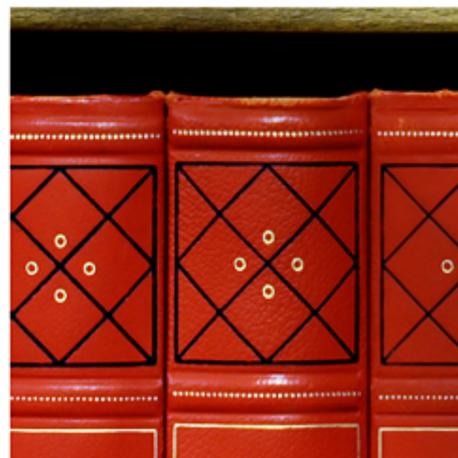
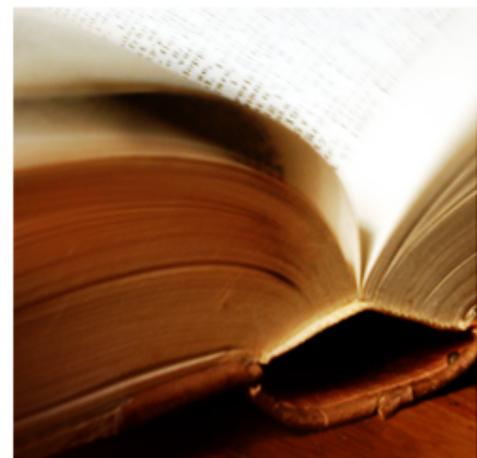
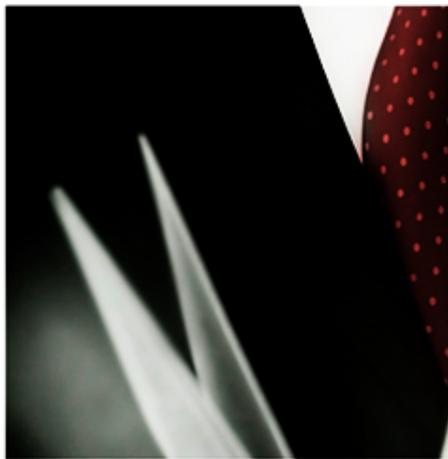


The Secret to Powerful Writing: Activate, Activate, Activate!



Claire
Cavanaugh
and
Robin Perini

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*

Powerful Writing Evokes a Response

- *“Don’t tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass.” – Anton Chekhov*
- *“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.” – Mark Twain*



What is Activating your Writing?

- Changing from flat writing to compelling
 - To make your reader FEEL
→ **EMOTIONS!**



Why do we care about emotions?

- Actions don't drive the story.
Actions drive emotions.
Emotions drive the story!

Motivated Drama



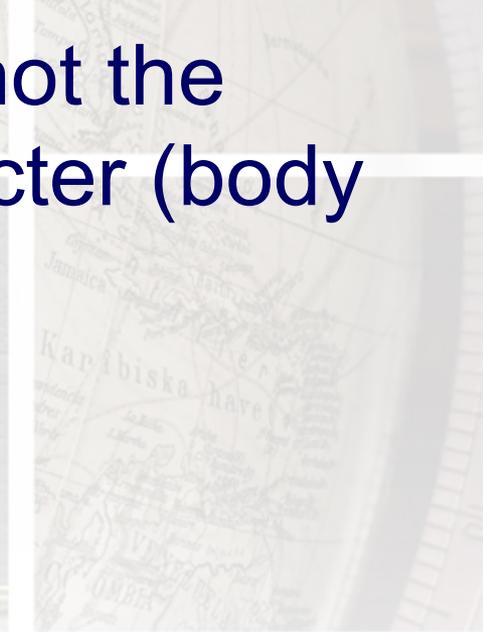
So...how do we do it? – S-P-I-C-E-D

- **S**pecificity (including senses)
- **P**owerful Verbs, etc.
- **I**mage-making and picture-forming words
- **C**ompelling Dialogue (Inner/Spoken)
- **E**nding Hooks (And Openings) aka Surprises!
- **D**eep Point of View

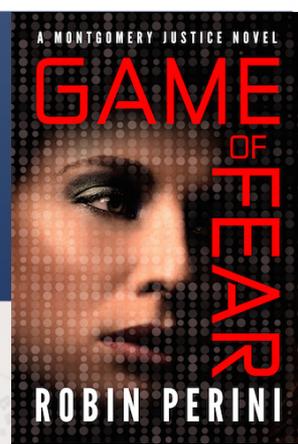


Deep Point of View: Your Most Powerful Weapon

- The character tells the story, not the author – be **INSIDE** the character (body and mind).
- The character:
 - Feels what they feel
 - Knows what they know
 - Interprets events through *their* knowledge, *their* backstory and *their* personal beliefs
- Careful of author intrusion



Deep Point of View – An Example z from Game of Fear (August 2014)



Finally reaching the landing, Deb slipped her key into the lock. 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. The textbook vaulted from her hand landing five feet away.

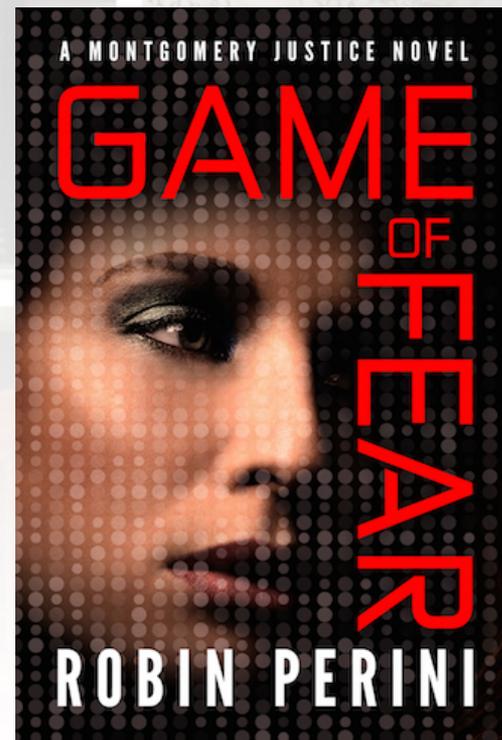


What do you know about Deb?



SPICED - GAME OF FEAR

- SPICED in a single scene from Game of Fear – Montlake Romance, August 2014
- Brilliant kids from all over the country are disappearing after mastering the video game, *Point of Entry*—but no one knows why. Until now.
- Deb Lansing - Heroine



SPICED – Image-making and Picture-forming words



The whirr of the **circling Bell 212 helicopter** rotors echoed through the cockpit. New Mexico's **Wheeler Peak, barely visible in the dusk, loomed** just east, **its thirteen-thousand-foot summit laden with snow**. Deborah Lansing leaned forward, the **seat belt straps pulling at her shoulders**.

Far, far to the west, the **sun was just a sliver** in the sky.

“It’s almost dark, Deb. We have to land,” Gene Russo, her local Search and Rescue contact, insisted.

SPICED - Compelling Dialogue (Inner/ Spoken)



Deb squinted against the setting sun; her eyes burned with fatigue. They'd been at it for hours, but she couldn't give up. Not yet.

"All the other choppers have landed, Deb. **This is too dangerous.** Besides, **do you really think your spotlight's going to find a snow-covered bus** on the side of the mountain with all these trees?"

"Five more minutes. That's all I'm asking."

A metallic glint pierced through a thick carpet of snow- packed spruce.

"There! I saw something." Deb's adrenaline raced as she shoved the steering bar to the right and down, using the foot pedals to maintain control.

"Holy crap, Lansing. What are you doing?" Gene shouted, holding on to his seat harness. **"You trying to get us killed?"**

SPICED – Deep Point of View (Character)

He [Russo] didn't understand. The bird knew exactly what Deb wanted, and she didn't leave people behind to die. Not after Afghanistan. She had enough ghosts on her conscience. She tilted the chopper forward and came around again, sidling near the road toward Taos Ski Valley where the church bus had been headed before it had vanished.



SPICED – Powerful Verbs, etc.



She **dipped** the chopper, **scouring** the terrain with the spotlight. A metallic flash **pierced** her gaze once again. “Gene, did you see that? Just south?”

The gray-faced spotter **shook** his head. “No, I’m too busy trying not to **puke** all over your windows.” He **swallowed** deeply and adjusted his microphone. “Could you **fly** this thing steady for a while?”

SPICED – Specificity (including senses)



Gene groaned. “Deb, I know you’re used to Denver terrain, but you can’t treat the **Sangre de Cristo Mountains** this way. These **gullies and drafts can buffet a chopper**, especially in some of the gorges. Your lift will disappear, and you’ll fly into the mountain.”

A peak rose toward them, and Deb **pulled up on the collective control stick**. The Bell followed her lead easily, but the sun was gone now. The near-total darkness made flying treacherous. The moon was the only thing making the deadly terrain remotely visible outside the spotlight’s range.

“At least **there aren’t Stingers or RPGs shooting** at us,” she said.

SPICED - Ending Hooks (And Openings) aka Surprises!



The chopper touched down, and Deb jumped to the snow-packed ground, ignoring the cold around her. For now, she had people to save. As Deb and Gene yanked out the sled to transport the wounded, two men ran toward her, one whose forehead was caked with dried blood.

“Please, we need help. Some of the kids are hurt bad. They need a hospital.”

Deb scanned the inside of the chopper. How many could she fit and safely make it back? If she left equipment behind, she could carry someone extra. Her boss would be furious she'd taken the risk, but she'd worry about her job later.

What do you know about Deb?



Emotions: Your Most Powerful Ammunition

- A writer's power is in their ability to evoke an emotional response in the reader.
- Make the reader FEEL something.
 - Joy, sorrow, empathy, sympathy, disgust, fear, love, passion, anticipation, dread...

Show, Don't Tell Emotions

Watch Out

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



Now Your Turn: Exercise - Show, Don't Tell Emotion

- Write down 3 powerful childhood memories
- Write down 1-2 powerful emotions that event made you feel.
- Choose 1 emotion listed.
- Write a few sentences **SHOWING** this emotion, without using the word (or a form of the word)



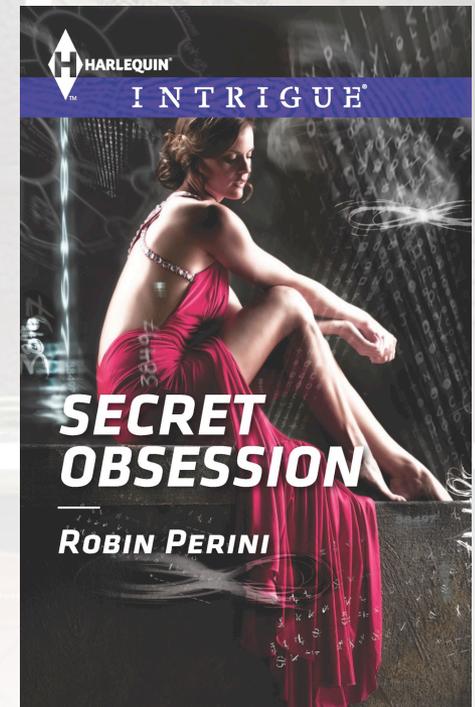
Emotions

- **Evoking Emotions without using emotion words...**
- **How can you do it? S-P-I-C-E-D**



SPICED - SECRET OBSESSION

- SPICED in a single scene from Secret Obsession – Harlequin Intrigue, August 2014
- Desperate to keep a precious secret, the only woman to survive an uncatchable serial killer, must count on her murdered fiancé’s best friend—a brilliant and deadly ex-Marine—to save her from the killer’s vicious obsession.



SPICED – Image-making and Picture-forming words



The diner was dingy, grimy and dirty. He pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the chair down before carefully sitting in the booth.

Alessandra had run, but he would have her. Soon.

He shifted in his seat. His feet clung to the sticky floor and he grimaced. Carefully using two fingers, he opened the menu then couldn't bear to hold the germ-infested plastic in his hands. He rubbed the table with two napkins to protect his skin from touching the filth.

SPICED - Compelling Dialogue (Inner/ Spoken)



“Are you going to order or keep cleaning?” A young woman with streaked blue hair and a tattoo on her neck stared down at him, chomping her gum.

He focused on the table, gripping his trousers. **She was rude, but she was probably rude to everyone.** He should ignore the urge. He had more important work to do.

“Come on, buddy. **Either order or get out. I ain’t got all day.**”

He pasted a smile on his face, but inside, his head throbbed, pounding at his temples. **“Coffee. Three sugars. Cream. Not creamer, cream. The kind that comes from cows.”**

“**Freak,**” she muttered [...]

SPICED – Powerful Verbs, etc.



The waitress practically dropped the cup on the table. Coffee **sloshed** over the edge. She didn't even bother to wipe it down. She **sashayed** away to another booth where a smiling young man winked at her.

They **ignored** him. They always **ignored** him.

She wouldn't **ignore** him for long.

Abandoning the coffee, he stood and walked out the door. He took a half dozen steps and waited, an alley situated **strategically** behind him.

The girl ran out of the coffee shop. "You can't leave without paying!" she **shouted**.

"And you need to learn some manners."

SPICED – Specificity (including senses)



“I don’t think so, girl.” With a smile, he slipped a knife from his pocket. “You’re very rude,” he whispered, **pressing the blade against her side**. “You must be taught a lesson.” With a quiet move he slit her shirt on the side and flicked the sharp knife through a layer of skin.

She opened her mouth, but before she could scream he covered her lips with his hand. He **pressed her against the brick wall**. “I won’t be ignored,” he said softly. “Or dismissed.” He drew the knife around **her torso, positioned the blade between her ribs and shoved it in**.

She tried to scream, tried to bite him. “Don’t bother,” he said softly. “You’re bleeding inside. You’ll be dead soon.”

SPICED – Deep Point of View (Character)



“With practiced ease he slid his knife through her dress, baring her chest. He didn’t look on her tattooed curves with desire. Just disgust.

He dragged his blade across the tainted pale skin of her belly, then stopped. She wasn’t worthy of him or his attention. Marred with drawings and piercings.

Alessandra Cummings had none of those. Alessandra Cummings was perfect.

She’d run from him, though.

“What a disappointment. He’d forgiven her the slight twice before, but this time she would have to prove herself worthy of him.

SPICED - Ending Hooks (And Openings) aka Surprises!



He stared down at the woman's body, then at his hands, bloody and uncovered. He tugged out a vial from his pocket and **sprinkled the body with the concentrated accelerant he'd created.**

The strike of a match and her body was engulfed in flames. He tugged his coat's cashmere collar around his neck and slipped down the alley before rounding the corner.

Behind him someone shouted.

Sirens screamed, but he didn't care.

Archimedes had a seduction to plan.

What EMOTION does it evoke?



ACTIVATE: Openings and Application of SPICED

- Set the tone of your story
 - Set reader expectations
 - Hook them in!
 - Now...apply SPICED!
-
- Exercise: It was a cold and rainy day. Someone is walking down the street going home for the evening.



Secret Obsession (August 2014)

Specificity

Power Words

Imagery

Compelling
Dialogue

End Hooks

Deep POV

The **sting** of frozen rain **pricked** Lyssa Cafferty's cheeks, **another attack she couldn't prevent.** She hurried from the **L station toward her small Chicago apartment.** **If only she could pull her hood over her head, duck down and avoid the **piercing needles of ice** on her face, but then she'd lose her peripheral vision.**

She couldn't afford to allow comfort to trump safety.

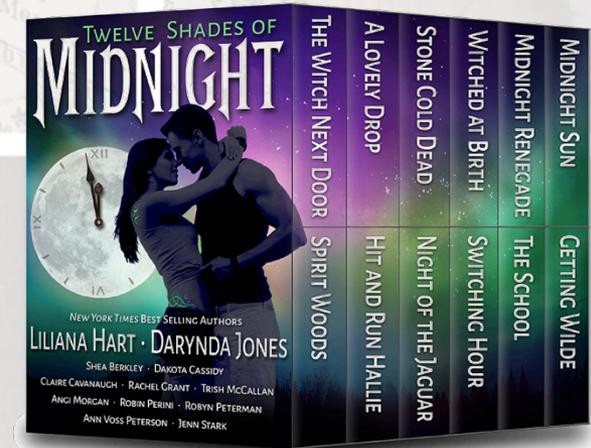
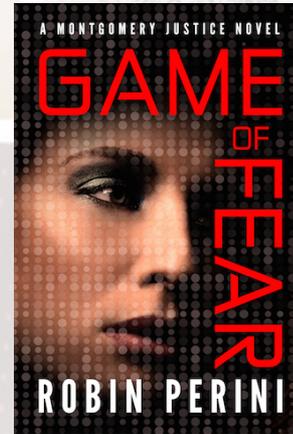
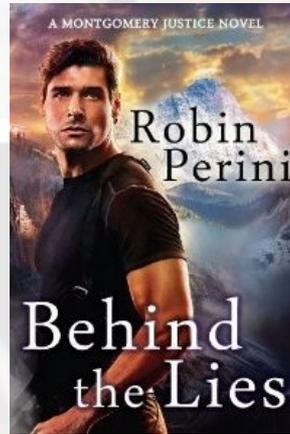
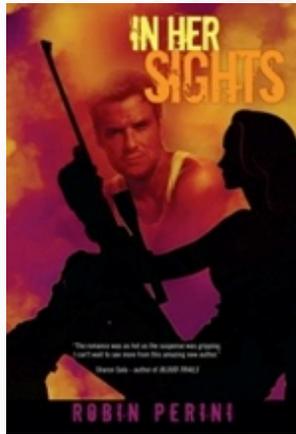
Not now. Not ever.

FINAL WORD

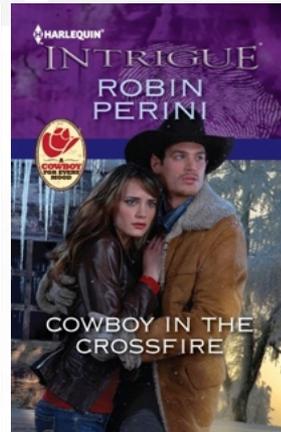
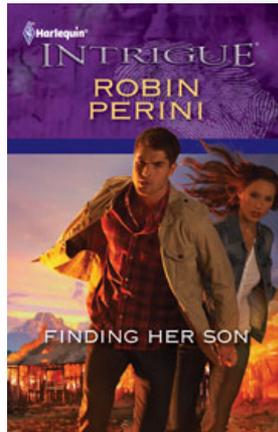
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- **C**ompelling Dialogue (Inner/Spoken)
- **E**nding Hooks (And Openings) aka Surprises!
- **D**eep Point of View



Q&A and Drawing



• www.robinperini.com



Also Coming in 2014 from Harlequin Intrigue – **Christmas Justice** (December)

Coming In August– The GAME: GAME OF FEAR (On Amazon, Itunes and Google Play

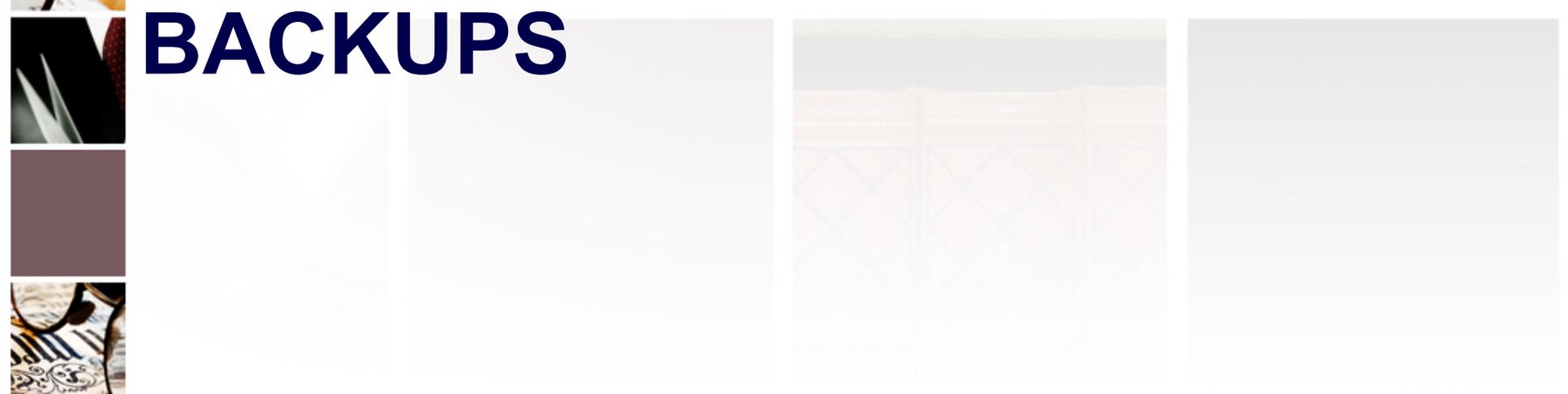


Coming In August– The GAME: GAME OF FEAR (On Amazon , Itunes and Google Play





BACKUPS



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.

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.

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."

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.