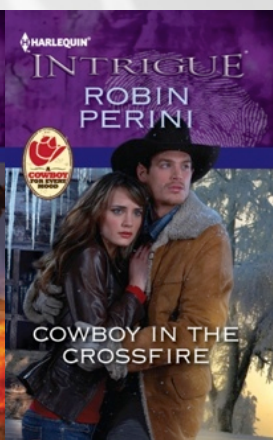
# Lesson 10: Don't Edit Out the Passion

- 
- **Let your Voice Shine Through.**
  - **It's YOUR story.**
  - **Ray Bradbury says, "There is only one type of story in the world-- YOUR story."**



# Conclusion

- Q&A
- Drawing
- [www.robinperini.com](http://www.robinperini.com)



Coming in 2014


Harlequin Intrigue - **Secret Obsession** (August), **Secrets, Lies and Trouble** (December)  
Amazon's Montlake Romance (Montgomery Justice Novels) - **Game of Fear** (August 26)



# BACKUPS


# Character Sketch (Laura Baker)

*Enter into your computer and watch it grow*

- 
- Title of Work:
  - Character:
  - Sex:                      Age:                      Height:
  - Weight:                      Eye Color:
  - Hair Color:
  - Identifying Characteristics, description:
  - Beginning Situational Conflict:
  - Greatest Strength:
  - Why is the character this way?
  - Greatest Flaw (Internal Conflict):
    - How does person hide it, get around it?
    - Why does the character stay this way? What needs to happen to not be this way? Does this trait stay through the end of the book?
  - Greatest need or want (Long-Range Goal)?
    - Why is the need or want important? What's at stake? What will it cost this character?
    - How will meeting that need or want affect other characters?
    - Obstacles to meeting that need or want:

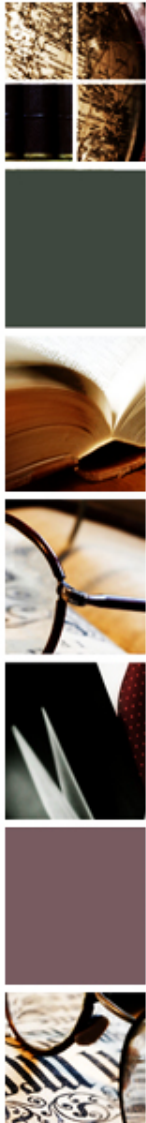


# Character Sketch (cont' d)

- 
- Short Range Goal:
  - Dark Secret:
  - Other personality characteristics, strengths:
  - Other Personality characteristics: weaknesses:
  - Greatest Fear:
  - Biggest Regret:
  - Most Powerful Dream:
  - What about this character conflicts with the other protagonist?
  - Romantic/Interpersonal Conflict (What's inside of him/her that keeps him/her from loving her/him):
  - Danger (If I love her/him . . .):
  - Darkest Moment:
  - What about this character renews the spirit of other protagonist?
  - How does greatest strength overcome the greatest weakness to produce a happy ending?
  - What does character learn by the end of the book?

# Raven's Prey by Jayne Ann Krentz w/a Stephanie James

- External Conflict
- Who to root for
- Probable romantic hero



Perhaps he was merely an adventuresome tourist who had drifted into the obscure **little Mexican town** in search of some action. Perhaps he had wandered into the cantina for the same reason **she** had: **to get a bite to eat** and have a bottle of the local beer. Perhaps he was a perfectly innocuous male who, when he realized there was another **North American** in the cantina, would come over to her table to chat.

Then again, **perhaps he was her executioner.**

# Internal Dialogue

## Dance with the Devil by Sherrilyn Kenyon

- Who
- What
- Where
- When
- How

### *New Orleans, The Day After Mardi Gras*

Zarek leaned back in his seat as the helicopter took off. He was going home to Alaska.

No doubt he would die there.

If Artemis didn't kill him, he was sure Dionysus would.

The god of wine and excess had been most explicit in his displeasure over Zarek's betrayal and in what he intended to do to Zarek as punishment.

For Sunshine Runningwolf's happiness, Zarek had crossed a god who was sure to make him suffer even worse horrors than those in his human past.


Not that he cared. There wasn't much in life or death that Zarek had ever cared about.



# Dialogue Only

## Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card

- Who
- What
- Where
- When
- How



"I've watched through his eyes, I've listened through his ears, and I tell you he's the one. Or at least as close as we're going to get."

"That's what you said about the brother."

"The brother tested out impossible. For other reasons. Nothing to do with his ability."

"Same with the sister. And there are doubts about him. He's too malleable. Too willing to submerge himself in someone else's will."

"Not if the other person is his enemy."

"So what do we do? Surround him with enemies all the time?"

"If we have to."

"I thought you said you liked the kid."

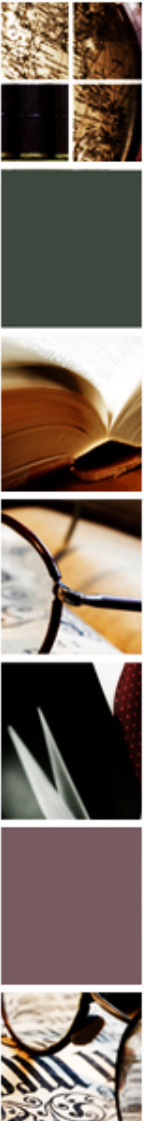
"If the buggers get him, they'll make me look like his favorite uncle."

"All right. We're saving the world, after all. Take him."

# Third person Internal Dialogue

## Naked in Death by J.D. Robb

- Genre type
- Tone/Imagery
- Backstory – Emotional component
- Internal Conflict



She woke in the dark. Through the slats on the window shades, the first murky hint of dawn slipped, slanting shadowy bars over the bed. It was like waking in a cell.

For a moment, she simply lay there, shuddering, imprisoned, while the dream faded. After ten years on the force, Eve still had dreams.

Six hours before, she'd killed a man, had watched death creep into his eyes. It wasn't the first time she'd exercised maximum force, or dreamed. She'd learned to accept the action and the consequences.

But it was the child that haunted her. The child she hadn't been in time to save. The child whose screams had echoed in the dreams with her own.

# Extra: Braid Plot and Character

- Why is this character the **ONLY** character for this story?
  - Choose plot to exploit character.
- Actions don't drive the story. Actions drive emotions, emotions drive the story. (Laura Baker)
- Is the drama motivated?
- It's a cycle
- Internal vs. External Conflicts

