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April 2016

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## Letter from the President

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### **What is a Spotlight Chair?**

The NTRWA Spotlight Chair helps to build a sense of community within our organization by helping members get to know each other a little better via both newsletter and in-person interviews.

### **Responsibilities:**

- Create a list of twelve to twenty interview questions.
  - Time: about 20 minutes just one time since you can use the same questions for the entire year of interviews
- Personally invite ten members to step into the Spotlight. Get their contact information and schedule their Spotlight months for Jan-Oct. No Spotlights are done in November and December.

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- Time: 5-15 minutes at one or two meetings.

- Send the questions to the designated Spotlight each month, compile their answers into an interview format, and send to the newsletter editor

- Time: about 15 minutes per month

- Present a Spotlight interview at the January thru October meetings.

- Time: about 5 minutes

**Time Investment:**

Minimal. This Chair position doesn't require attendance at board meetings. But attend anyway because they're a great way to learn more about the business of writing.

**How this position allows you to serve the membership:**

Spotlight builds a sense of community. It's just easier to talk and laugh and learn with people we feel we know a little better.

**How this position allows you to serve the individual member being interviewed:**

Stepping into the NTRWA Spotlight helps a writer hone skills for both print and in-person interviews in a safe and welcoming environment. That can translate into smoother, easier interviews in other venues down the road.

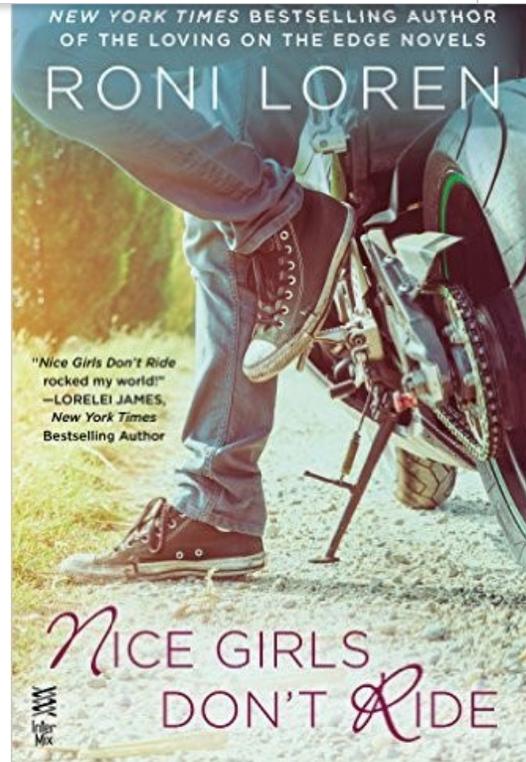
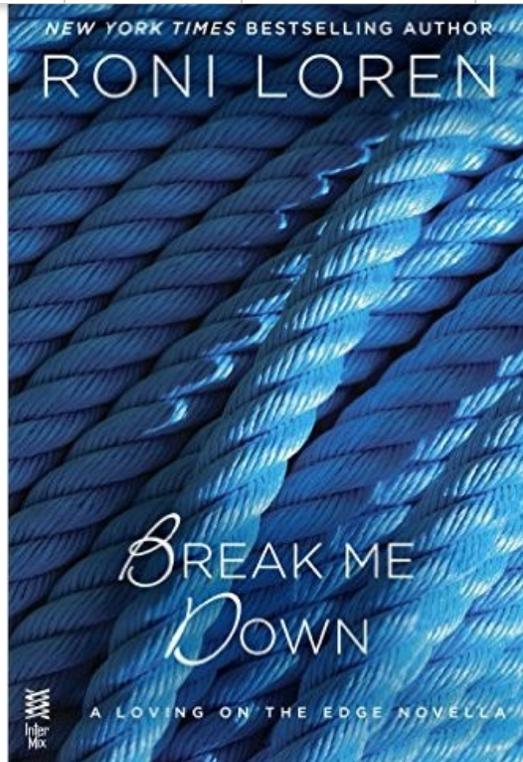
**How this position serves you, the Spotlight Chair:**

Being Spotlight Chair has real benefits. Developing a greater understanding of the interview process from both sides will serve you well as you grow and advance in your career as a writer. Some people are born with the gift of being at ease speaking before groups. Most aren't. Serving as Spotlight Chair allows you to hone your public speaking skills and increase your confidence in a comfortable, welcoming environment. Remember, you can make money simply by writing a great book and putting it out there, but you can make MORE money by writing a great book and putting yourself out there with it.

If you're interested in serving as the 2016 Spotlight Chair, see Angi. It'll be a worthwhile step on your author's journey.

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Congratulations to Roni Loren! She's a double finalist in the RITA for Break Me Down (Erotic Romance) and Nice Girls Don't Ride (Romance Novella)!

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The following article appeared in the March 2016 issue of *romANTICS*, the newsletter of the Toronto Romance Writers, Susan Haire, editor. It may be reused by RWA chapters with appropriate credit to the author and chapter. Permission form is on file with the editor.

## When Characters Change Their Minds

By Cara Lauren

I have spent so much time with my characters, both in and out of story. They are with me when I write, remind me of their presence when something in my life reminds me of themselves, and reveal their unique nuances when I am still and quiet.

Such was the case during the months of writing *High Tide*, book #1 of the three book trilogy of the TIDE series, when one lead character changed his mind, thus forever altering the course of the story.

I had to listen, had to re-examine the entire storyboard from start to finish. If this were true, his own arc and trajectory would reshape. The characters closest to him would equally be affected, albeit in different ways. *The story would change.*

And that was my biggest fear.

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what if my character was just being thick, indecisive? What if he was reacting to something I wrote, and in time, would agree with my choices and fall back in step with his initial actions and decisions? How would I be able to test his authenticity?

Like so many authors I knew, I was on a course to completion. I had a goal in mind, a time line, and didn't want to disappoint my potential readers with an unnecessary delay. I spent time simply listening, and observed my character to ensure what he showed me was real. And when I knew with certainty that this *was* the story, I got to work.

In full acceptance, I am writing with the new information he provided. There is no longer the need to question the direction of the story, for, in my belief, the muse of writing works as a conduit somewhere between divine inspiration and free will. Having internalized this, I know I'm serving the story well, and it will be done when it is done.

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*Cara is based in Toronto, Canada and holds a B.A. in English Literature & Film Scriptwriting. High Tide, her first feature-length novel, is an aquatic love story with strong spiritual and environmental themes. This is book #1 in the TIDE series. Please visit her website at CaraLauren.com, on Facebook at CaraLaurenAuthor and on Twitter at @WriterCara.*

### **4 Tips for Setting Up Your International Amazon Author Central Pages**



**By Marcy Kennedy, @MarcyKennedy**

***Part of the Indie Author Series***

Last month, I walked you through the [6 Steps for Setting Up Your Amazon Author Page](#). In that article, I talked exclusively about your author profile on Amazon.com, but Amazon sells books all over the world. While setting up our author page on Amazon.com is the most important (because that's where we're likely to sell the most books), we shouldn't overlook our author pages elsewhere.

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You might be thinking, *Why do I want to take the time to do that for non-English speaking countries?*

The answer is simple. English is the most common second language in the world. Even if English isn't the primary language of Germany or India or China, many people living in those countries still speak it, read it, or are trying to learn. Creating an author page on international sites gives us a leg up over authors who only bother to update their Amazon.com page.

Because you'll want to add the same information as you did for your Amazon.com author page, I won't go over all of that again. You can read my previous article for details. What I'm going to focus on in this article are the unique things to keep in mind when we're updating our pages on the international sites.

### ***Tip #1 – How to Find International Amazon Author Central Sites***

Currently, there's no centralized list of Amazon Author Central sites, so the first thing we need to do is explore a little. Searching for sites is a two-step process.

Google the Amazon site for the particular country you're interested in. For example, I might type "Amazon France" into my search bar.

This lets you know if Amazon has a site in that country, but what you're really looking for here is the little country code that comes after **www.amazon** in the search results. For France, it's **fr**.

The URL for all Author Central sites begins like this...

<https://authorcentral.amazon>.

So once you have the country code, you add it like this...

<https://authorcentral.amazon.fr/gp/landing?>

And that's where you'll sign in to create your author page.

Not all countries currently have Author Central, but more and more are appearing all the time. If you can't find an Author Central site for a specific country (I'm looking at you Canada), just wait. It will probably appear in the not-too-distant future.

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Here are a few sites to get you started:

<http://authorcentral.amazon.co.uk>

<http://authorcentral.amazon.fr>

<http://authorcentral.amazon.de>

<http://authorcentral.amazon.co.jp>

### ***Tip #2 – How to Read International Amazon Author Central Sites***

Remember how we talked about these sites being targeted at non-English speakers? That creates a snag for those of us who don't speak multiple languages.

Thankfully, technology gives us two ways around it:

(A) Keep your Amazon.com Author Central page open so you can compare. For the most part, the sites are all the same structurally, so you'll know what it's asking for even if you can't read all the words.

(B) Use [Google Translate](#) or download [Google Chrome](#) (which comes with a built-in translator) to use as your browser while you create your pages.

These won't be perfect, but they'll be enough to allow you to easily fill in your author pages.

### ***Tip #3 – Some Other Countries Will Want You to Create a New Account***

Some countries will allow you to sign in with the same email and password you used when you created your Amazon.com account, and some countries will require you to set up a new Amazon account with them. If your regular Amazon email and password won't work, it just means you need to start from the ground up with a new account.

### ***Tip #4 – Don't Think You're Doing Something Wrong If You Can't Find All the Same Features***

Strangely enough, not all international sites are created equal. Some won't allow you to connect your blog. Some won't allow you to upload pictures. If you can't find a particular feature, it's probably not because you're blind. It's probably because it doesn't exist on that specific site. The key with the international Amazon author pages is to fill out what you're offered and not worry about the rest.

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When you find a site that doesn't allow you to connect your blog, make sure you include your website address somewhere. Along with claiming your books, this is the most important thing. This is all about providing readers with a way to find more of your books and to form a relationship with you.

Good luck!

*Marcy Kennedy is a suspense and speculative fiction writer who believes fantasy is more real than you think. Alongside her own writing, Marcy works as a freelance fiction editor and teaches classes on craft and social media through WANA International. She's also the author of the Busy Writer's Guides series of books. You can find her blogging about writing and about the place where real life meets science fiction, fantasy, and myth at [marcykennedy.com](http://marcykennedy.com).*

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social Media is important to a writer's world. Complete the social media form <http://ntrwagreatexpectations.blogspot.com/p/ntrwa-social-media-form.html> and get connected with other NT members.

## **FOLLOW ON TWITTER**

Let us know if you have a hashtag (#) specific to promoting North Texas authors. Share other hashtags on our loop or with the hashtags below.

#TXauthors

#ntrwa-gecontest

#dara-ntrwa-pals

Others:

#WhiteHatHeroes (Angi Morgan)

#chickswagger (Brynley Bush, Jerrie Alexander, Kym Roberts, Mia London)

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## **MINUTES from MARCH**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

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A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, March 19, 2016 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President and the Secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:50 a.m. The minutes for the February 20, 2016 meeting were approved.

#### **OFFICER REPORTS:**

##### **President: Suzan Butler reported:**

- Open positions:
  - Spotlight Chair
  - Membership Chair
  - Hospitality for the last six months of the year

##### **President-Elect: Kim Miller reported:**

- No Report

##### **Secretary: Lisa Fenley reported:**

- The February 20, 2016 meeting minutes were approved and filed for audit.

##### **Treasurer: Jen FitzGerald reported:**

- The Treasurer's report will be sent out and filed for audit.

##### **Program Director: Amanda McMurrey reported:**

- Today's Meeting:
  - **Amy Atwell: Launching Your Book: A Survival Guide for Before, During, and After**

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- April's Meeting:

- Write like a Winner...or Brainstorm like a Boss?

**Website Director:**

- If you want to post information to the website, please contact Jen FitzGerald.

**COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:****Membership Director: Open Position. Jen FitzGerald presented:**

- Membership renewals ended February 29th.
- Please renew your membership.
- 69 members to date.

**Communications Director: Audra Lewandowski reported:**

- Report submitted:
  - Send information / articles / photos for inclusion in the newsletter to [newsletter@NTRWA.org](mailto:newsletter@NTRWA.org) by March 28, 2016.
  - Social Media—please complete the profile information for your social media formats to share with the chapter.

**PAN Liaison: Chrissy Szarek was not present:**

- No report.

**PRO Liaison: Clover Autrey reported:**

- If you are not a PRO member, please see Clover for application information.
- PRO membership allows you on the NT PRO loop, where training and information are

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provided to our chapter PRO members.

**Two Step Conference: Amanda McMurrey reported:**

- The link is open to sign up for the conference. Please sign up by March 25, 2016.
- 45 people are registered to date.
- Margie Lawson is our speaker and it's a full day program. Members only. \$25 to pay for lunch, the rest of the program is covered for members. The event caps at 125 people.
- All registrants will received a confirmation e-mail listing all you need to bring to the workshop: Bring 5 different colored highlighters and 5 chapters, typed, in a binder.

**Great Expectations: Lisa Fenley reported:**

- Report filed:
  - The 2016 Great Expectations Contest closed with 131 entries.
  - Gross proceeds: \$3,705; Projected net proceeds: \$2,625
  - 426 entries judged
  - The new judge for the Mainstream with Romantic Elements category committed to an April 8, 2016 completion date. We will announce winners at that time.

**Carolyn Contest: Jen FitzGerald reported:**

- Report filed.
  - 200+ judges
  - 115 entries
  - \$2720 gross
  - \$107.11 Paypal fees
  - April 20<sup>th</sup> hoping to have all scores returned.

**Hospitality: Regina Richards reported:**

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- Requested a hospitality chair for the last six months of the year.
- Faith Stencil will assume Hospitality duties for the months of April through July.

**Writing Incentives: Chrissy Szarek was not present. Jen FitzGerald reported:**

- Top 5 Edited Pages: Jerrie Alexander-536, Carolyn Rae Williamson-516, Tish Sanders-375, Roni Loren-265, Cindy Dees-250
- Top 5 Written Pages: Clover Autrey-320 pages, Alex Haughton-200 pages, Krystal Shannon-82, Sarah Cannon- 80 Jen FitzGerald-53

**Bylaws: Angi Morgan presented:**

- No Report.

**Spotlights: Open Position:**

- No Report.

**Unfinished Business:**

- No unfinished business to report.

**New Business:**

- No new business to report.

Next Business Meeting: 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, April 16, 2016 at La Hacienda. The meeting adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

*Submitted electronically by Lisa Fenley.*

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## THE PERILS OF BEING PUBLISHED - Pacing...Yourself and Your Book

*by Gerry Bartlett*

I signed a contract to finish three books this year. It's what I wanted: a deal with a New York publisher, an editor and a deadline that would hold my feet to the fire. I work well under pressure. Or at least that's what I told myself and my agent when I proposed this project. Now that it's too late to back out, I've got to deliver. Oh, and finish book twelve in my vampire series that I promised my fans. I did want to do another novella or two on top of that. Self-publishing has proven to be both lucrative and fairly easy to do when I find the time for it.

Time, oh yeah. Now that I've come down to earth and actually looked at a calendar I realize that I may have promised more than I can deliver. I will have to give up some of the fun things that make my life worth living and actually treat my writing like a business for a change. So far I've stuck to a pretty tight writing schedule. I admit it hasn't been easy. But I'm producing pages fairly fast. That's the good news.

Now for the bad news. What I'm writing is different from my old reliable paranormals. I have been cranking those out since 2005. I know those characters inside and out. And my paranormal world offers many chances for action that keep the books flowing fairly well. My hero and heroine can even make love in chapter one and no one is surprised or disgusted. I've built in some enemies that I can always bring into the stories and lots of fun secondary characters to provide humor when I need it. Do you see how this makes it easier to write yet another book in my series?

But this new series is a different breed. I'm writing straight contemporary now.

It's set in Texas which is great because I was born and raised here. I have the Texas flavor in my bones. The proposal I sold with made my new editor go "Yee haw!" She loved it. But I'm having a bit of a problem keeping up the pace I set in those first few chapters. My beloved critique group isn't helping. Here's what last week's session sounded like: "Nothing happens in this chapter." "Why is this scene here?" "It started dragging here." "Don't write about a horse unless you've been on one yourself." You see why I stopped dead and wept over my keyboard?

Now I'm the first to admit that pacing is everything. I won't read a book that bores me. I just got rid of a full sack of books on my shelves that had bookmarks stuck in them around page fifty. I didn't finish the books. I'd bought the book in

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the first place so I couldn't blame the concept. The back cover copy had convinced me that the characters were the type I liked to read about. So obviously the pace had slowed and I lost interest. My time is too valuable to waste slogging through a book that drags. Why was it dragging? Was there too much internal dialogue? Angst about decision making? I hate that. Or the eternal backstory. People rehashing what happened in high school. Who cares if he dumped you at prom? If you haven't lived since then, you're a loser and I don't want to read about you. Move on!

Or maybe there was so much instant chemistry between our hero and heroine that I wanted to scream. Where's the tension? If we're so instantly attracted, why are we waiting to consummate/get together? Oh, wait, there was that stupid misunderstanding at the come-out ball. Please just talk it out. They don't, at least not with each other. Argh. The bookmark goes in and I move on.

Back to that critique group. We had a huge debate about what is considered action. It doesn't have to be a murder, apocalypse or attack by killer bees. Does it? I claimed it could be an event that moves the story along such as a phone call that gives the heroine important information. Maybe she breaks up with her boyfriend. Or rides a horse for the first time. Seriously, she doesn't have to fall off and break her leg for this to be action, does she? It was a big deal to her, a city gal. Good enough for me. Not for SOME people.

We finally agreed that the important thing to keep your pacing going was to keep the reader interested. Okay, what would do that? Loading the dishwasher? No. The hero coming up behind her and sliding his hand under her blouse while the heroine is doing that? Maybe. Developing the relationship can keep the reader with you. Describing the drapes in the drawing room? Not a chance. The fact that the hero has on jeans? No. But if those jeans are molding a muscular thigh. Hmm. Maybe. Humor can speed things along too. Get your reader laughing and they'll be happy to read more. Maybe the heroine was so flustered loading that dishwasher that she puts in the wrong soap and bubbles fill the kitchen. And if the bubbles come in handy for an erotic scene? So much the better.

Too much of anything can bore your reader. Endless sex scenes, unless you're writing erotica and know that's what your reader is looking for, can make anyone start to skim, looking for story. Describing the house, clothes, bedroom, will take your reader out of the story unless it's essential that the reader know how easy it is for your heroine to get out of that slinky dress. Conversations about what happened yesterday won't drive the story forward, especially if your reader was there when the event occurred. Your heroine keeping a secret about what she did yesterday can add tension. Her dread and the possible repercussions from the big

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reveal can keep pages turning.

So what did I learn about pacing? First, I'm writing fast and doing two books at once. So I've found it necessary to finish a chapter then let it cool off for a day or two before I go back and try to see with an objective eye if it is tight and moves fast. I tend to be repetitious. It's an old bad habit and cutting some of my repeats does help move things along. So I'll work on one book for a day, let that chill out while I work on the other one. This may not be for you. But it's always a good idea to let your pages simmer for a while before you declare them finished.

Of course my favorite pacing technique is the ever popular cliff hanger. I end every chapter with a question or hint that something is about to happen that could change everything. The reader has to read on in the next chapter to find out what that will be. Is it the danger a secret will be exposed? Does she hear footsteps?

Does the bedroom door open? Writing fast, you might end a chapter and then decide to take that last paragraph and move it to the beginning of the next one.

See how that works for you. It's all about keeping the reader engaged so she won't stick that bookmark in there and heave it into a sack.

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*Gerry Bartlett is the nationally bestselling author of the Real Vampires series. The book that is making her go crazy now is REAL VAMPIRES AND THE VIKING. She hopes to have it ready for release before Valentine's Day but don't hold her to that. Go to her website <http://gerrybartlett.com> for the latest news on her releases or visit her on Facebook or twitter.*

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Can you name this hunk? ;)

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### **A Note from the Newsletter Editor:**

Please note photos included in the newsletter are provided by the members. Any photos you'd like to include can be sent to [newsletter@ntrwa.org](mailto:newsletter@ntrwa.org). It is at the discretion of the newsletter editor as to which photos will be included in the newsletter. Thank you.

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