

ARENA

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Fantasy Magazine



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PROTAGONIST

The most important relationship you can develop in your story isn't between the characters, but between your protagonist and the reader.

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COMPETITION

We launch our writing competition. Would you like to win £100 and publication in this magazine? If so head on over to our website and enter

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WHO IS?

Our who is author this issue is a renowned author Andy Peloquin. We get under his skin and find out what makes him tick and what inspires him.

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What is Flash Fiction - A Piece of fiction considered short usually a few hundred words

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Any articles, advice or information for new and aspiring writers & artwork that is based on the fantasy genre we would consider any ORIGINAL artwork.

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Letter from the editor

Well, this is exciting this is our first ever Arena Fantasy Magazine. I want to thank you for taking a chance on this publication and I hope you gain a lot of valuable insight from it. It is jam-packed with goodies on the craft of writing and also introducing our Seasonal competition see more on **page 12**.



The reason why I created this Publication is I wanted to give up and coming authors a platform to show their handiwork to the general public. I am in the same category and any publicity is good publicity! We are always on the lookout for content to feature in our magazine so if you have something send it in.

In this issue 'How to establish your protagonist voice' on **Page 4**, they say that knowing your protagonist inside and out will only help you relate with your reader. I have also put one of my stories for you to read and I would appreciate your feedback that is on **Page 14**.

Going forward I will also be on the lookout for other authors to spotlight, This issue we have a chat with Andy Peloquin. **Page 18**. We also have a very handy pro's and con's guide on Traditional publishing versus self-publishing that is on **Page 30**. If you would like to see anything else in this publication going forward please do not hesitate to contact me on Editor@arenafantasymagazine.co.uk

Again many thanks for reading and keep writing
Kind Regards

Andy Hesford | The Editor



How to establish your protagonist's voice Building trust with your reader

The most important relationship you can develop in your story isn't between the characters, but between your protagonist and the reader. The reader needs to empathize with your protagonist and understand his struggle in order to feel connected with your story.

But how exactly do you create a connection between the reader and the protagonist?

In this passage, we're going to dive headfirst into how to build trust with your reader through creating a strong and consistent protagonist's voice.

There was an absurd amount of buzz words in that sentence, so let's also define what we're talking about first. Ready?

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE NARRATOR AND THE PROTAGONIST

Sometimes the lines blur, but there's a marked difference between a narrator and a protagonist. Here's a brief definition of each:

WHAT IS A NARRATOR?

Simply put, the narrator tells the story.

Here's a helpful guide on understanding what the narrator does:

This may surprise you but there's actually more than one type of narrator. According to Stephanie Orges, there are seven types of narrators including:

1. **The Protagonist** – The story revolves around this person.
2. **The Secondary Character** – The character who is close to the protagonist, but somewhat removed.
3. **The Detached Observer** – This narrator is completely removed from the action and relays the story without personal opinion.

4. **The Commentator** – This narrator adds personal opinion and insight and becomes his own "storyteller" character.
5. **The Interviewer** – This narrator exists between detached and commentator. This narrator focuses on the characters with limited commentary, although his opinion may be inferred based on the way he chooses to tell the story.
6. **The Secret Character** – This narrator appears to be similar to the commentator but then reveals himself to be a pivotal character in the story. He may refer to himself in third person until the big, shocking reveal.
7. **The Unreliable Narrator** – This narrator appears to be reliable until readers can detect, through interaction with other characters, that the narrator cannot be trusted.

WHAT IS A PROTAGONIST?

The protagonist acts within the story. The story is about this person, even if he isn't the main character. However, as a general rule, the protagonist is the main character.

ARE THEY ONE IN THE SAME?

Sometimes, but not always.

Very helpful, huh?

While the protagonist is usually the main character, the protagonist is not always the narrator. This is connected to your chosen point of view (i.e. first, second, third objective, third limited omniscient, and third omniscient).

Sometimes, the writer is the narrator—especially when written in second and third person.

For the purposes of this post, let's say you've chosen to use the protagonist as your narrator. How do you now create a voice that makes the reader feel connected to the protagonist?

I thought you'd never ask. Let's first define *voice*.

WHAT IS VOICE?

Voice is more than just word choice. It includes the protagonist's outlook and attitude, the way he chooses to assert his opinion, how he reacts to the world around him. It should be uniquely identifiable.

If you've chosen to write in first person as your protagonist narrator, the voice is active. You can directly relate your protagonist's voice to the reader as if the two are talking face to face.

If your book is written in third person limited omniscient, the voice is passive, and we (the readers) only catch glimpses of it through the protagonist's interactions with others and the world around him.

Of the two, it's infinitely easier to establish a clear voice in first person as a protagonist narrator.

WAYS TO ESTABLISH YOUR PROTAGONIST'S VOICE

Now, let's take a look at the most important ways to create a connection with the reader through the protagonist's voice.

MAKE YOUR PROTAGONIST INSTANTLY COMPELLING

It's not always necessary to like the protagonist, but it is necessary to have one that is clearly defined.

A character should have clear motivations.

That's not to say that you will always root for the protagonist to win. Here's a mantra to remember: empathy over sympathy. Your reader may not like the character, but help him understand the character's motivation.

Here's an example of what I'm talking about:

Wile E. Coyote is a compelling, although maybe unlikeable, protagonist. The story is about his fruitless pursuits to capture the Road Runner.

While you may not want the Coyote to actually capture the Road Runner you still understand what motivates him. You may even admire him for never giving up, and you can relate to that experience (empathy).

GET IT RIGHT IN YOUR FIRST SENTENCE

No pressure, but in a first-person narrative, the first sentence establishes the tone of your novel and hints at character clues about the protagonist. This is also your opportunity to set the pace. You're not just setting up the story, introducing characters, or establishing scenes, you're also speaking for the first time in your character's voice (if written in first person).

Let's take a look at two fantastic first sentences that firmly set voice for the rest of the novel:

Call me Ishmael.
— Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*

I'm pretty much fucked.
— Andy Weir, *The Martian*

Infuse it with personality.

The personality doesn't have to be bubbly, it can be brooding or self-deprecating. Your protagonist's voice should match who they are, not necessarily who they present themselves to be in the world you've created.

How do you show personality? You show it through phrasing, how the protagonist presents the story and himself within it, and how he tries to relate with the reader.

SPEAK DIRECTLY TO YOUR READER

Focus on your reader's "presence." As a writer, you should always have in mind the person who will read your story. As a protagonist narrator, you have an incredible opportunity to speak directly to the reader.

So, how will your protagonist view the reader? Does he talk to him as a trusted friend who knows some of the facts? Or, as a stranger on a train that he'll never meet again so he feels comfortable sharing a little too much? Perhaps the protagonist is talking to his grandkids, which is a completely different perspective.

Decide and define who your protagonist is speaking to. This will help you establish a line of trust with that reader.

SHOW GROWTH OR CHANGE

Your protagonist should change or grow within the story. Not doing so makes him completely unrelatable and, as a result, not trustworthy. Your protagonist shouldn't just react to events within the story, but also act.

Many stories end with a reflective tone that demonstrates a change of perspective for the narrator. Your reader will appreciate that arc.

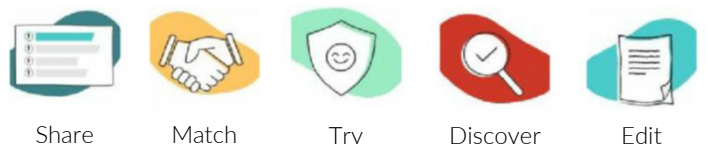
FINAL THOUGHTS

It's important to focus on establishing a strong relationship between your protagonist and your readers right away in order to build trust with your readers. Use these strategies, and you're well on your way!

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Summer Fiction Competition

To celebrate our launch we ran a competition via our website. We set a challenge and you did not disappoint.

We asked you to write about the following theme:- Before bed, you put your clock back one hour for daylight saving time. When you wake up, you realize you've gone back a lot more than one hour.

Congratulations to **Josie Lane** with her entry **Manic Monday**. She wins a feature and an annual subscription.

Do you have what it takes to win one of our quarterly competitions? Can you write about an image? If the answer is yes head to Page 12 to see what the requirements are for Septembers issue. To view full guidelines head to our website

<https://arenafantasymagazine.co.uk>

First Prize

Manic Monday

Josie Lane



Log – first two days from memory

Sunday 24th March 11 p.m. The night before

Finished watching repeat of *Stranger Things* on Netflix in my room. Went to the kitchen. Housemates Essie and Will were getting it on - she was sitting on his lap with her arms around his neck and giggling. They tried to be cool about it when I walked in. I grinned as I quickly poured a large glass of milk to give them some room. Will would have appreciated it though 'cos he's my best mate.

He called out as I was leaving. "Kian – did you get your phone screen fixed?"

"Yeah, picked it up this afternoon. Thanks for the recommendation - the shop did a good repair. That lady was a bit strange."

"Oh really? Didn't pay much notice to her."

I shrugged my shoulders and left.

Upstairs, Dan was holed up in his room on the PlayStation shouting obscenities at his party members. My fifth and final housemate, Lucy, knocked on my door around 11.30 p.m. She held up a tray of homemade chocolate cupcakes. Smelled buttery and fresh.

"Made these this afternoon."

"You angel. Can I save one for breakfast? Got to be up early to finish my assignment."

"Sure. I'll leave some in the cake tin – help yourself. Night, Kian."

"See you." I held her gaze for an extra second. I couldn't help myself. There was so much I loved about her. It wasn't her honey-coloured hair, dewy skin and hazel eyes alone. Lucy had this incredible nature – kind and always thinking of others. She didn't know how I really felt.

Set my phone alarm for 7 a.m. as it was going to be a long day. Little did I know *how* long.

Monday 18th March 7 a.m. When it happened

Had to hit snooze twice on my mobile. It takes forever to wake

me up. It was pretty bright in my bedroom. Sunlight was pouring in between cracks of the wooden blinds. I didn't bother opening them until I had a shower – a long one as it's the only way to clear my fuzzy head. Everyone was still in bed, but silence always helps me gather my thoughts. I've got to keep my scores up to pass my second year in Animation. In the kitchen, I put two teaspoons of instant Americano into the mug. Rocket fuel, I know. But it works. I looked around for Lucy's cupcakes but couldn't find them. Odd. Abi (who was in our halls last year but doesn't live with us) walked into the kitchen, clutching her phone. She was wearing an oversized Isle of Wight Festival t-shirt. I recognised it straightaway as belonging to Will. I stared at her. I mean most lads would 'cos she's fit, but it was like some kind of crazy déjà-vu.

I was reliving the same scene.

Except in that instance, I had been looking for two paracetamols from Lucy's cupboard to numb the effects of a hangover. Abi had also strolled into the kitchen without a care in the world.

"You've just spent the night with Will, and he's begged you not to tell Ellie?" I said in my current scenario.

She looked incredulous. "How did you know—"

"What day is it?"

"Er, Monday."

"No, the actual date."

"18th I think."

I snatched her mobile from her hand.

"What the hell, Kian?"

I glanced at the date on her phone. Sure enough, she was correct. "Fuck. This can't be right."

Abi protested. "You're scaring me."

A second later, Will walked in rubbing his eyes. I predicted he was going to lean against the door frame. He did. "What's going on Abi?"

"Kian is acting all weird. Saying strange shit."

He

"Except in that instance, I had been looking for two paracetamols from Lucy's cupboard to numb the effects of a hangover."

froze when he looked across and saw me. "Look mate, I know this looks bad – me and Abi...It just happened."

"You're also about to ask me not to tell Ellie."

I knew she had gone home for a long weekend.

"Yeah. It's kind of awkward."

"I don't care," I said. I thrust the phone in front of his face.

"Look at this and tell me something weird is going on with the date."

"It says Monday 18th."

"But it isn't. It should say Monday 25th!"

"You've lost me," he said.

"Last night – when it was Sunday 24th – you and Ellie were here in the kitchen, all over each other."

Abi cut in sourly. "Will?"

"Kian – I don't know what you're talking about. I was with Abi. Ellie's away."

"Something's not right," I said. I ran upstairs to my room and checked my laptop. It clearly showed the same date: Monday 18th. I looked through my texts. The last one received was on Sunday 17th. I slumped on my bed and thoughts raced around my head. Maybe I had dreamt the events from yesterday?

I stayed in my room for the rest of the day and fell asleep at some point. I heard a knock on my door around 7 p.m. I ignored it at first but gave in when I heard Lucy begging me to let her in.

"Are you OK, Kian? Will says you freaked out this morning. Something about the wrong week."

I put my trust in Lucy. Told her everything. She nodded and listened.

"I guess I would feel like I was going crazy too," she said.

"You're under a lot of stress and anxious about your studies."

"Maybe. At least I now have an extra week to finish my assignment."

She tapped my arm playfully. "That's a bonus then!"

"Are you sure you didn't bake yesterday?"

"No, but I'll make some brownies tomorrow. How about that?"

"Perfect."

I set the alarm for 7 a.m. again.

Monday 18th March 7 a.m. Today

I looked at my mobile when I woke up. No change.

My mind and body seemed to separate themselves. Looking on the outside and in. No control over what was happening. I felt sick. I opened the blinds and a window. Birdsong and fresh air entered the room – tangible and real. I took a deep breath. I know I didn't imagine yesterday, in lost or real time. They weren't dreams. I paced up and down wondering what I was going to do. I waited on the landing. Sure enough, Abi padded through Will's doorway.

"Hi, Kian," she said casually.

I barely acknowledged her and waited until she reached the bottom of the stairs. I sneaked into Will's room.

"Are you awake?"

"What?" Will muttered.

I strode across the room and pulled up his blinds. "I need your help."

"Shit, Kian. What's going on?" Will sat up and looked around. He pointed to the moulded space next to him. "Ah mate, I can explain about Abi—"

"I need you to think about anything which was out of the ordinary in the past week."

"Like what?"

"Something inexplicable. What about an eclipse or small earthquake?"

"It's Bournemouth. No fault lines here. Chances of a tsunami are rare as we're about two miles away from the coast and above sea level."

"There's got to be something."

"You're sounding peculiar."

"That's because it is," I stressed.

Abi walked back in with a plate of toast and looked at us.

"What's going on?"

I ignored her and walked out.

I heard Will leap out of his bed and follow me into my room.

"Please don't say anything to Ellie."

I turned around and rolled my eyes. "Not interested in your complicated love life. I've got other things to worry about."

"You seem stressed. It was the same last year when you had

"My mind and body seemed to separate themselves. Looking on the outside and in. No control over what was happening."

your exams."

"Because somehow I've gone back a week in time, and I don't know why."

I wasn't surprised to see Will gawping at me. I shook my head in disbelief at my set of circumstances. But deep down I was terrified.

"Maybe you should ring the GP," he suggested.

"Yeah," I choked.

"I'm going to get Lucy."

I slumped onto the edge of the bed and slipped my head between my knees. Thought I was going to faint.

Lucy joined me. "Hey, Kian. What's up?"

"You won't believe me if I tell you."

"C'mon, start from the beginning."

I recounted my version of events. Again.

"I can see why you're feeling really anxious."

I sighed. "You don't believe me."

"I believe you're scared, and I know you pretty well enough to declare you aren't a liar."

"Maybe Will is right. Perhaps I should call the GP."

This time, Lucy took my hand and dropped her head to my shoulder. Her newly washed hair smelled of apples. I wanted to wrap my arms around her but resisted. Couldn't risk spoiling our friendship too.

I made an appointment to speak to a GP who called me back before lunchtime. I told him about my stress, omitting the bit about jumping back in time, of course. He was really understanding. Lucy offered to pick up the prescription and brought it back late afternoon.

"The doctor said it would take about two weeks to kick in," I said.

"Give it a chance. I'm here whenever you need me. You look really tired. Try and get some rest."

After she left, I stared in the mirror. Sure enough, there were grey smudges under my brown eyes. My pale complexion looked stark against my black hair.

I was exhausted and slept the rest of the day, waking up briefly to set the alarm once more.

Monday 18th March 7 a.m. No change

I put the phone back to factory settings and re-installed everything.

Monday 18th March 7 a.m. No change

I've started a tally of Mondays. I'm hoping the pills will be working in a fortnight. Something has to change. Surely...

Monday 18th March 7 a.m. Today

||||| ||||| |||||

The meds have numbed the edges of my fears, but they haven't improved my situation. Total despair. Chucked my phone against the wall. I heard it crack. I picked it up and spotted the chipped corner of the frame. Shit. I've only just had it repaired.

A thought entered my head. I hadn't considered it until now. I ran down the corridor and burst into Will's room, flicking on his light. I didn't bother with the blinds. "Will, wake up!"

"What the fuck?" Abi yelled.

"What's going on, Kian?" he mumbled.

"I know there's got to be a connection with the phone shop." Will look confused. "What has?" He propped himself up against the headboard next to Abi. His cheeks flushed. "About Abi—"

"Do you remember my screen got smashed last Monday in the kitchen when I returned from lectures in the afternoon?"

"Yeah, sure," Will said vaguely.

I continued. "I left it on the side. Half an hour later, I found it on the floor. It must have slipped off. You had just returned from your long weekend away and recommended that repair shop in town. I took it in on Tuesday. The woman said it would be ready the next day, but when I went back the shop was shut. A 'Closed' sign was up and a note stuck to the door to say it was closed due to sickness and to collect repairs on Sunday. I thought that was unusual because they wouldn't normally open for business on that day. I didn't question it since I was relieved to get my mobile back. I wished I had gone and bought another phone instead. Things could have been so different..."

Will scratched his head, "I'm sorry mate, but I'm not sure how I can help."

"Don't worry. I know what I need to do."

I caught the bus and headed into town. In my haste, I arrived an hour before the shop was due to open. I grabbed a take-away latte and took a stroll along the pier to clear my head, blurry from the anxiety tablet. I made a decision there and then to ditch them.

The navy sea was dead calm, just a few gentle breaks every so often. A seagull landed on the wooden railing and looked straight at me as if it was trying to read my thoughts. A black and beady eye connected with my own. It began to squawk, stabbing its head in my direction. A small gust of wind lifted its wings, and the bird hovered over my head. I shooed it away, but it pincered my finger with its beak.

"Fuckers," I shouted. I clipped its body with my hand. It finally retreated and flew off, screaming into the distance.

9.15 a.m.

With fifteen minutes to go before opening time, I returned to the shop and shifted my weight impatiently from one leg to the other. At 9.30 a.m. there wasn't a visible presence of anyone. I waited five more minutes and banged on the door. No answer. I cupped my face and peered inside. Nothing to see. I thumped harder the second time. I wasn't going to leave without getting answers. Eventually, a strip light powered up in the rear of the shop.

A figure seemed to drift towards the door. I couldn't see the person's feet. Creepy-like. A face appeared. Nearly jumped out of my skin. It was the woman that served me the first time. Her eyes glinted in the thin light.

"The meds have numbed the edges of my fears, but they haven't improved my situation. Total despair. Chucked my phone against the wall. I heard it crack"

"Open up," I said, lowering my voice an octave. No way was I leaving without answers. The lady was rooted to the spot, staring. "I'll call the police," I threatened.

She switched on another light, unbolted the lock and let me in. Followed her and kept my distance as she snaked her way around to the other side of the counter.

She was wearing some rank, cloying perfume, like rotten flowers. Her jet-black hair had been scraped back into a ponytail. I studied her face properly. It was hard to work out her age under the milky glow of the ceiling light. Death warmed up. Her skin was waxy and smooth with no wrinkles, but her eyes were lined and hooded. She tipped her head mockingly and her hooped, brassy earrings jangled. She spoke in a gravelly voice. "What do you want?"

I flashed my phone at her. "You repaired this last week. It had a cracked screen."

She sighed. "So, what's your problem? It's fixed, isn't it?"

I hesitated. What the hell could I say? She started picking nonchalantly at a loose piece of skin on her index finger, while she waited for me to speak. I noticed she had a bird's eye tattooed on the top of each hand. The inked charcoal shade matched the colour of her irises. A cold feeling washed over me.

"You put a curse on it."

She laughed. It was patronising and ridiculing.

"Remove whatever you did to it."

She wagged a crooked finger. "I can't stop it. Only you can. Ask your friend - he knows."

"Who?"

"The one who told you to come here."

Will.

She pinched my forearm. "You can't throw your phone away either. It won't make a difference."

I slapped her hand away. "Don't touch me, you witch."

I staggered out of the shop. Total disbelief. I caught the bus thinking about the million questions to ask my so-called best mate. It also dawned on me that Will must have sabotaged my mobile when I left it in the kitchen. I texted him to say I visited the shop and knew he had deliberately damaged my phone. I had another worrying thought. What the hell did she mean when she said I couldn't get rid of my mobile?

10.17 a.m.

I bolted through the front door when I got home, panting after running from the bus-stop.

Lucy emerged from the kitchen. "What's going on, Kian?"

"Have you seen Will?"

"He left a short while ago. Had a holdall with him and asked Dan to give him a lift."

"Did he say where he was going?"

"No, sorry."

"What's this about?" Lucy asked.

I didn't have the time or energy to tell her. Not today. I charged upstairs, two steps at a time. I turned Will's door handle. It was locked. Kicked the door in and ignored Lucy's protests from the bottom of the stairs. I rummaged through every drawer and inside his wardrobe. He had packed some clothing. Done a runner. Prick. I texted Dan to tell me where he had dropped off Will.

Lucy appeared. Her face fell when she saw the mess. "Have you and Will fallen out?"

I pointed to my phone. "He's the one, Lucy. He caused this." She crumpled her forehead. "I don't know what's going on with you guys, but this situation sounds serious. Maybe you should contact his parents, or the police—"

"No one will believe me. I'm sorry Lucy. I need to go to my room to think."

Dan texted me: Dropped Will to station.

My heart sank. Will's parents lived in Nottingham – if that was where he was headed. I wouldn't be able to make it on time. I had a thought. Let the day reset and grab Will first thing.

4.23 p.m.

Must have fallen asleep again. So tired all of the time.

Someone was shaking me.

"Kian...wake up."

I recognised the voice, and my eyes sprang open. Impulsively, I grabbed the front of Will's green hoodie. We crashed to the floor and wrestled for a couple of minutes. Managed to pin his arms with my knees and screamed into his face, "What did you do?"

"I'm sorry, I'm so sorry. Hear me out – please mate."

"I'm not your fucking mate. You've got a lot of explaining to do."

Will nodded. I released him. He sat upright, shuffled across to my desk and leaned against it for support.

"I went to the phone shop about two weeks' ago to get a new screen. There was this crazy looking woman serving—"

"The witch with the evil bird-eye tattoos."

"Yeah. You know how I like to talk. I said something about needing to fix the phone because I had one of the best weekends of my life. The one where I went on that paintball and go-karting trip near Bristol with some guys from the hockey team. I wanted to see the photos."

He paused as if he was expecting me to say something. I didn't.

"She asked me if I wanted to relive that experience. I joked and said: 'Why the hell not?' The witch locked the shop door and told me to follow her around the back with my mobile. I entered a tiny room with row upon row of small amber jars from the ceiling to the floor. While she was repairing my phone, I examined the bottles. They were filled with liquid and labelled in some ancient language, like Latin or something similar. She picked out three or four of the jars. They had rubber pipettes, and she squeezed a few drops from each into a marble pestle bowl on a small folding table. But this is where it gets sinister."

I leaned towards him.

"She pulled down this heavy red book, the size of a photo album from another shelf. It looked ancient, covered in gold italic inscriptions around the picture of a bird's eye. She opened it and rested my phone on one of the pages. She recited some verses as she stirred the solution. You're going

THE QUICK READ

The Purpose of Pen Names

A pen name, otherwise known as a pseudonym, is an assumed name that an author will publish under, rather than his or her real name.

Some of the most well-known, famous authors have used a pen name to conceal their identities. For instance, have you ever heard of Richard Bachman? Well, it's actually Stephen King, who has been known to write forwards in Bachman's books (how's that for tricky?). How about Robert Galbraith? Shockingly enough, that's really the master of the wizarding world, J.K. Rowling!

These are just a couple of examples of famous authors using pen names. A pen name becomes a sort of shield, allowing the author to conceal his or her identity, shake off any pre-conceived notions, internal or external, and to write freely in the genre of his or her choice.

As a general rule, most authors should publish under their legal, given name. If an author has written an exposé and must remain anonymous for professional reasons, a pen name is quite understandable. Otherwise critics tend to regard a pen name as an affectation and anachronistic. It also makes promotion difficult.

Today, we are going to delve into some of the various reasons an author might want to use this publishing tactic.

Same name – An author may use a pen name when their real name is either confused with another author or notable individual.

Avoid overexposure – Sometimes a pen name is exercised to avoid overuse. For example, let's say an author publishes various pieces in a magazine. Rather than have their name listed each time, the editor will use a pen name for some of the pieces to avoid overexposing the author to the readers.

Cross-genres – An author might use a pen name when crossing over genres in an effort to keep from irritating their fan base. Let's say your favourite author who writes intense crime novels starts writing heartfelt romance novels. Would you be a little perturbed and perplexed? This is just a quick example of why an author may use a pen name in order to save face to their fans.

Although there isn't a right or wrong answer, using a pen name is essentially a personal decision when it comes time to publish your book. However you choose to proceed,

So, whether you choose your real name or a pen name, the fact of the matter is that you've made your publishing dreams a reality and your work is now available for people far and wide to read!

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to think, there was puff of smoke or something, but it was deadly silent. No dramatic music. I could only hear my ragged breathing because I was shitting myself by this point. And then she said it was done. I got the hell out of there.”

“I remember that evening.” I said. “You asked us all not to choose a horror movie when we had our film night with the others. You were unusually subdued. Go on.”

“I woke up the next morning in the youth hostel with the rest of the lads. I couldn’t believe what had happened. It was great to start off with. What was there not to like? Team games by day and beers at night. And sleeping with a gorgeous local girl.” I rolled my eyes.

“But then I got sick of it and was going stir crazy.”

“You – getting sick of sex? Don’t make me laugh. How did you escape from it?”

Will paused a moment. “That’s the bit I haven’t told you yet.”

“What do you mean?”

He chewed his bottom lip.

“Spit it out, Will.”

“The witch told me the only way I could transfer the curse from me to someone else is for it to be removed from my phone to another person’s mobile.”

“So that’s why you smashed mine and ensured I went back to her shop.”

“I was desperate when I woke up in the youth hostel all over again. I drove back here and saw your phone lying on the kitchen worktop. I popped back to the shop before you visited and told her she had to pass the curse over to you. I left my phone with her. My day stopped resetting only when you finally left it in her possession. I wasn’t thinking straight, but I thought you could handle it.”

“Are you kidding me? Fuck’s sake. I’ve been stuck in a revolving nightmare.”

“I know, I’m sorry.”

“Wait – so all I need to do is wreck someone else’s phone to get out of this?”

Dan walked in. “Hey guys, is everything cool between you both?”

Will looked from Dan to me.

I shook my head and eyeballed Will. I knew what was going through his head. Not a chance.

“We’re good, Dan,” I said cheerfully.

“Lucy says you’ve had a massive row. Will’s door looks pretty bad…”

“Just a misunderstanding. I deserved it,” Will said sheepishly. I couldn’t argue with him.

Dan turned to leave. “Film night sometime this week then?”

“Sure,” I said and gave him a thumbs up as he left the room.

“I’ve got an idea, Kian,” Will said.

“I hope it’s a good one. Time is running out. I can’t face another day.”

“Are those tools still in the bike shed?”

10.47 p.m.

Adrenaline was pumping through my veins as we mounted our bikes. Will didn’t want to use his car in case someone spotted his registration. Our backpacks were packed tightly with selected tools taken from the bike shed, two tins of barbecue fuel, one bottle of nasty tasting own-label rum, some matches and two of Will’s ski balaclavas.

Earlier in my bedroom, he had shared his plan. “We’ve got to stop this crazy bitch from doing it to anyone else.”

“I’m listening.”

“Who knows how many other people are wondering around Bournemouth caught in time loops, and wrecking other people’s lives to escape the nightmare? We need to get to the

source to break the link. It’s that red book. We have to destroy it, along with all the other crap she’s got in that room. At least run her out of town.”

“So - breaking and entering?”

*“Will paused a moment. “
That’s the bit I haven’t told you yet.”*

“And burning.”

“Arson?”

Will stood up. “I’m not religious, but I know fire is the one thing that could purge this abomination. It’s worth a shot.”

“What if we get caught?”

“Better make sure we don’t.”

11.06 p.m.

We dumped our bikes behind some gravestones in the church that faced the rear entrance of the shop across the road. Will knew the location as it shared the same route to his favourite arcades. We slipped the balaclavas over our heads. He pointed to the alarm box above the door and

pulled out a pair of pliers from his backpack. I looked around to check the street was clear and looped both hands, taking his weight as he stood up. He snipped carefully through the wiring.

Will was the lookout for the next task and shielded me as I positioned a wrench at an angle above the rusty padlock. I knocked the end heavily with a small hammer. The lock cracked and snapped apart. Will stuffed it in his pocket. The wooden door cranked as I pulled it outwards, and he followed me inside.

11.12 p.m.

It was the smell that hit us first. The lingering waft of the witch’s perfume mingled with rotten meat. Nearly puked. We were both retching under our balaclavas. Will shone his torch which highlighted a small corridor. He nudged me and pointed ahead. There were two black wooden panelled doors with flaking paint stood opposite each other. The main entrance to the shop was at the end. Will opened the door on the right and entered first.

11.16 p.m.

He found a light switch. Inside, there were plastic crates, stacked five deep and filled with mobile phones. Stuck to the front of each box were sheets with the bird-eye symbol stamped on every corner. Freakish. There had to be hundreds of phones. All cursed. Will grabbed a footstool from the corner and doused barbecue fuel along top of the boxes. I removed another bottle and laced the floor with flammable, colourless liquid.

11.35 p.m.

We entered the second room and discovered the origin of the putrefying stench. In the corner, was a skinned creature pinned to a cork board perched on the counter, leaning against a free patch of wall. I could tell it was a rat because the furry ears and grey waxy tail were still in tact.

Will wasn’t joking when he said how high the shelves of bottles rose. I pointed at my mobile to signal the urgency. He climbed onto the counter and ran a trickle of more fuel along the top two rows. Couldn’t see the red book he wished to destroy. It would be a pointless mission without finding it.

I crouched down onto my heels and rifled through a couple of cupboards underneath a counter. Filled with more bottles. Checked again. I nearly missed the grey canister tucked away at the back of the second unit. I prised the lid open but lost my balance and rolled backwards. The contents poured out, and I heard beads clattering across the floor. As I looked up, the witch was staring down at me, clasping the red book to her chest. She narrowed her eyes, peeled back her upper lip and produced an unearthly snarling sound. She lifted the tome above her head and then everything went dark.

11.49 p.m.

Someone was dragging me from under my arms. I was semi-conscious, and my head pounded. I started choking heavily in the smoke-filled air. I tried to get up, but my legs were limp. "Stay with me, Kian. Almost there!" Will shouted. He let go of me for a moment. I heard him kick the back door open. I pulled my head up and saw orange flames licking the ceiling of the corridor. The witch staggered out of the burning room, screeching as she clutched the scorched book with cracked and blistered hands. Pages were crumbling into ash. She slid over the loose beads, and crashed to the floor, near my feet. The remnants of the charred book were engulfed by the encroaching flames. She tried to shuffle forwards on her front and clawed at my leg with her melting fingers. "Get the fuck off!" I screamed and kicked her in the head. She snapped to the side and her twisted features were blanked out by the thick, black acrid smoke. Will dragged me onto the pavement and ran back to the exit. He pulled out the bottle of rum and lobbed it inside. He

"Someone was dragging me from under my arms. I was semi-conscious, and my head pounded. I started choking heavily in the smoke-filled air."

slammed the door and forced it shut by wedging the wrench underneath the base. He took me back to the graveyard in a fireman's lift, and the last thing I remembered hearing was a rumble followed by an atomic explosion.

Awake

My alarm beeped. I slowly emerged from a deep sleep. Someone turned it off and leaned over me. I could smell a trace of apples. "Hey, Lucy." "Hey, you." "Your alarm was ringing for ages." "I know." If my day hadn't reset, at least I could spend it forever, here with Lucy. "What's the date?" "Monday." I groaned. But something occurred to me. Lucy didn't feature in my bedroom in any of my mornings. "What's the actual date?" "25th March." I grabbed the phone to be sure. She was right. I scrolled through checking the local news reports from the previous week. A headline grabbed my attention: *Unidentified body discovered in burned down mobile phone shop.* "What's wrong, Kian?" "Nothing. It's all good." I took her hand without realising I had probably over-stepped the parameters of our friendship. "Sorry, shouldn't have done that." I let go.

She slipped her hand around mine instead. "Don't be sorry," and kissed me, softly on the lips. New beginnings. Will, Ellie and Dan crashed into the room. Will was holding Ellie's hand. He grinned mischievously when he saw Lucy in my arms. "A perfect coupling!" Will announced. "By the way guys," Dan said. "My phone case is broken. Does anyone know a repair shop?"

The End

Well done Josie, a very gripping and an interesting twist on the theme I like it.

Andy Hesford | Editor

Meet the Author

Josie spent her early years living in North America, the Middle East and London. From a young age she loved reading fantasy, and in her teens branched out into sci-fi and horror books which sparked off ideas for her first stories. After qualifying as a primary school teacher, Josie headed out to the Far East and taught local and international children.



Eventually, she decided to put down some roots and returned to England where she now lives in Dorset on the Jurassic coast with her family.

After spending several years teaching and encouraging little ones how to read and write, Josie joined a creative writing group eighteen months ago. Here, she was inspired by other published authors who shared their material, offered support and critiques of her writing. She was encouraged to submit her short stories and flash fiction for publication.

To date, Josie's work has appeared in EGO magazine and was long listed for Retreat West competitions.

Her previous travels and local area feature in her tales. When exploring new story ideas, she always begins with the premise: 'What if?'

She loves sending real life characters into alternative worlds or having chance encounters with the supernatural and bizarre. Josie often lightens dark material with snippets of humour and weaves the unexpected throughout her plots. She is currently writing her first novel where the assembling of a present-day puzzle impacts on a chain of events in the 1980s



Competition Time

Here we have our ongoing competition where one entry can win a massive £100 plus be published in this very magazine. Runners up will get £50 plus publication, also every entry will be considered for publication.

Winners will be published in the Autumn edition and hopefully will remind you of those summer nights!

Picture this!

Have a look at the picture across can you compile a 3000 word story based around the picture.

Word count & Entry

Word count—No more than 3000 words (title not included)

All entries need to be emailed to submissions@arenafantasymagazine.co.uk.

Closing date - **15 August 2021**

Winners will be published in the Autumn issue released on the 15 September 2021—Good luck



Competition Guidelines

- 1) All entries have to be sent via email to Submissions@arenafantasymagazine.co.uk and are only accepted in English. Non-UK residents are welcome to enter but have to submit their entry in English.
- 2) Please clearly state in the email which competition you are entering.
- 3) MS word/word pad documents only in doc or Docx or txt format only.
- 4) Please submit your entry with the following in the email body:
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- 5) All entries MUST have the title, word count and page number in the footer. And be at least 1.5 lines (double spaced preferable)
- 6) Postal entries will be accepted
- 7) No simultaneous entries. If your entry is accepted by another publication/competition, let us know.
- 8) Copywrite remains with the author.
- 9) Fee's are to be paid via PayPal. PayPal address Submissions@arenafantasymagazine.co.uk. this is our favoured method.
- 10) Cheques can be accepted but the entry will not be judged until the funds are cleared. If this results in after the closing date your entry will be disqualified and your fees will not be

refunded.

- 11) Cheques are to be made payable to Andy Hesford - please email me on Submissions@arenafantasymagazine.co.uk for my postal address and on the back of the cheque please state your name, contact number and story title.
- 12) No correspondence will be entered into and the judge's decision is final
- 13) If there are insufficient entries the Judge's reserve the right to extend or end the competition, this may mean that the total won may be different than advertised.
- 14) Failure to adhere to the entry guidelines will result in disqualification from this competition and the fees you paid will not be refunded.

If you have any further questions or require clarification please email us at editor@arenafantasymagazine.co.uk

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Stories

Here we have some really great stories that our readers have submitted. This issue we have a great story by up and coming author Dean Hodsfray and his gritty short story about an Assassin in ancient Greece, with an axe to grind. We also get a sneak peak about life under the waves as a sub-mariner explorer written by Andy Ryan.

Do you have a story you would like to tell us? As long as it can be classed as fantasy and no more than 5000 words we would take a look at it. Either submit directly to Submissions@arenafantasymagazine.co.uk or head to

<https://arenafantasymagazine.co.uk/submission-guidelines> for further details. All submissions are considered for publication

The Harbinger Chronicles By Dean Hodsfray

The Harbinger sat by the temple thinking about how did the start of the new life came; the memories came like flies to fruit. It tore at the Harbinger's inner core but without resistance, the memories came.

'Xander, stop lagging behind we need to get to Thebes before nightfall,' Kyra said with genuine frustration in her voice. Kyra being 17 years old and the oldest, she had to watch constantly over her brother who was scared of anything and everything. He was so much hard work she thought many times about just leaving him, just steel away in the night, the only reason she had not was the last thing her mum had said to her as she was sentenced and strung up like a rag doll and killed.

'Kyra keep Xander safe' their mum's throat was sliced and her chest split open in front of them.

That was 13 seasons ago and for the Harbinger of Thebes, the memories of 'that troubled time' haunt the harbinger to this day and will never rest until punishment has been met. Yet even more memories relentlessly came.

'Can we rest now Kyra, I am tired?' Xander said with his usual and grating annoyingness.

'If we must,' shouted Kyra. Even though Kyra was not the gentlest of souls, she loved her little brother and would do anything for him. Maybe she would meet her warrior prince in Thebes. She longed to be one of Aphrodite's women. That was one of the reasons why she wanted to go to Thebes there was nothing for her at Primis. Kyra was destined for the Temple of Aphrodite. She had all her plans, she was going to get Xander into one of the training academies at Thebes and she would dedicate herself to Aphrodite and her husband. That would all change on this fateful night.

'Eat up Xander, its cured meat your favourite.' said Kyra

'I am not eating, I am scared and its dark' whinged Xander 'Well you wanted to rest' said Kyra just keeping her anger in check. 'What was that?' said Xander frightened. There was a loud crack and then three men entered the clearing

'Oh look what we have here boys' Said a tall skinny male with long blonde locks,

'Another beauty for my growing collection'

he added as he went toward Kyra

'Come on then let Messina see what you have got for him' Messina said as he tore Kyra's gown. Kyra pulled away and Messina backhanded her

'I will dedicate myself to Aphrodite, in your name O Goddess' shouted Kyra

'Ah, you want to be Aphrodite's women?' as she let Messina take clothes and underwear off. After he rudely stripped Kyra Messina stood back and examined her like Kyra and Xander's father examining a bullock before purchase. Xander did something he never thought of or done before. He stood between Messina and Kyra in a fighting stance.

'I demand you not to hurt my Sister or you will have me to deal with!' Xander said with all the deepness and conviction his voice he could muster, Messina stared at the little boy in front of him and Messina did not know whether to laugh or have pity. Not one to suffer fools gladly Messina raised his sword. Xander grabbed a stick and held it like a sword. Messina went to pretend to swipe and Xander parried but the sword clove through the makeshift sword. Xander could hear the mocking laughter as he felt his head spin and his legs giving way as he fell to the floor. Messina had hit him with the handle of his sword knocking him

unconscious. The last thing Xander saw as he fell was a glittering signet ring with an inscription of K and a setting sun it then went dark.

The Harbinger left the resting place a job needed doing. It was in an alehouse, a meeting, and the target a male who persecuted women. The Harbingers employer demanded a hand with a signet ring as proof. The Harbinger somersaulted off the dais and ran. The place was only 30 paces away. So the hooded stranger entered the alehouse it was called The Crown. Everyone looked around and the stranger unperturbed went to the bar ordered a glass of mead and went to sit in the alcove.

The harbinger saw his target there he was, with two other males talking and exchanging gold pieces. The Harbinger stared what felt like an eternity, looking at a male a very handsome man by all accounts, short-cropped blond hair a very square jawline, and he had the coldest blue eyes and a signet ring on his left hand. The Harbinger went over to the man and said 'Messina, killed any women recently?' Messina looked at the hooded stranger the voice was unusually calm and menacing but after being dosed up on alcohol, Messina thought nothing of it

'Ignore the stranger, probably one of the many who has been slighted by my women!' Messina said casually,

'Maybe a little girl who has seen her man with a real woman' both did not look at the stranger.

'No, I am not slighted by your women and I name you killer of innocence, and you must be punished.' The speed and ferocity of the hooded stranger attack stunned everybody in the Crown, from the Harbingers right sleeve a jewel-encrusted sword's appeared and before he knew it Messina's head was cleaved from his body. Messina's companions rose to their feet weapons to the ready, the Harbinger looked at both on them, in turn, the look was fierce and filled with malevolence with the harbinger's weapon lowered. The two companions went for the attack the Harbinger somersaulted, landed on the table sliced Messina's left hand, grabbed it, and somersaulted toward the door to the tavern.

'Be thankful, you are not wanted by the Harbinger yet! I do not fight with you.' After that, the harbinger left. The two companions' ran outside but the street was deserted. The harbinger of Thebes has struck again.

Back at the temple, the Harbinger saw the two men run out of the pub and thought

this last job may have made the feeling cease they did not. Still drawn to that turning point the Harbinger brooded ever onward.

That night while unconscious Xander was plagued with dreams of screaming maidens and the dark lord Hades beckoning him to his embrace, promising him of chances of redemption. When Xander eventually woke, it was just before dawn. He was still in the clearing his head hurt a lot so he cried out for Kyra, his big sister always made him feel better but to no avail. The dread memories of last night came back to him he got up too quickly and fell back down. He got up a little more slowly and looked around the clearing. There she was her beautifully naked lithe body bent over a large rock. She must be sleeping he thought. Xander gently stumbled over to his sister to wake her.

'Kyra' he called gently

'Kyra please wake up.' The image he saw was one of hellish anguish, the first thing he smelt was the congealed blood it was like an acrid metal smell, he vomited, the next thing he saw was her head a couple of paces away from her body her lips were moulded into a smile, her eyes wide open. He vomited again. Xander cried in anguish, who would look after him now? Running out of the clearing hysterically he came upon the road to Thebes. He saw a tall warrior dirty and scared from battle 'Little one, Come to Palos tell me what has happened' arms open wide Xander cautiously and untrusting eyed the man on the road he looked like his father dark tree bark coloured eyes with a rough and short-cropped black hair and beard. In that instance, Xander ran to Palos and told him everything.

After calming Xander down, Palos shared some rye bread and some liquid that burned Xander's throat and but his head hurt less, mead Palos called it. It tasted like honey and corn.

'Do you know who done this Xander' Palos asked,

'I did not see anything he hit me, but...' Xander paused

'He said his name was Messina'

'I see, I have heard of him, He is a bad man and you stood up to him' Palos enquired

'Yes stand up and I will show you' Xander said proudly grabbing two sticks. As Palos was indulging Xander in his take on the event, he notices the strength and sturdiness of his stance and the grip of the stick this boy a mere eleven years old had potential.

'Xander have you ever had any sword practice before?'

'No why?'

'Here hold this.' Palos said offering Xander his sword. Xander looked fascinated it seemed magical a long silver blade about two-thirds length of one of Palos' arms and a bright white handle adorned with dozens of gemstones. Xander grabbed it but did not expect how heavy it was he tried holding it with one hand as he had seen his Uncle do the last cycle, but before he dropped it, he had to grab it with both hands he held it upright Palos was impressed.

'Come little one let's put your sister to rest' Palos said taking the sword off Xander and sheathing it.

'I will show you how to handle a sword. I promise'

Palos walked into the clearing he saw Xander run out of. And he saw her body first clearly she had been subjected to several sexual acts it seemed like it was a ritual but Messina usually takes any young women he finds and forces then into prostitution, why did he slay this one in this barbaric way it then hit him.

'Xander, this is very important was one of the men dressed like me but with dark skin?' There was no answer from Xander only weeping. He looked around drawing his recently sheathed sword only to find Xander on his knees cradling his sister's head. 'Xander lets send here to Hades and let him look after her and keep her.'

Over the next hour or so a decent enough Pyre was raised, Palos carefully clothed Kyra laid her down on top of the Dais they created put two coins over her eyes and started setting fire to it.

'Xander do you know why we put coins over the dead's eyes or in their mouth?'

'It's to pay Charon to carry the dead over the river Styx.' Xander replied innocently, whilst gently sobbing,

'How do you know that?'

'Kyra... he sniffed...told me when we had to do that to mum and dad? He said whilst pointing at the now burning pyre.'

'Oh little one, so you have no-one.' Xander looked at Palos with the tiredness of an age older than he was and said,

'I have you if you teach me how to fight. I will make Messina pay with his life.' Xander touched his forehead as if promising to any god who was listening. If he is affiliated with Kami then that might be difficult Palos thought.

'I will help you learn' Palos said whilst kneeling and offering his sword. Like the good Trojan officer he was.

Now Xander in his black robes sat in the shadows outside the Temple of Aphrodite finally feeling some sort of peace. He got

used to the life of killing and assassination he loathed the person he was when he was younger but thankful for the turning points of his life, especially Palos and all that darkness. He now had a purpose in life only two more men to find and he might retire. They were Karin the evil tax collector who brutally killed his mum and dad and Kami the murderer of Palos.

Dean Hodsfray— Dean always had a flair, for enchanting and sometimes brutal writing. He was on the committee for Chip Lit (Chipping Norton Literary Festival) in 2012. Whilst Dean's writing sometimes causes offence it is always well written and thought-provoking.

Dean usually writes short ghost stories but has ventured into Epic Fantasy novels and is interested in writing Horror, Fantasy and Thriller. They are imaginative and have a twist that is unexpected. Dean likes to keep his reader guessing and on their toes so the twist has even-more power than usual.

You can find him online at -

<https://deanhodsfrayauthor.wixsite.com/deanhodsfray>



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The Deep By Andy Ryan

Morris checked the readouts on the monitor in front of him. Aside from a slight increase in pressure, all appeared normal.

"All fine this end guys, nothing unexpected".

"Loud and clear. Report back in fifteen minutes. Over".

Morris disconnected his comms, and sat back in the small chair in the centre of the pod. He was currently at a depth of around 11,000 feet and descending slowly, and the inky blackness was starting to feel oppressive. This was relatively normal territory, and he had long ago learned to manage the claustrophobia which was always tickling at the edges of his mind, but that's not to say

Morris disconnected his comms, and sat back in the small chair in the centre of the pod. He was currently at a depth of around 11,000 feet and descending slowly, and the inky blackness was starting to feel oppressive. This was relatively normal territory, and he had long ago learned to manage the claustrophobia which was always tickling at the edges of his mind, but that's not to say that it was always easy. The 1 metre squared pilot pod in which he was based didn't exactly help, and he barely had the room to itch, let alone move. Once he reached the floor of the Challenger Deep, the state of the art submersible would start monitoring the

surrounding area with little input from Morris himself, aside from regular contact with the surface.

The small lamp on the front of the HMS Armstrong allowed a slice of visibility, emanating outwards in a cone shape. Dark shapes occasionally flitted past, evidently unused to the artificial yellow light, before vanishing into the thick darkness just out of sight. Morris wasn't sure whether or not this was comforting, or whether he would have preferred complete darkness. Either way, you had to admit that it was unnerving. He had faith in the structural integrity of the vessel, but his primal monkey brain wasn't blessed with his critical thinking faculties, and subsequently spent most of the journey screaming for fresh air and solid land, away from the vast expanse of unknown stretching out in all directions.

Morris blinked hard and shook his head, trying to clear the fog and focus. No point sitting here and indulging his irrational fear of the dark. He was a scientist damn it, he had to start thinking like one.

He glanced at the array of dials and monitors to his left. The pressure was continuing to creep up, but this was within the acceptable margins. Aside from this, everything was operating as intended. He glanced out of the small reinforced porthole and tried to appreciate the weight of scientific and engineering capability that had allowed

him to reach this point. Really, when you thought about it, he was incredibly lucky. Only a handful of people got to see the world at this depth, he should remember that more often.

He was just starting to settle his nerves, when a red light to his right started to blink, accompanied by a beeping sound. He swivelled around to look at the monitor, and switched on his comms.

"Guys, I'm picking up some unusual vibrations, are you seeing this?"

"Receiving, we can see. Nothing to panic about, it's well within acceptable boundaries. See if you can get a visual on the camera. Over".

The on-board computer calculated the source of the vibrations, and Morris grasped the manual controls, ready to slowly rotate the Armstrong in that direction, when he felt the first wave. The submersible rocked, and Morris felt his stomach roll. He engaged the manual controls and gently rotated to his right, his eyes glued to the porthole. At this depth, he wouldn't have expected to experience this kind of disturbance, and the thought caused a knot to form in his stomach and sweat to prickle his forehead.

The on-board sonar started to blink and beep, slowly at first but quickly increasing in frequency. Morris ensured that the external infrared cameras were operational. The second wave hit, much larger than the first, and the pod shook

violently as Morris attempted to compensate. Suddenly, they were there on the camera.

The pod of whales were swimming together, almost in formation. Around 7 or 8 in total, although it was hard to see because they were bunched together unnaturally, and moving faster than he would have expected.

"Guys, are you seeing this?" Morris gasped into his comms device. "Since when do whales swim this deep?"

"Received. Maintain a safe distance and record, we're checking some details, but it looks like this is new behaviour, so you need to collect all the data you can. Over".

Morris checked the equipment and ensured that the information was all being recorded as planned. He shifted the trajectory of the vessel to ensure that the cameras were able to continue to monitor, and made a note of their speed and depth.

"Uh, guys, I'm not sure whether we're having some kind of malfunction with the equipment, but I think they're descending...".

Radio silence.

"Guys, are you seeing this?"

Nothing.

"Morris to surface, I'm not hearing you, are you receiving?"

He turned the volume dial of his comms receiver and tried again, without luck. He felt the prickling of fear started to take hold, and swallowed hard. The whales were descending too fast to follow now, and were nothing but blips on the sonar screen. The darkness and silence combined in his mind, and he furiously mashed the buttons on the comms device, his calm demeanour starting to slip.

"Morris to surface, repeat, Morris to surface, where the fuck are you guys?" he yelled, his breath escaping in small gasps.

He was interrupted by a new beeping on the sonar. He swivelled around, and saw a shape at the outer edges of the screen, but moving inwards at a startling rate. This was larger than the whales, and moving faster than anything he had seen before. His training hadn't prepared him for this, no one had explained the protocol, and his usually rational mind had handed over the reigns to his screaming monkey brain.

He grabbed the manual controls and gunned forwards and upwards, away from the shape on the sonar and towards the sweet normality of the surface. The porthole looked out into murky blackness, and his eyes scanned the visible scenery. Suddenly, the front mounted lamp started to dim.

"No, no, no!" He exclaimed, hammering his fists on the dials and switches in front

of him, but the light continued to fade, until nothing was left.

"It's fine, it's fine, I can use the cameras, don't panic", he muttered to himself, and turned to the display. The screen was blank. He was riding blind.

The bleeping from the sonar was the only sound, and the increasing frequency filled Morris with primeval fear. He couldn't outrun whatever that was, that much was clear, and the waves caused by something that size would rip him apart.

The engine rumbled as he continued to accelerate, his only hope now was to make it to within a safe distance to the surface and hope that the submersible held together. He took deep, strained breaths and tried to focus on the instruments, designed specifically to guide him through the gloom. He would be fine, this was all just adrenaline and fear, he would reach the surface, find the instrument malfunction, and have a funny story that his friends and colleagues would mock him for relentlessly.

Just as these thoughts had been formulated in his mind, the Armstrong shuddered to a halt. The screens died. The dials dipped to zero, and the light from the monitors faded. The small internal light faded to black, and as the darkness and silence enveloped him, covering his senses like a blanket, he heard the bleeping of the sonar merge into a solid hum, before it too flickered and died.

Andy Ryan – is an independent author, social care professional and amateur book reviewer, and lives in Weston-Super-Mare, UK. He has been writing for most of his life, but only recently had made moves to make his work available to others. He primarily writes children's picture books and occasional short stories, and enjoys reading the work of other unpublished authors and writing reviews for his website, www.andryanswords.com. Andy is passionate about social justice and equality, and tries to include these topics in his children's writing as much as possible."



AFM looking for Stories

The team at AFM are always on the look out for outstanding stories. We do prefer stories with regards to Fantasy or historical element's, think knights of the round table, Families fighting each other for an iron throne and such and yes that does include, werewolves and vampires.

However it does not include, Spaceships and aliens

probing people, laser guns and black holes, that is firmly in the Sci fi genre. That is not to say that we would not look at a time travelling protagonist who tries to stop the Battle of Culloden! (Outlander fans would recognise this reference!!)

So if you think you could create a story of no more than 5000 words and based on some of the elements above, we want to hear from you.

Get your submission over to:

submissions@arenafantasy magazine.co.uk

We will be in contact if we want to use it. Remember please view our submission guidelines at

www.arenafantasy magazine.co.uk

So what are you waiting for get writing!



Who Is?

Andy Peloquin

In every issue we try to focus on one or two authors this month we have managed to get some time with renowned fantasy author Andy Peloquin. He takes time out to discuss all things writing and authorship.

This month we have a Questions and Answer session with Author Andy Peloquin. Andy currently has 40 books under his belt. Andy primarily writes fiction and has upwards of 4 series all set in the fictional continent of Einan, not one to gather moss he also has a sci-fi series Cerebus. Here is a little bit more about him and his style in his own words.

Tell us a little bit about yourself?

Wow, that feels like a loaded question. Boiling 30+ years of human existence down to a few words? Hah!
I'm Andy Peloquin, fantasy and science fiction author, husband to a wonderful wife, stepfather to four young adult children, writer of extraordinary tales, and absolute nerd. Those seem like all the highlights people need to get to know most of me.

What projects are you working on?

Currently, I'm hard at work on the Hero of Darkness series. I'm revamping the first 3 books in the series and relaunching them in mid-2021, then will set to work writing the second story arc (an additional 5-7 books on top of what is already written). Hero of Darkness was my first series ever written, and looking back at it now, I can see a lot of "rookie" mistakes I made. It's still one of my all-time favourite characters, though. Now that I'm going to dive back into the world of the Hunter of Voramis for the second arc, I thought it would be a good idea to polish the beginning of his story so it's in line with the quality I produce now after 40+ books under my belt.

Are you a pantsier, plotter or plantser? Why?

I'm probably about 75% plotter, but with 25% of my brain dedicated to pantsing up the coolest stuff I can dream up. I do follow an outline for each story, though I give plenty of room to create and innovate without adhering too rigidly to the

- structure I've set for myself.
-

I love this style of writing because I never have to wonder what comes next, but the path forward is always laid out for me. And yet, if I feel that something could be done better or my original idea improved upon, I do it. It leads to far better stories and prevents writer's block.

Do you have a writing routine and what is it?

I sit down to write at the same time every day (7 AM, 10:00 AM, and 2:30 PM) and write for the same amount of time (90-120 minutes, depending on chapter length). I write until the chapter is concluded, then get up and get on with another activity (cooking, cleaning, gym, etc.).

This way, I can force my brain to hyper-focus and work extra hard while I'm writing, then it's free to relax while I'm doing other activities. I've found it helps me to be more productive this way, without burning out my brain.

What was one of the most surprising things you learned in creating your books?

I think the things that I've found most interesting and surprising were the things I learned about myself.

When we write, we're telling someone else's story—sometimes someone else is vastly different from who we are, and yet, we still end up putting bits and pieces of ourselves into those characters. Sometimes those things can be surprising.

I've found that I think, believe, and act very differently than I realised. A lot of my internal core beliefs have only become crystalized because I was writing them into someone else, or someone else who went against those beliefs. It's almost like therapy, but stretched out over thousands of hours. I've had great epiphanies and minor realizations, all of which have made me a better person, a better version of myself. After all, that's what I'm trying to help the characters do, so of course I'm going to be taken along my own journey as I write the journeys of my characters.

"When we write, we're telling someone else's story—sometimes someone else is vastly different from who we are, and yet, we still end up putting bits and pieces of ourselves into those characters"

Does one of the main characters hold a special place in your heart? If so, why

Honestly, all of my main characters are truly important to me, but for different reasons. The Hunter was the one who started me on this journey, and he's probably the most like me (a bit of a loner/outsider struggling to belong). Ilanna from the Queen of Thieves series just takes my breath away every time I read her, and sometimes I can't believe that I was the one who wrote her. Aravon is just quietly an absolute hero and genuinely decent man—in a way, the man I aspire to be. Nolan Garrett (from Cerberus) showed me that strength takes on many forms, often the ones we least expect.

Every one of these characters have taken me on a journey, and it's hard to care about them any more or less than the others.

How many plot ideas are just waiting to be written and can you tell us about one?

Oh so many! Probably the one I'm most likely to write next is about a giant bounty hunter. It's set in a country similar to French wine country and the Italian Renaissance city-states, which is a fun setting to play in. The character is a former soldier who returned from the war burdened by guilt over his actions, so he's been unable to return home to his wife and children. All of his adventures are sort of an internal Odysseus' journey to finally conquer the monsters in his mind so he feels worthy of returning home.

When you are not writing is there anything else you do?
Snowboarding makes me love winters in Canada, and

"Every one of these characters have taken me on a journey, and it's hard to care about them any more or less than the others."

summers are a great time for hiking, kayaking, floating, fishing, and other outdoor sports I didn't get to enjoy growing up. I'm also a bit of a TV-phyle—I find it's amazing research for stories, characters, and just awesome for shutting down my hyper-active writer's brain. I love cooking, grilling, and reading, too. I'm a simple man who loves the simple pleasures in life,

Who is your favourite author to read?

Tough call! Scott Lynch's *The Gentlemen Bastards* series is one of my all-time favourites, but so are Brandon Sanderson's *The Stormlight Archives* and anything written by Joe Abercrombie. I also spend a lot of time reading indie authors: Phil Tucker, ML Spencer, JA Andrews, Alisha Klapheke, Stevie Collier, and the list goes on!

How do you manage your time?

I've been working at home for about 9 years now, so I'm accustomed to my daily routine of getting work done first, THEN relaxing after all my to-dos are checked off the list. I can probably a bit too set in my habits, but it's helped me get as much done as I have.

I watch the clock carefully, structure my between-work activities to make sure that everything is done in time to return to my desk, and put in the hard work during the week so I can kick back and relax on the weekends.

What is the first book that made you cry?

That would be *Red Seas Under Red Skies*, Book 2 of the *Gentlemen Bastards* series I mentioned above. I was washing dishes at the time, but this one moment hit me out of nowhere and had me bawling my eyes out over the sink. I'm just glad no one was there to see me!

Please tell us where we can get more of you? (website, socials etc)

You can find me everywhere as Andy Peloquin:

<http://andypeloquin.com/>
<https://www.amazon.com/Andy-Peloquin/e/B00J9008MC/>
<https://www.facebook.com/andyqpelequin>
<https://twitter.com/AndyPeloquin>

Written by Andy Peloquin,
edited by Andy Hesford

For Sale by Andy Peloquin

Warriors of Blood and Shadow: A Military Epic Fantasy Series
(The Silent Champions Box Set Book 1)

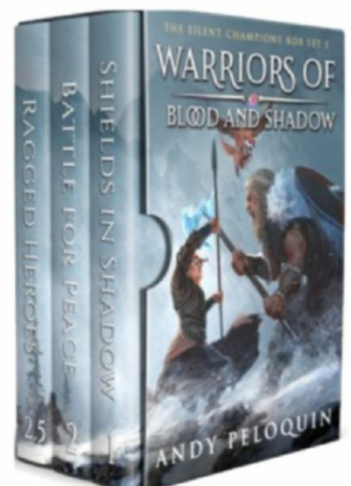
A vast barbarian horde is on the march. One hardened captain and his elite commandos are the only hope of salvation...

To Get Your copy go to <http://mybook.to/WoBaS>

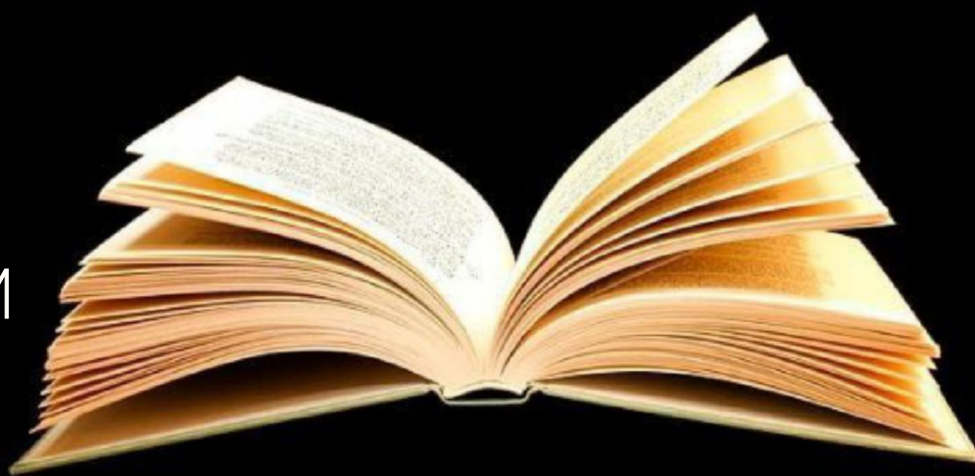
Or to see what else Andy has for sale go to <https://andypeloquin.com>

In the Warriors of Blood and Shadow Box Set:

- Shields in Shadow (Book 1)
- Battle for Peace (Book 2)
- Ragged Heroes (Book 2.5)



How to Format your book the AFM way!



Here is a brief article on how I used to edit and format my own books internal gubbins of my novel and also how I used to format my author's books when I ran my publishing company. Overall in 12 months, I published four of my own books two of which were eBooks and the other two were print on demand (POD) books. I published two author books under the CNWriters & Publishers Imprint using the same format, however, my word is not the gospel I merely make suggestions.

Terms I use that may not be familiar to the budding author.

Recto – Right page or odd-numbered page

Verso – Left page or even-numbered page

Printing signature – usually used by publishers a signature is a block of pages, usually, pages are divisible by 16 or 32

Frontmatter

What the dickens is Front Matter? Frontmatter is a selection of pages right at the beginning of any novel, usually consists of a half heading, a full heading, copyright, dedication page and contents. Sometimes it may even include a list of books available from the author and their respective series.

Here is a list of pages I used to add to the front matter for my books and my author's books

- A. Header – Recto/right – usually centred at the top and my publishing logo centred at the bottom of the page (*essential*)
- B. Copyright page – Verso to the header page. Feel free to google copyright notices. Reedsy is a good resource (*essential*) <https://blog.reedsy.com/copyright-page/>
- C. Dedication & Acknowledgement page - recto (not essential)
- D. On the verso side is sometimes other stories by the author or if this is the first book it is usually blank (*not essential*)
- E. Contents page – recto – this is not essential unless you want to let your reader jump to certain chapters in your fantasy book, This is essential for non-fiction books.

Margins & Layout

In this section, we are going to look at some formats for your manuscript. In the examples below I have used the generic fiction size of 5 x 8 with mirrored margins (Word Layout – Margins – Mirror)

Margins –

First Page (Recto/Right)

Top, Bottom, Right = 1.5cm

Left needs to have gutter (min 1.27cm for 150pages to 300pages) + Margin. If your manuscript is less than 150 pages you can get away with setting the gutter to 0.95cm whilst if your manuscript is longer than 300 pages you need a gutter of min 1.65cm.

A quick note about gutters – Why do you need them? my manuscript looks wonky? Don't worry I hear you the reason why we have to put a gutter measurement in the margin is that bound books do not lay flat and in the middle, there is a 'gutter' if this is not large enough then the beginning of each recto page line will be obscured additionally the end of each verso page line will also be obscured. That will equal not happy readers!

Layout.

Chapter headings are usually two thirds or halfway down the page. (5x enters) This font is Calibri and it is size 10 (obviously the larger the font the more pages you will need for your novel. Also, the start of each chapter is usually on the recto/right side, you will have to page break to adhere to this to do that go to **Insert – Pages – Page break** or ctrl + Enter

Sometimes (dependant on the publisher) it may be prudent to indent new paragraph's and sentences to do that go to Layout - Paragraph -Paragraph settings (the little square with an arrow) and set indentation – first line 1cm.

Non-Fiction Headers

I do not know if you write non-fiction but I would be remiss not to mention Headers. By headers, I mean section headers. These are important if you want to also release your manuscript as an eBook as a lot of eBook readers need contents. Formats for these are as follows

Chapter heading – H1 (centred)

Section headings – H2 (Left-aligned)

Subtitle Headings - H3 (Left-aligned)

You can change the format if you wish but it may be prudent to stick to the same font throughout.

On the point of fonts

There are two types of font styles Sans-serif or serif. Calibri is a sans-serif font because it does not have little bits (or serifs to use their proper term) dangling from the edges. It is primarily used for headings as it can be tiring to read. The purpose of these serif's is to subtly direct the reader's eyes along with the word.

Whilst Serif fonts like Times New Roman has little bits off each letter. Serif fonts are primarily used for the body of the text.

However, I do prefer using sans-serif fonts, because, in my opinion, it looks fresher and tidier.

Feel free to check out the following link from Ingram Spark it has good information for fonts

<https://www.ingramspark.com/blog/best-fonts-for-books>

Chapter 3 – Back matter

After you have written your manuscript and your reader reads 'The end', if the rest of the book has blank pages then your reader may be dismayed as they are fired up to read more content, and you have missed a great marketing opportunity.

Usually, if you are traditionally published your publisher uses printing signatures the total number of pages is usually divisible by 8, 16 or 32. So why not use these last few pages to promote you as an author! Most publishers would be happy to fill these blank pages with some promotional content.

What is back matter?

Back matter consists of all the pages that come after the last line of your book, and it is a powerful tool for selling more books and growing your email list.

Back matter is a form of passive marketing. If you have an effective backmatter, you could be dead, and your back matter would continue to sell books for you without your involvement.

Traditional and indie authors have equal opportunities to use the back matter to sell more books.

Indie authors can update and edit back matter at any time, while traditionally published authors must have their back matter finalized long before your book is released.

Common elements found in the back matter are:

1. Acknowledgements and credits
2. Titles of your other books
3. First chapters of your next book
4. Photo and link to a lead magnet on your website
5. Request for reviews
6. Reading group resources
7. Author photo and bio
8. Appendix and notes

Order of Back matter

A point to note, when compiling your back matter is the priority of marketing, by that I mean what you want your reader to do first as soon as she has finished reading. This depends on your priorities as a writer.

1. Write a review or buy book 2
2. Sign up for your lead magnet
3. Buy book 2 or Write a review
4. Share your social's
5. Read 1st chapter on another book

Conclusion

Well, I hope that you found this article insightful and goes part of the way to helping you with formatting your internal files for publishing. This advice does not replace a traditional editor and that is why each publisher has its own slightly different way of formatting files. However, using these guidelines may cut the cost down in the long run as the editor does not have to spend so much time sorting out your manuscript. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to email me. editor@arenafantasymagazine.co.uk



Do you want to get your book published?

Let Arena Fantasy Publishers help you.

AFP offers Publishing assistance with Manuscript formatting, cover design editing and distribution. With fee's less than 10% per sale what do you have to lose?

Interested yet? Yes, get your contact details over to editor@arenafantasymagazine.co.uk to register your details and when we fully launch we will help you get published.



Double Your Writing Speed: 10 Top Tips

Do you want to double your writing speed?

Imagine being able to produce the same amount of writing you do now in half the time.

Or even producing double the amount of work you do now in the same amount of time. It's not only possible to do, but very simple.

I've written thousands of articles during the period I've been making a full time living online, and I've discovered that the only thing holding me back from writing faster is myself.

You see, we all have beliefs within that tell us what our writing speed limit is. As I've let go of these beliefs and blocks, I've found myself writing faster and getting into the writing zone effortlessly.

With all that said, let's look at ten simple ways you can double the speed of your writing, right now:

1. Outline

The first thing that has proven highly effective for me and my writing is to outline my articles before I start writing.

I know this sounds ridiculously simple. The problem is that most people know about outlining but never use it in their writing properly.

For example, with this article, I brainstormed a good headline, and I then wrote down the 10 different ways that you can double the speed of your writing.

It's nothing fancy, but it works wonders for me and as you implement it into your writing, you may notice the same effects.

2. Single-Task

The next step is to single-task and eliminate any and all distractions while you're writing.

I know this is hard with Twitter, Facebook and e-mail beeping for our attention, but I've found that I can significantly increase the speed of my writing by simply doing nothing other than writing.

Another really simple tip, but the magic lies not in complexity, but simplicity.

So focus on getting your first draft done and then allow yourself to check e-mail or whatever your addiction is.

Or you may want to wait until the end of the day until you reward yourself.

3. Destroy Your Inner Critic

Our inner critic gets in the way of writing the first draft fast because it wants to have everything perfect before you've even written the article.

You can simply thank your inner critic for caring about the quality of your work and focus on getting the first draft done.

Tell your inner critic that you will edit the article after you've written it. The magic in writing well is not in producing a perfect first draft, but editing and rewriting afterwards.

4. Voice-to-Text

Another fantastic way to increase the speed of your writing is to use voice to text software such as Dragon NaturallySpeaking.

In fact, I'm using this very program to write this article. It allows my hands to take a break and it lets the inspiration flow freely.

It is not without mistakes, but it is amazingly accurate, especially when you've used it for a while and it has gotten used to your voice and way of speaking.

5. Brain Dump

Whenever I'm stuck, I set a goal to write as fast as I can. If I run out of things to say or write, I will simply repeat the last word to keep the momentum going.

Brain dumping is a great way to get all your ideas out.

Once you've got the ideas on there, you can pick and choose the ideas that you think are relevant to whatever message you're trying to convey.

6. Deadline

If you want to dramatically cut down the time you spend writing articles, I suggest you get an egg timer or a regular clock and set a deadline for each article or story.

If you're writing a 500-word article, you may want to set a deadline for 10 minutes.

This will force you to get everything out as fast as possible. It will also help to suspend your inner critic and focus on what's truly important.

7. Routine

We all have routines and rituals that help us get into the right state for writing.

Mine is often making a cup of green tea and sipping it while I outline whatever I'm going to work on.

Think back to the last time you felt really good about diving into your writing. What did you do? How did you feel? Where were you?

8. Place

There are places where you seem to get into the flow of writing effortlessly. For some people, this may mean going to a coffee shop, while others like sitting in nature with no distractions at all.

I personally prefer writing at my desk with total silence. I may listen to music from time to time but often enjoy the silence.

Find your own sacred writing space and spend your time writing there as much as possible.

9. Replicate the Zone

Think about a time when you've been in the zone. How do you know when you're entering the zone?

What do you feel inside your body? What is it that tells you that you're now in the zone and your writing is flowing effortlessly onto the page?

You see, when you identify what the zone looks like to you, you can replicate it.

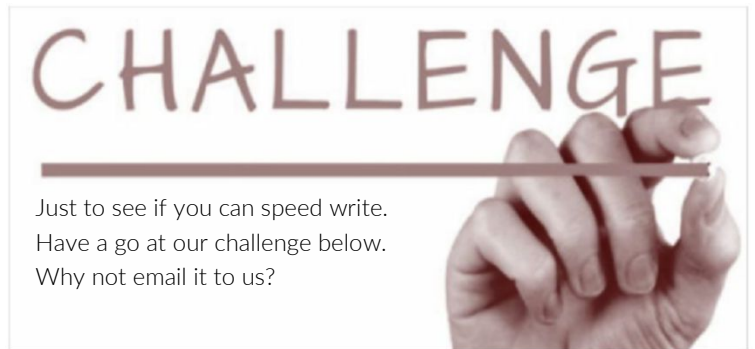
10. Passion

This may seem irrelevant at first, but have you ever noticed how much more you get done when you're passionate about the topic you're working on?

I certainly have.

Being passionate is not only important in writing, but in every area of your life. If you constantly do what excites you, you will produce high-quality work while at the same time feeling good about yourself.

As you finish reading this article, I want to remind you that you already have all the resources within you to easily write faster, better, and higher quality articles. We often get in our own way, and as you become aware of this, you can begin to realize that you can get into the zone whenever you want.



How this works?

You are going to grab a dice and roll it then you are going to write about the prompt you roll. DO NOT become your inner critic, just keep writing for 15 minutes. Do not even worry about the grammar. Hide the piece for at least a week and at the end of the week, pull it out and read through it. I bet you have got the bones of a great story there. Now feel free to edit, fill your boots go on and finally do not forget to send it over to Arena Fantasy Magazine! (this is the most important step!—ed)

The Prompts

1. You walk into a castle and you see a two Knights talking.
2. You and your partner are sitting in a field, you see a strange goblin character, He needs help.
3. You find a magic book, when you read you get transported to a magical kingdom.
4. You are caught in the Lady of the Keeps bed-chamber. What happens next?
5. You are out for a night-time walk, you see a mysterious Bard he calls to you.
6. A mage comes up to you and tells you that you are their child and they need help.

It has been advised that if you are suffering with writers block writing short stories can help unblock you. It give your mind something else to focus on.

I would really like you to have a go a this challenge and we would like to see your results. Do you think you can do this challenge? Can your friends?

Submit

Short Fiction, Flash Fiction
Articles, Artwork.

We would love to see your work in progress, and you could be featured in our next issue. Send your edited piece of work to:

submissions@arenafantasymagazine.co.uk



7 Tips For Writing Meaningful Death Scenes

Let's admit it, readers: we all love a good death scene. Don't we admit it.

Whether we're ugly-crying because we loved the character so much and OH, THE INJUSTICE, or punching the air and cheering because that villain got what they deserved... There's nothing like a well-crafted death scene to elicit a strong reaction in a reader.

But how should we approach death scenes from the other side – as writers?

Dealing with character deaths is a difficult part of fiction writing. A lot of thought, effort and even pain goes into crafting those death scenes readers respond to so strongly. It's an intimidating task, to say the least.

Luckily, we've got you covered with a handful of useful tips for writing meaningful death scenes. Read on and you'll be making those readers weep/cheer/gasp in no time!

1. Make the reader care about the character

Without a doubt, the most important part of writing a meaningful death scene is making sure the reader actually cares about the character who's dying.

If you haven't created compelling characters whose fates your readers are emotionally invested in, you're going to have a hard time writing a death scene that packs a punch.

Crafting properly developed characters, who readers can root for, relate to or just simply like, is a sound strategy in any fiction writing. And when it comes to

reaction you're looking for – whether that be sorrow when a 'good' character is lost, or triumph when a character who's caused pain or destruction has it turned some way back on themselves.

"If you haven't created compelling characters whose fates your readers are emotionally invested in, you're going to have a hard time writing a death scene that packs a punch."

fictional killings, these characters are the ones whose deaths will be the most meaningful and affecting for readers.

Spending plenty of time developing a character's personality, backstory and motivations is the best way to build up to a death scene that's really going to mean something. The scene itself will be served well by all the character development that has led to it.

However, you never want to use these kinds of characters as cannon fodder to force an emotional reaction just for the sake of it. More on that further below.

2. Make the reader despise the character

On the flip side, creating an authentic villain who inspires readers' ire is a sure-fire way to get them cheering when you kill that character off.

As we touched on above, your reader doesn't always have to be saddened by a character death! It's simply a good, strong

Let's use everyone's favourite death-heavy show as an example: Game of Thrones. Think about the time that person was viciously poisoned, or that person was eaten alive by dogs, or that character's throat was cut by this character.

These hateful characters had been built up to the highest point of villainy in viewers' minds, and when their deaths were finally brought about by characters we were rooting for, it made for very satisfying viewing. If you can achieve the same effect in your novel, you're on the right track.

(Here's an extra challenge for you: See if you can make readers hate a character... And then actually feel sad, rather than satisfied, when they die. Case in point: Severus Snape, who turned out to be more of an anti-hero than a straight-up villain, and whose death scene was rather more tragic than triumphant.)

3. Show the death's effect on other characters

A death scene becomes meaningful not only when the reader is invested in the outcome, but when other characters are invested as well.

"See if you can make readers hate a character... And then actually feel sad, rather than satisfied, when they die"

It's important to show the way death affects your characters, especially your protagonist. As well as exploring the plot-related repercussions of a death, the emotional impact on the characters should be examined, too.

The way a character reacts to someone dying can tell readers a lot – not only about the character themselves, but also about their relationship with the departed character. Try to weave these kinds of insights into your death scenes to add an extra layer of depth.

There should be personal and practical costs and consequences to every character death. Drawing these out and exploring them is a great way to deepen the story, develop your characters and ultimately add meaning to every death scene.

(To flip this concept on its head: if you're writing a scene that focuses on someone who's killing someone else, rather than the person dying, showing the effect on the killer can give insight into that character. Are they haunted by what they've done? Or emotionally distant? Is it a cathartic moment, or a traumatic one, or a combination of both?)

4. Avoid over-dramatization and clichés

When trying to craft the perfect death scene, it's easy to assume that you need to go all out. It can be tempting to ramp up the emotion and drama, draw out the moment and essentially milk it for all it's worth.

"However, when this is overdone, it doesn't tend to go down too well with readers. It's essentially telling them how they should feel about the death, rather than allowing them to feel it themselves. Readers don't like being spoon-fed like this."

However, when this is overdone, it doesn't tend to go down too well with readers. It's essentially telling them how they should feel about the death, rather than allowing them to feel it themselves. Readers don't like being spoon-fed like this.

For this reason, it's important not to over-dramatize a death scene or pack it full of clichés.

An example of an overused and often over-dramatized death scene cliché is the long, drawn-out deathbed speech. You know the one – where a character is supposed to be dying, but just keeps talking instead, more often than not choosing that moment to reveal some huge piece of information vital to the plot.

Using a death scene in this manner can make it feel somewhat disingenuous and hollow. Yes, death scenes can (and often will) be dramatic and plot-changing, but this effect should come naturally. Readers won't respond well if it's forced.

5. Don't rely on shock value

"However, when you use these elements purely for the purpose of shocking, your death scene risks becoming gratuitous and over-the-top. Ask yourself: how much detail do readers really need to see here?"

One of the most important qualities of any death scene is that it must be necessary for the story. Killing characters simply for shock value isn't the right way to craft a meaningful death scene, or a meaningful story overall.

Yes, it can be great to surprise readers with a huge plot twist in the form of an unexpected character death. But when this is done purely for the sake of shock, and doesn't actually contribute realistically or meaningfully to the story, it can come across as cheap or contrived.

Also keep the shock value element in mind during the actual writing of a death scene.

There's nothing wrong with violence, blood and gore if they have a place in that particular story, for a particular purpose. Perhaps you need to get across the brutality of a villain, or the way suffering affects a character and those around them.

However, when you use these elements purely for the purpose of shocking, your death scene risks becoming gratuitous and over-the-top. Ask yourself: how much detail do readers really need to see here?

Consider whether the more shocking aspects of the scene contribute to the story or the development of a character, or – and be honest with yourself here – whether you've included them for shock value alone.

6. Try not to make a death predictable

When you're writing your way towards a death scene, it's important to strike a balance between foreshadowing/building up to the moment, and not giving too much away.

Let's say you're planning to kill off one of the 'good guys' – a beloved character

whose death will sadden other characters and, you hope, your readers.

While you want to make this character endearing to readers and hence heighten the tragedy of their eventual death scene, it is possible to overdo it, inadvertently tipping readers off that the character is fated to die.

For example, if you start over-emphasising moments where that character talks about the future and how great their long, long life is going to be, you might be dropping too strong a hint that they're not going to make it.

When carried out so subtly as to escape readers' conscious notice, these elements

of build-up can have great payoff when it comes to the actual death scene. But be sure 'subtle' is the key word here, otherwise you risk the scene falling short of the surprise and emotional impact you intended.

7. Get into the right mindset (but have a plan to get yourself out)

We've all heard that old Robert Frost saying: 'No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader'. It's a particularly relevant sentiment for the practice of writing death scenes.

You don't have to take it 100% literally, but just be aware that if you feel nothing when writing a death scene, chances are your readers will feel nothing, too. And indifference is the last result you want when crafting a character death!

To ensure your readers (and you!) feel the gut-punch blow of a tragic character death, you're going to need to put yourself in the 'right' mindset. But be aware: this isn't necessarily a pleasant thing to do.

You might have to draw deep from your own emotional well, harking back to your own experiences of loss, grief or trauma. And while this can make for some raw, moving and effective writing, it can also be emotionally taxing.

So if you're willing to, quite literally, 'suffer for your art', don't forget to take care of your mental health. Be sure you have a way to get yourself out of this dark mindset when you're finished writing.

So there you have it, writers!

Whether you're writing a thrilling fight scene that culminates in a character death, or focusing on the emotional impact of the moment, these tips should help you craft a death scene that's effective and meaningful.


Claire is a freelance editor and proof-reader based in Newcastle, Australia. She holds a B. A. in English and Writing and a Graduate Certificate of Editing and Publishing. Claire's biggest passion is working on editorial projects, particularly when it involves perfecting book manuscripts for publication. In her spare time, you'll either find her reading or drinking endless cups of tea while writing things of her own. You can find out about her here <https://www.clairebradshaw.com.au/>

Written by Claire Bradshaw
Edited by Andy Hesford

Editors note

In my writing career I have had to 'kill off' some of my characters. Sadly it is a part of the creation process. I will certainly be using some of these tools going forward. A point to note regarding getting into the mindset. Please do not get sucked into the negativity of a character's death, remember your fiction character is only fiction (unless you are writing a memoir!) If you do need help getting out of the mindset. Speak to your friends and family and of course in the UK you can ring Samaritans on 116 233. Best of luck with it and feel free to contact us with your thoughts at editor@arenafantasymagazine.co.uk

CHALLENGE



On your WIP or current project pick a character. Write about their death.

How this works

Get a six-sided dice, roll it and consult the following table.

1-2—Write about your Protagonist/Main Character

3-4—Write about your Antagonist/Bad guy

5-6—Write about another character in your story.

What you need to look at is how does the other characters feel about this character's death. Are they directly affected by it?

Maybe it is the character's spouse or partner in crime or even their family member. Next write down what you (as the author) feel let your emotions flow.

How does it affect you? Are you happy or sad about this character's death? Lastly jot down how you think your potential readers will feel if this character dies.

Look at how you can make it more impactful without being too cliché or too obvious. It's harder than it looks.



Claire Bradshaw
EDITOR

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Courtesy Game of Thrones © 2016

They say a picture speaks a thousand words.

Check out the following artwork, to get your creative juices flowing. Are you an artist do you want to be featured? Send a sample of your artwork to submissions@arenafantasymagazine.co.uk



© Image by Enrique Meseguer

A knight in full plate armor is shown from the chest up, holding a sword. The knight's armor is dark and highly detailed, with a prominent cross on the helmet. The sword has a gold hilt and a red cloth draped over the blade. The background is a soft, hazy landscape with a bright light source on the right.

“I pledge my
allegiance and
my sword to you
my Lord”

IN NC

TRISE







TRADITIONAL



SELF PUBLISHING

There is an age old battle between Traditional publishing or Self Publishing, which is better? Hopefully the articles on the following pages will help you make your mind up. First of all we here the case for self publishing. Then on the following the case for Traditional publishing

Why should you self-publish?

Over recent years there has been an explosion in self-published books, as it has become easier and easier to publish your book yourself. This poses writers with a new quandary: continue to pursue publication through the traditional means, or jump into the world of self-publishing? As the rejections from traditional publishers pile up it can be tempting to reach for the control and certainty of self-publishing. Should you give into the temptation, or stick to your guns?

Isn't it just vanity publishing?

Modern self-publishing is quite different from the vanity publishing of times gone by. A vanity publisher would often pose or at least seek to appear to be a traditional publisher, inviting submissions and issuing congratulatory letters of acceptance to everyone who submitted – only slowly revealing the large fees the author would have to pay to cover the cost of printing the books.

Once the books were printed, the vanity publisher would deliver them to the author then cut and run. The author would be left with a big hole in their pocket and a mountain of boxes of books that they would be unlikely to ever sell a fraction of.

Modern self-publishing, on the other hand, is provided not by shady dealers but by some of the biggest companies involved in the publishing industry, including Penguin and Amazon. It doesn't have the large fees that vanity publishing did (depending on the path you choose and your own knowledge and technical ability it can cost almost nothing to get your book published); it *does* offer a viable means of selling your books (they can appear on the biggest bookselling websites around the world); and it *doesn't* leave you with a house full of unwanted books, because modern technology means that a copy of your book only gets printed when it's actually ordered.

That isn't to say that there aren't still shady characters out there trying to take advantage of authors' vanity by charging them enormous fees for publishing a book that stands very little chance of success, but it does mean that self-publishing – done right – can be a viable and cost effective way of an author taking their book to market.

The benefits of self-publishing

The main benefit of self-publishing, of course, is that the author gets control of whether their book is published or not. There is no need to spend years submitting to countless agents and publishers, building up countless heart-breaking rejection letters, and possibly accepting in the end that your dreams of publication will never come true – you can make them come true.

And this need not be pure vanity on the author's part. Almost every successful book – even such massive hits as *Harry Potter* – usually build up a string of rejections before someone finally accepts them. The professionals that authors rely on when going through the traditional publishing process – the literary agents and the editors – are often, it seems, just not that good at spotting what the public are going to buy. How many potential bestsellers might languish forever in the slush pile, just because agents and editors fail to spot them? What if your book is one of them? The traditional publishing process forces you to rely on the good judgment of others, but the self-publishing process enables you to sidestep that barrier and take your book directly to the public, so that readers can decide for themselves.

self-publishing also allows you to keep control in other areas. You won't have an editor trying to change your text, and you'll have complete control over what kind of cover your book receives.

“Almost every successful book – even such massive hits as Harry Potter – usually build up a string of rejections before someone finally accepts them.”

Finally, with no publisher or team of editors and accountants taking their slice, you'll probably get to keep a lot more of the retail price of every book you sell. So if you can sell the same amount of books as if you were traditionally published, you'll stand to make a lot more money.

The drawbacks of self-publishing

While self-publishing can guarantee that your book will be available for sale, it cannot guarantee that it will actually sell. Your self-published book will probably have a much lower

chance of achieving significant sales than if it had been published traditionally, because it will lack the support that a mainstream publisher could bring. You will have no marketing support, no established position in the marketplace, and no PR – unless you do it yourself. You will have to arrange your own book tours; you will have to do your own sales pitches; you will have to set your own pricing structure; and you will have to manage your own accounts and tax affairs. If you're selling through Amazon or Smash words or Apple (and if you're not, then why did you bother self-publishing in the first place?) you're going to need to fill in the relevant forms with the IRS (the US tax office) – whether you're a US citizen or not. If you're not a US citizen then you'll have to register with the IRS and complete the necessary tax forms, and potentially other forms for claiming treaty benefits so that you don't get taxed twice (in the US and your home country). And then of course you'll also have to register for tax purposes in your home nation and complete your own tax return there (though you would also have to do this as a traditionally published author).

It can all get very complicated, very confusing, and very lonely. Instead of being able to just be a writer you can find yourself writing less and less and becoming more and more embroiled in the business of publishing a book.

And while it's great to have control over your text and your cover, you'd be ill advised to ignore the value that professionals such as editors and cover designers can bring. It's tempting to think that you don't need an editor – that you've checked the book and had a friend or family member check it too, so it's probably fine – but a professional editor brings a totally different mindset to the process and will check things that won't have even occurred to you and your reader. Without a professional editor, you will almost certainly end up publishing a book which is full of embarrassing mistakes, and trust me – there is no feeling quite as deflating as opening up the first copy of your freshly printed book to see an obvious error jump out – or, even worse, to have it pointed out in an Amazon review, for all to see.

The cover is also incredibly important. Whether for sale on the shelf or on a website, the cover is normally the first point of contact your potential reader has with your book, and will cause them to form immediate opinions about it. A good cover can help a book sell well, but a bad one can kill its chances – and all too often self-published books have amateurish covers

"The cover is also incredibly important. Whether for sale on the shelf or on a website, the cover is normally the first point of contact your potential reader has with your book,"

that will have readers flicking past them without a second glance.

Finally, the financial benefits of self-publishing can often be illusory. For starters, getting a higher proportion of the retail price is pretty irrelevant if you don't sell any copies. Fifty per cent of nothing is still nothing. Far better to have 15% of something. And then there's the advances. Advances are up-front payments made by traditional publishers to authors, which are off-set against future royalties. So, an author might receive a £5,000 advance before their book is published. When the royalties start coming in, the publisher keeps the first £5,000 to off-set the advance. The good news for the author is that if the book flops and doesn't make £5,000 in royalties they still get to keep the full advance. In an uncertain profession, the security of an advance can be invaluable for an

author – and of course it's not something available to self-published authors.

Conclusion

Self-publishing can seem like a tempting shortcut to publication, but in reality it has its own challenges and difficulties. For the moment at least, traditional publishing still offers you the best shot of not only financial success, but also quality of life as a writer. With other people to handle all the other elements of publishing, you get to concentrate on doing what you love.

So we think that writers should always aim for traditional publishing first. It might be a long shot, but if it works then you stand a much better chance of being successful. If you don't manage to get signed by an agent or a publisher then you still have the option of self-publishing, but make sure you don't get tempted to resort to self-publishing too soon – most agents and publishers won't consider self-published works, so this is a one-way street. Once you've self-published your work, you probably won't be able to change your mind and go back to the traditional publishers with your book unless it becomes a huge hit without them. It's therefore important that you exhaust all your traditional publishing options before making the leap to self-publishing. Be prepared for this to take perhaps a few years (lots of agents and publishers can take six months just to respond), and make sure you've submitted to everyone you can on *both* sides of the Atlantic (publishing is a global game these days, and you need to concentrate on the two main centres of English-language publishing (New York and London) equally) before you make the decision to self-publish instead.

Why choose traditional publishing?

However, once you have exhausted all options for traditional publishing, modern self-publishing does offer a genuine alternative path to success, and there are a growing number of self-published authors who have managed to sell millions of copies of their books. If you don't think traditional publishing is going to be an option, we definitely think you should give self-publishing a shot.

Back in 2001, there were only two games in town when it came to getting your book published: traditional publishing, and vanity publishing – and which you should pick was a no-brainer. Vanity publishing was little more than a scam that would leave you with an empty bank account and a house full of unsold books. If you were serious about being a writer, you had to follow the traditional publishing path.

Since then, there has been a self-publishing revolution, with new technologies and new printing methods giving writers a genuine opportunity to get their books into the market by themselves. So, in 2021, is there still a reason for writers to choose traditional publishing?

The benefits of traditional publishing

Despite the allure and apparent ease of self-publishing, the traditional path still offers you the best chance of making a success of being a writer. There are rare cases where self-published writers make staggering fortunes and become internationally renowned on the back of their self-published books, but these cases are few and far between, and a tiny

drop in the rapidly expanding ocean of self-published works. The vast majority of successful books – and the vast majority of successful writers – have their homes firmly in the established publishing houses. Even those self-published authors who find success usually end up moving to a traditional publisher in the end.

This is because the traditional publishers have the systems, the market presence, and the financial clout to *make* a book a bestseller. While successful self-published authors often owe their success in no small part to a decent dose of luck (a social media comment that goes viral; the right mention on the right media outlet at the right time), traditional publishers are in the business of engineering that success. They might not always succeed, but they have the marketing budgets and the distribution channels in place to give themselves, and the book they are promoting, the best possible chance.

And it's not just the marketing and the distribution. Getting signed with a traditional publisher brings a whole team of people with a wealth of expertise that will all work towards the success of the book. It will provide you with an editor who may have experience of working on previous bestsellers, who will not only help you get rid of mistakes in your work but may also help you refine it into a better book. They will help make sure that the quality of your content is good enough to make it in the marketplace.

"Getting signed with a traditional publisher brings a whole team of people with a wealth of expertise that will all work towards the success of the book"

The publishers will source a professional cover designer who will make your book look the part on the shelves and on the pages of the bookselling websites. They will have accountants who will handle the technicalities of tax regimes both home and abroad. They will have overseas contacts for establishing foreign publishing rights; translations; etc. They may even have contacts in the film industry, should there be a prospect of a movie adaptation. They will have experts working on every aspect of your book, right down to the printing and the warehousing and the shipping of the physical products. They will have people to manage the eBook conversion and the electronic distribution. As an author, you don't need to worry about any of this.

This means you get more time to simply be a writer. You may have to go on book tours, but even these will be organised for you by PR experts, who will also be handling all the press releases, etc.

And then there's the advances. Advances are up-front payments made by traditional publishers to authors, which are off-set against future royalties. So, an author might receive a £5,000 advance before their book is published. When the royalties start coming in, the publisher keeps the first £5,000 to off-set the advance. The good news for the author is that if the book flops and doesn't make £5,000 in royalties they still get to keep the full advance. In an uncertain profession, the security of an advance can be invaluable for an author – and of course it's not something available to self-published authors.

The drawbacks of traditional publishing

The main downside of traditional publishing is just that it's so hard to get into. If you choose to self-publish then – provided you have enough perseverance, the right help and advice, and

perhaps a little bit of money – you are guaranteed to succeed and see your book in print and for sale. With traditional publishing, the cold hard fact is that most people who try will not succeed. And for many of those people who fail it may not even be their fault. That aspect of traditional publishing which can bring so many benefits as compared to self-publishing – that of being part of a team – can also be part of its biggest drawback. It means that you have to get other people to buy into your book. It means that you have to rely on other people being competent enough to spot a bestseller. Many failed to spot the potential of the Harry Potter books. How many potential bestsellers never make it into print just because none of the professionals at the publishers' gates manage to recognise their potential?

"With traditional publishing, the cold hard fact is that most people who try will not succeed. And for many of those people who fail it may not even be their fault."

So if you choose traditional publishing your destiny is not in your own hands – and for some writers the lack of exclusive control can also be a problem. Sometimes writers get defensive when editors try to tinker with their work, or annoyed when cover artists don't realise their vision the way they expect. But this is hardly a fair criticism of traditional publishing, as most writers (particularly when they are starting out) will benefit from advice from experienced professionals in the field, and will often only be shooting themselves in the foot if they insist on ignoring it.

The final main drawback with traditional publishing is that less of the sale price of each copy makes it to the writer. A typical royalty contract will give the writer 15%. With a self-published book, the author can expect to receive much more. So, all other things being equal, the self-published route can be more profitable – but, of course, all things are not equal. If self-publishing means lower sales (as is likely), then you will probably make less money overall. Remember, it's better to have 15% of something than 50% of nothing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our advice to writers would be to aim for traditional publishing first. It might be a long shot, but if it works then you stand a much better chance of being successful. If you don't manage to get signed by an agent or a publisher then you still have the option of self-publishing, but make sure you don't get tempted to resort to self-publishing too soon – most agents and publishers won't consider self-published works, so this is a one-way street. Once you've self-published your work, you probably won't be able to change your mind and go back to the traditional publishers with your book unless it becomes a huge hit without them. It's therefore important that you exhaust all your traditional publishing options before making the leap to self-publishing. Be prepared for this to take perhaps a few years (lots of agents and publishers can take six months just to respond), and make sure you've submitted to everyone you can on *both* sides of the Atlantic (publishing is a global game these days, and you need to concentrate on the two main centres of English-language publishing (New York and London) equally) before you make the decision to self-publish instead.



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Mages Fury

I stood there relived at least Emile was finally dead. I knew Merenne would have liked to deal the killing blow. I turned to face the horde amassing hundreds of feet in front of us they were a shambling mass of bones coupled with rotted and rusting weapons. It was their bodies that shocked me, their skulls had purple orbs where their eyes were meant to be, holding it all together in a macabre manner was parchment-like skin. I looked along the lines and there was one being looking more putrid than the others with a tarnished crown. I focussed on it and it raised its crude glaive toward us and the horde charged. It was unsettling, to say the least. I looked further back and I saw another giant creature must be one of the other horsemen. By the retinue in front of him, this must be death himself.

'Merenne you ready?' I said

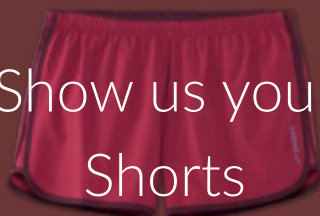
'Cleansing fire?' She asked.

'Of course, you use fire against the undead.' She gave me a tired look then a wicked smile.

'This won't take long.' Khazak said

'Aye Lord Khazak. There is nothing like a Mages fury.' Henry

Show us your Shorts



said swinging his axe

Merenne and I shouted the same incantation 'ignis purgationis' and a flash of flame from the ground rose in amongst the foul ranks this halted the charge. The smell of staleness permeated the battleground like an old building aflame. I felt the tinge of pain burning down my arm

which dissipated into my sword. I had the acrid taste of vomit which I spat out.

After the smoke cleared my resolve seemed to waiver I looked out over the field and I saw several scores of undead fiends still charging.

'Not Again?' Merenne said

'Ignis purgationis' I replied flames leaping.

By Dean Hodsfray,

Dean usually writes short ghost stories but has ventured into Epic Fantasy novels and is interested in writing Horror, Fantasy and Thriller.

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