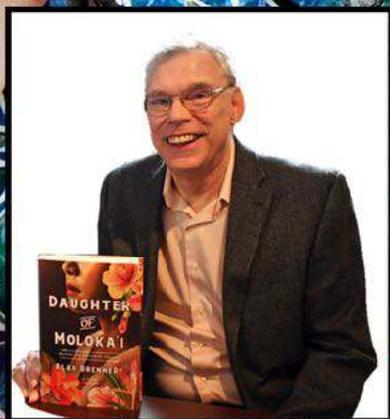
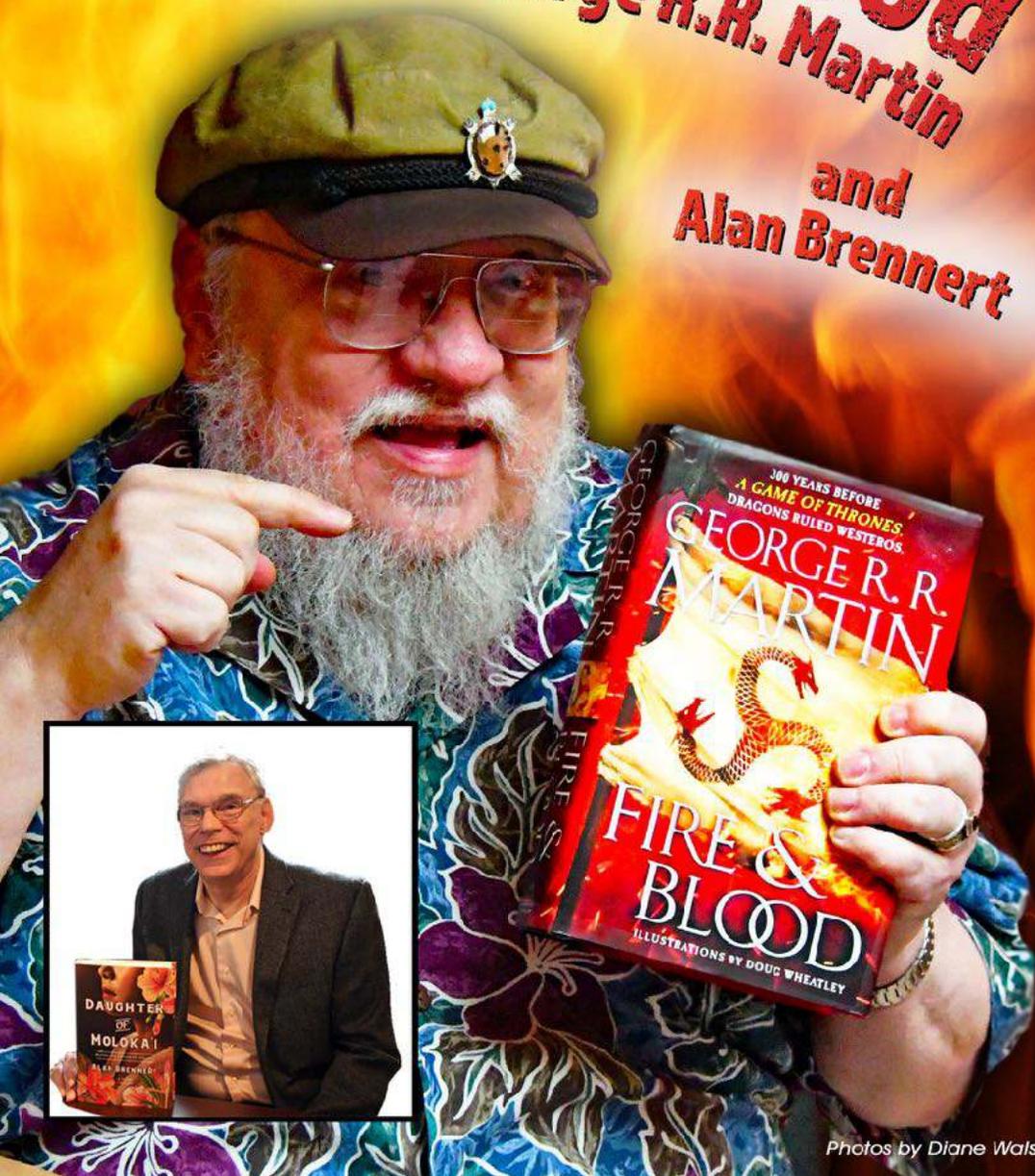


# BOOKS *in* PIECES Magazine

Interviews with Bestselling & New Authors • Stories • Pro-Self-Publishing Tips

**MARCH 2019**

## Fire & Blood with George R.R. Martin and Alan Brennert



Photos by Diane Walsh

*March 2019*

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## FROM THE PUBLISHER

It's **March 2019**, if you can believe that. I'm not sure I can.

The measure of any publication is by the quality of its content; in our case our interviews and short stories.

In the past we have interviewed **Robert J. Sawyer**, one of the giants in the science fiction field, along with many other bestselling authors from **Peter James**, a giant in crime, **Tosca Lee**, **KJ Howe**, **JC Ryan**, **Mike Wells**, and very, many more.

In this issue we are grateful for the opportunity to include an interview with **George RR Martin**, a giant in his field, and a household name to anyone who enjoys the hit show ***Game of Thrones***. **Jill Hedgecock**, an award-winning author herself, who writes our book review column, offers an exclusive interview with George which took place in New Mexico.

In short, we strive for quality and we want **YOU** to enjoy reading **Books 'N Pieces Magazine**. And you can read each issue **FREE Online**, or buy a print copy at a very reasonable price through Amazon. But to keep doing this **WE NEED ADVERTISING** to help pay the bills. We prefer

publicists, publishing companies, and authors as advertisers so that we can offer **LOW RATES**. This helps us, helps them, and offers our readers advertising that isn't just annoying. So please tell your publisher, your publicist, your manager—whomever decides on where to spend your advertising budget—that WE are an excellent place to do so.

Enjoy this issue, and please let us know your thoughts. If you would like a print copy, we have made those available on Amazon for a low price.

Best wishes,



William Gensburger

*william@BooksNPieces.com*

## INTERVIEW

# TONY BUSSEY

The Weight of the Word



**Q:** Which was harder, losing the weight (567-pounds minus 330 pounds) or writing the book?

**A:** I would definitely have to say losing weight was the hardest part. To break years of habits and not to go back to my old comfort zone of eating every time I was lonely or depressed was difficult at first, but as I continued on and started to lose weight, it got easier and easier. Also the

physical pain of walking in the beginning wasn't easy. To walk with almost 600 pounds on my frame and no socks, was unbearable at times and on top of that, the withdrawal of sugar and junk food, made for a tough combination.



Q: When you made the decision to write record the experience, had you any prior writing experience?

A: I didn't have any prior writing experience at all. I wrote a few essay papers when I was in college, but even then, I wasn't very good at it. That is why having a ghostwriter help me with it was very important.

Q: What were the steps you took getting this into a book?

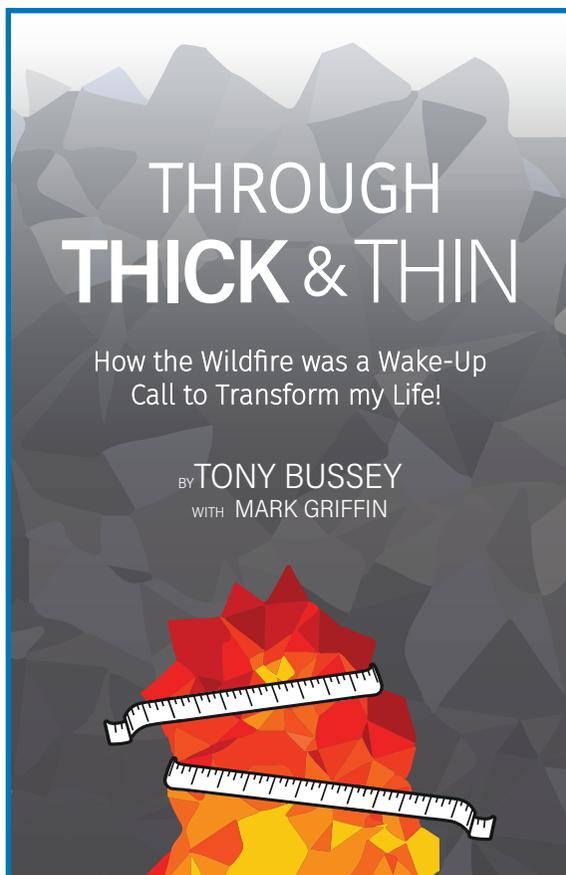
A: Mark Griffen [ghostwriter] and I had a mutual friend that put us in touch. We had our initial phone call last spring and it went from there. Last November, I flew down to Ontario and met with mark. We spent a few days together and sat down and talked. He asked a lot of tough questions and had a way of bringing stuff out that was hard to talk about, but needed for the book. He recorded the answers to questions and then from that point on, turned it into a book.



Q: You self-published your book. How did that decision come about as opposed to going the traditional route?

A: I am self published. Mark and I just figured that putting it on Amazon right away was quicker and easier to get it out

there. I had some interviews coming up, so we wanted it done by then. I would love to go the traditional route and get it into stores, so hopefully that will happen soon.



Click to learn more or to Buy this book:> <https://amzn.to/2Udlv17>

Q: What's the worst part of the writing experience? Best part?

A: the worst part of writing the book is just talking about things that I had buried for a long time. I'm not the easiest person to talk about feelings or emotions, but I wanted to share the hard truth of what it was like to be obese and the struggles that came with that , so anyone reading it and struggling themselves, can have hope that it can be beat if me at almost 600 pounds and no tricks, just hard work and determination, can lose the weight and keep it off

Q: Do you plan further writing?

A: I'm not sure about further writing, but I am willing to do whatever it takes to try and inspire people and get my story out there. ■

## SHORT STORY

# THE LITTLE AMERICAN BLONDE

by Gene Parola

"Go play with yourself," Diti had said in careful English.

Mike smiled again in recollection. It was the only time politics had ever gotten in the way of his love life.

Well, he had been hungry, anyway.

Now, as he approached the restaurant he could see Nick at his station on the curb. He took the paperback from his waistband where he had tucked it--after he failed to convince Diti that she should make his last night on Cyprus a memorable one.

Diti was a native and could have her pick of the handsome tourists who were just now arriving to enjoy Cyprus' early Spring. Even at the beginning she had been only nominally interested. Then she asked about the book and politics prevented any further progress.

The novel was set against the background of the 1974 coup and the subsequent division of Cyprus into Greek and Turkish sectors. Blue helmeted UN/Canadian peace keepers still manned the separating ‘Green Zone’ and lately one had been accidentally killed in a foolish skirmish by youths of the two sides. The soldier’s death stirred the regular fuss made by the readers of *The Star* about Canada’s more than half-century role in Cyprus and had prompted his editor to send Mike on this research trip.

He had been trying to learn more about the short war and the current attitudes of those who participated. But he had found few who were willing to open up such a painful period in their past. His Canadian residency and employment seemed not to make any difference. No matter how careful he was to stress the difference, Canadians and Americans were mixed up in many Island minds. And Canadians ‘peace keepers’ had fought in the war.

“I think you are all alike,” Diti had muttered. It appeared that from the Cypriot point of view, it was still necessary to find someone to blame.

Diti brought more heat than light to the subject.

"It had been one of those dark moments in the Cold War when the end justified any means," Mike had quoted from the book's cover.

"Yes," Diti sneered. "In this case the end was a divided Cyprus, with the lives of 200,000 people permanently wrenched apart." She paused to swallow the lump that rose in her throat as she talked of the youth of the island who first fought the Cypriot coup plotters, then the Turkish army. "It was a ploy by the CIA to dislodge the *junta* of Colonels in Athens," she hissed. "Greece!! Cyprus was sacrificed for Greece!!"

"According to the book, it was to 'stabilize the sagging flank of NATO,' " he again quoted. But she was having none of it. Then he brought up the killing of the American ambassador by the rioting Cypriots. "An innocent man who had been sacrificed, in ignorance, by the faltering Nixon administration."

She didn't buy that either. "You Americans! You are so naïvé. You have fought so many wars, yet have not been changed by any of them. Like children playing—how you say—cowboys and Indian...you still shout 'bang, bang you're dead' and expect the playmate to get up,

brush off and play some more." She stood up, "Go play with yourself."

"Canadian! I'm Canadian!" he shouted, smiling at the double-entendre.

"*Touché*," he said, in an affable attempt to draw her back, but she just arched an eyebrow and strode off down the beach. Pity too, he thought. 'Diti' was short for Aphrodite.

Now, he was famished. The *Elkion* sloshed about in his empty stomach. He had gotten so involved in the book that he had failed to have lunch and Diti had already eaten when he bought the bottle of wine to launch that fruitless campaign. He would be early for dinner, but all Americans were. Octopus in red wine sauce--Nick's chef made the best on the island.

Nick clucked feigned disapproval, all the while smiling and grasping Mike's hand in his great warm paw. "And where have you been, Cowboy? Don't tell me, I know, Ayia Napa. Where the topless Swedes have arrived." Mike's Levis and the flat crowned straw hat he wore, gave Nick license for the 'cowboy' tag.

He was gently pushing, pulling, guiding...leading Mike to the small sidewalk table near the door where he

could watch all of the night's little dramas as they unfolded here and in the restaurant beyond.

It had been almost a week since he had eaten at Nick's. He had had dinner there the first night on the island and had enjoyed the food and the parade of characters that had arrayed themselves for his study and amusement. He'd come back every day or two since, until the second weekend which he had spent in Paphos at the other end of the island.

"They were in Paphos," Mike managed to say. The gaggle of tall topless Swedish women dotting the beach had indeed delayed his return to Larnaca. Now it was Wednesday and he was to fly home tomorrow.

Nick released him in order to pull out the table. His gregarious, Zorba-like romantic image had been copied from the famous film, Mike guessed, or maybe a sassy father or uncle. These restaurants were almost all family owned. In the course of a single evening Mike had witnessed a three generation quality control squad weave in and out of the place looking, checking, stopping by--to straighten the sign or the cloth on a sidewalk table. To kibitz. To be a part of the business.

Nick knew Mike was a reporter, not a cowboy, yet Mike suspected that there was a palpable wish that he was. The Cypriot fascination for the romanticized West didn't include Calgary perhaps, but it was a preferred image of America. Better than a constant and not gentle reminder of what many astute Islanders detected as Dr. Kissinger's fine hand in the partition.

Nick repositioned the table after his guest was comfortably seated. Then, leaning over, ostensibly to brush away a crumb, he whispered, "Well, I know a gentleman doesn't talk of these things, but did you lie in the lap of Aphrodite while in Paphos?" And he winked an exaggerated, macho wink.

"Yes, her name was Helen, I think." Mike shot back with a grin.

"Impossible," Nick said, returning the ball immediately. "That's the name of a good Cypriot girl." And the baritone chuckle bubbled forth as he turned to meet an approaching English couple and wooed them to his food.

He was good, Mike thought. A real people person.

"And was she pretty? This Cypriot girl you brag of seducing?" Nick smiled down at him between potential patrons.

"Like all Cypriot women--beautiful. Brown eyed and henna haired."

Nick nodded and moved to meet two women in their sixties who might have been twenty by the way he flattered and charmed them. He was good, Mike thought again. He was very good. He seemed to be able to read each couple at a glance, determining nationality--sometimes greeting them in their native tongue--noting a sporting interest by a t-shirt logo or a pair of boating shoes. He often commented knowledgeably on a home country or a home town that had been volunteered by the flattered guest. He could even handle the haughty British pensioners who initially regarded his assertive effort as being crass--until they paused long enough to fall under his spell.

Sometimes, Mike thought, it bordered on the occult. How had he guessed that the Austrian couple raised horses? What made him ask the Italian about leather? The guy was good. And once he had your measure, he could get you to agree to almost anything he suggested.

The waiter brought his salad, remembering the American penchant for dining in reverse, and Mike began a mouthful with: "Now, I know gentlemen don't talk about these things," he beckoned the attendant Nick to lean over, the better to hear, "but how did you make out with that little American blonde last week?" He had returned to his salad as he spoke. Nick's hand, pausing in mid-reach for the paperback, caused Mike to look up quickly enough to see a shadow cross the big man's face. Then it was gone and he casually flipped through the pages of the book.

"You mean Eleni." It was a statement and he nodded vaguely at the tall, thin, nondescript Cypriot girl who stood guard inside at a table near the kitchen door. Mike suspected that Nick was being pressured to marry Eleni because her family was in the business too...and after all, wouldn't it be a good idea to join two such hard-working families, eh?

"No, I don't mean her," Mike smiled but did not look up. "I mean the little American blonde in the tight jeans that you were so cozy with on Thursday night after you took Eleni home."

He hadn't realized that Nick had moved away and when he looked up the big man stood at the sidewalk's edge leafing through the book in deep concentration.

The preceding Thursday evening had been the last time Mike had eaten at Nick's and in his fashion, he people-watched all night--filing away images, snatches of conversation, glimpses into the lives of strangers--all he hoped to use one day when he could write for himself instead of to a deadline.

He had noticed the guy and the two American girls. They were the only other people in the place when he had arrived. Typically American, they were hungry an hour before any self-respecting European would venture into an eatery. They were sitting at a table at the left end of the bar that night. Nick had divided his charms between them and Mike, and slipped into the chair next to Eleni at the end of each circuit. Somewhere in the conversation it was revealed that the girls were artists, the guy a musician. Finally, after the girls had picked at the very sweet *baklava*, Nick had served the complementary glasses of *Commanderia* himself, explaining at length that this fine Cypriot port was the first in the world to have a name of its own. The Americans had been duly

impressed with both the quality of the wine and the quantity of attention, but departed soon after, leaving Mike alone at the sidewalk table until the other diners began to arrive an hour later.

It was then that Eleni had begun to fret and had asked to be taken home. Passing the greeter's baton to his cousin, *comme* head waiter, Nick did as she asked. He returned a few minutes later to find the same rental BMW that had whisked the Americans away, again parked at the curb--a car length farther south, on Nick's side of the road. The little blonde, alone now, was behind the wheel of the right-hand drive car and her window was down a few inches. She had talked earnestly to Nick through the narrow gap.

Nick had been the consummate Casanova. Leaning on the car, he flattered, he cooed, he urged, he promised--but he removed his hand from the window sill regularly to greet a guest or open a door for one departing, or wave goodnight to another.

The car window came down by degrees and finally a beaming hand covered Nick's. He talked, the hand flicked a something from his lapel. He flattered, the hand, bangles cascading, brushed a fallen curl from his

forehead. He cooed, and a finger was placed against his mouth to silence it. It was withdrawn, kissed by very red lips and pressed against his again.

Then there had come the only two words for Mike to hear: "Midnight, then?" Nick had nodded in response and the BMW sped into the night.

"If you're really interested in this stuff," Nick tossed the paperback onto the table, "I can introduce you to some of the people who were a part of it. No fiction. Real stuff." The easy going look had disappeared for a moment from the intrinsically happy countenance. "My father was killed in the mess. I was a baby. My uncle Theo and two cousins also died. Every family lost members--mostly young and in their prime. Then the wrenching of the two populations apart--Turks to the north, Cypriots to the south..." He shook his head.

Was this what Mike had looked for in vain for two weeks—hiding right here behind the hail-fellow, smiling, womanizer facade?

"She was there too," Mike said, indicating the book's author.

"Yes," Nick said, pausing a moment. "But there are many stories and many did not live to tell theirs. Our best

young artists were killed, our best writers did not survive to speak for them. There are some who lived it who must tell the things that are not set down on paper. To right the wrongs."

And those, thought Mike, are what I've been listening for.

"Great. When can we do it? My flight doesn't leave until six tomorrow evening. If that's too tight, I can stay on another day." Mike finished off his wine. "My compliments to the chef. His sauce is better every time I have it."

"It's always better later in the week." Nick said absently. "He makes it on Monday, so by Wednesday or Thursday the spices have blended.... Why not tonight? I'll call some old friends." The sparkle had returned to his eyes. He was the gracious host again. "We'll go up tonight when I close here. We'll drive into a Cypriot dawn and be in the mountains for breakfast." His smile was as broad as the dawn Mike imagined. Could he be talking about Kapasia, Mike wondered. That was the only place east that would take four or five hours to reach. That was Turkish-held Cyprus. Why go there? How was he going to pull this off?

Nick had turned on his heel to open the door for a couple wearing tee shirts advertising a resort on the Rhine.

Mike nursed his Irish Coffee. Then he nursed his *Commanderia*. Then he chatted gaily with the elderly English lady who recognized him from his hotel's breakfast room.

The crowd swelled, thinned, swelled and thinned again. At 12:15 Nick's task was over. The cousin could handle the last good-nights. He checked quickly with the cashier on the day's receipts and scanned the schedule for tomorrow's help. He ducked into the kitchen to see about a late delivery of some produce and when he returned he was again the perfect example of the jovial, expansive, stereotypical, fun-loving Greek. He was a youth anticipating a night of masculine mischief.

"Come, before we go, let me show you around." He ushered Mike upstairs into an office where he twirled the dial of a safe to, and then past, the first three numbers of the combination, leaving the last for the cashier when he made his deposit. Then he snatched up the phone and stabbed at it from memory. The Greek-Cypriot *patois* rattled along too fast for Mike to follow, but he gathered

that the way was being paved for their visit. He caught references to there being two in the party and to some special arrangements for either a fishing trip or fish for lunch. Mike couldn't be sure, but it was sure to be nice. They would be there at about five if there were no delays. Before he could determine much more, his host hung up and was ushering him out the door.

"We'll take my car," Nick said. "One more thing before we go. Something to take with us. It's from my private stock." He led the way down to a room behind the kitchen. Taking a ring of keys from his belt, he stopped in front of the massive door of a walk-in refrigerator.

"This is where I keep all my prize stuff." He winked as he removed the long-shanked pad lock. "No one can get in here but me." He swung the door open, walked into the dark, cool interior and snapped on a small lamp over a freezer chest. Opening it he said, "Take a look at this. You can't get these anywhere on the island. I have a nephew that flies for Cyprus Airlines. He brings them in for me." He lifted the lid just as Mike arrived at his side and bending over the deep chest, he brushed the frost

from the large, clear plastic package that filled the bottom of the machine.

"Take a look," he said again, straightening up and allowing Mike to lean over in his place. Mike bent down but his breath fogged the package again and he had to brush away the newly formed frost.

Then he could see Nick's prize clearly.

The little American blonde.

This guy is *really* good, Mike thought as he twisted to avoid the coming blow. But, as in everything since the mention of the blonde, Nick was away ahead of him.

The chop snapped Mike's neck and with a little help, he tumbled conveniently into the chest.

"Another one?" Eleni asked from the door.

"Yes. A writer." Nick said without turning. "For Uncle Theo."

"A reporter!" Eleni challenged

"He wanted to be a writer. Like Uncle."

He made a check against the list on a clipboard hanging over the freezer.

"Is the car in the alley?" he asked, tiredly. ■

## About The Author



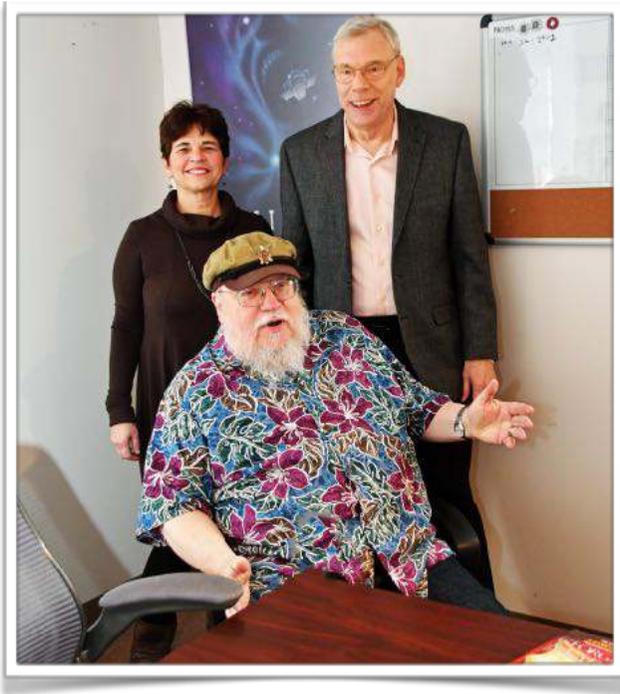
Historian Gene J. Parola, retired from Koç University in Istanbul, Turkey and returned to Hawai'i to delve into Kanaka history. "Lehua, Ka'ao a ka Wahine," his Prize Winning Historical Novel, has kept him in research for most of ten years. Mr. Parola has published two mysteries 'The Devil to Pay', based on a Kennedy assassination theory, and 'Old Sins, New Sinners', based on his years in the Middle East. He also has three collections of short stories. He is a long-distance sailor, wood sculptor, lecturer and grandfather of three. He lives in Hawai'i with his author wife, Shirley Tong Parola.

## INTERVIEW

# Writing Doesn't Come Easy: An Interview with George R.R. Martin and Alan Brennert

by Jill Hedgecock

*Photos by Diane Walsh*

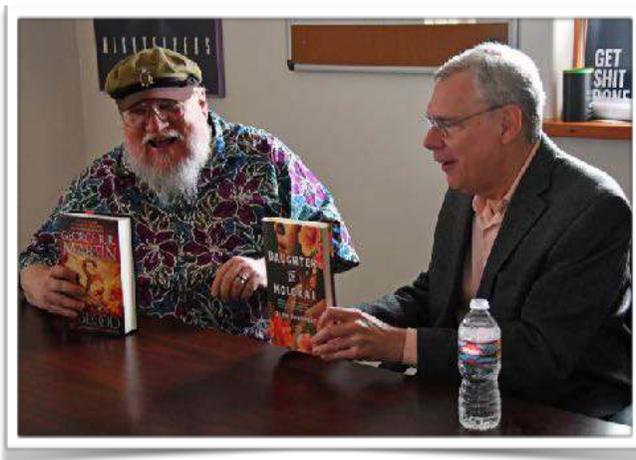


Jill Hedgecock with George R.R. Martin and Alan Brennert

On the crisp winter afternoon of February 24, multi-award winning author, George R.R. Martin strides into his Jean Cocteau Cinema wearing a Hawaiian shirt , despite the crisp winter afternoon here, in his hometown of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

While this might seem odd, his attire was perfectly suited for an on-stage author event with Alan Brennert, who had flown to New Mexico as part of his book tour, promoting his newly-released Hawaiian novel, “Daughter of Molokai,” the sequel to “Molokai.”

So how did this author event come to be? The answer is that Brennert and Martin had first discussed the idea over a Chinese dinner in Santa Monica. Brennert and Martin have enjoyed a friendship that has spanned over 40 years.

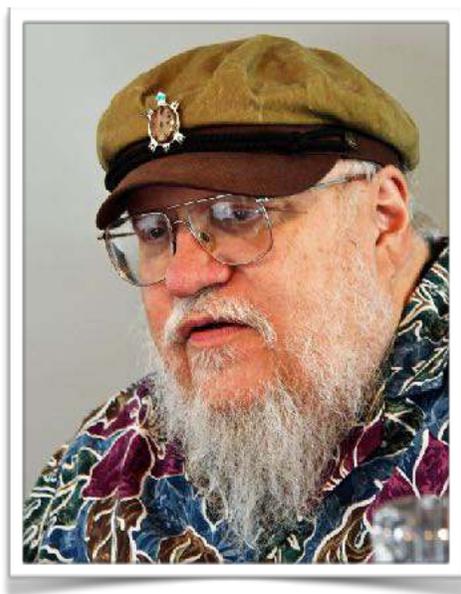


George R.R. Martin and Alan Brennert discussing their books.

“We’re actually the same person,” Martin says. “Kid from New Jersey who writes science fiction, publishes a few short stories, nominated for the Campbell Award, loses the Campbell award.”

Brennert and Martin chuckle then Brennert jokingly adds “I’m not over it yet” which causes yet another round of laughter.

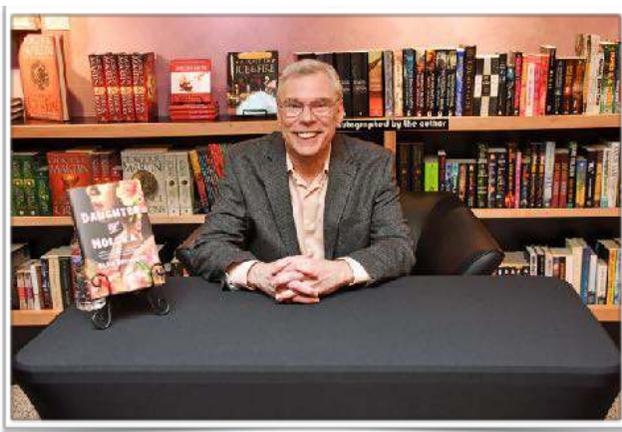
### **WE WERE POOR**



The conversation slowly shifts to Brennert’s popular novel setting. Martin explains that while he has visited Hawaii several times, he hasn’t been there nearly as many

times as Alan. But when I ask what is at the top of his travel bucket list, Martin's response is "everywhere."

"I grew up in New Jersey and we were poor," Martin explains. "We lived in a federal housing project. We didn't even have a car. We went nowhere. Wanting to see the world was something I always aspired to do. And I never went anywhere until my thirties and forties. The world is filled with fascinating places."



Brennert, on the other hand, has no problem identifying his specific top travel destination: The South Pacific. He explains that while he had never been to this region, he reads a lot of books and memoirs by writers like James Norman Hall, the co-author of "Mutiny on the Bounty." Brennert is particularly intrigued by American expatriots, World War I veterans recovering from their battle experiences who retreat to places like Bora Bora and Tahiti as a place to heal. And there are tiny islands like Suvarrow Atoll where Robert Dean Frisbie and his children survived a

hurricane by lashing themselves to palm trees and I'd liked to have seen that.

### **BUYING A SMALL THEATRE**

The conversation changes to the evening's venue. Martin, who bought the 1910-era Jean Cocteau Cinema in 2013, says the greatest challenge he faces owning the historic cinema is getting people to come to it.

“The small theater,” Martin says, “competes with the chains and the multiplexes. It’s hard to get the big movies and even when we do, people want to see them on a bigger screen. Before I bought it, I remember someone saying that it was Santa Fe’s most beloved movie theater. And I think that’s true. This theater has a lot of history and people do enjoy coming here. It was great to bring it back.”

Martin adds that it’s not just a movie theater: there are special events held here as well as an art gallery downstairs. Still, the author events are his favorite part of owning a theater venue.



## THE THRONES OF THE TURTLES

George had previously explained—on late night television talk-shows—that his inspiration for Game of Thrones (GOT) was a result of his pet turtles. As a boy, he owned dime store turtles as pets, and two turtle bowls fit inside his toy castle. The little reptiles kept dying, and his young mind decided that his pets were perishing because they were competing for the throne. Hence, his first epic fantasy was Turtle Castle.

His young mind was clearly inclined to embrace fantasy. As a fifteen-year-old boy, his first publication was actually in “Marvel Comics” when he sent a fan letter to the magazine. However, it wasn’t until 1976 when Martin’s first book of short stories was published. “A Song for Lya and Other Stories,” was followed by a novel, “Dying of the Light” in 1977. That and other short fiction won three Hugo Awards and two Nebula Awards. Then he got swept up by Hollywood in the mid-1980s, contributing to “The Twilight Zone” until 1986, when he and Brennert worked closely together. In 1991, Martin started writing the first book in his “A Song of Fire and Ice” series. Five years later, the beginning of the “Game of Thrones” series, first appeared on bookshelves. Martin has been immersing himself in his version of medieval Earth—also known as *Westeros*—ever since, to the delight of his gigantic fan base.

## THE LOVE OF WOLVES

In addition to dragons, “Game of Thrones” includes direwolves. In the GOT show, the “actors” are a group of Northern Inuit Dogs, a crossbred relative of the Siberian husky. Yet the GOT direwolves have roots in reality. A canid species called direwolves, now extinct, roamed our planet during the Pleistocene era, about 250,000 to 10,000 years ago. These real-life wolves are close relatives of the modern gray wolf.

Martin’s involvement in Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary (WSWS) came to be because these furry beasts figured prominently in some of his novels—and because Martin’s fan group, *Brotherhood Without Banners* honored his wife, Parris McBride-Martin, with a holiday present.



Flurry

“After Brotherhood Without Banners formed, they would send me Christmas gifts,” Martin said. “One year they sponsored a wolf in Parris’ name. She was mother to a particular wolf at Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary. Brotherhood Without Banners made a donation that was big enough to feed that wolf for one year. She loved that. We went down and visited that wolf. They do good work down there.”

WSWS currently houses several wolves with GOT connections: a pure Arctic wolf named Flurry who makes frequent appearances at Jean Cocteau Cinema; and six, pure

white, high-content wolves, known as the Westeros pack—the only relationship to the show are their names.



Jill Hedgecock with Flurry

These were rescued from Iowa in 2012. Parris named each animal after GOT characters. Like many wolf and wolf-dog breeding organizations, multiple animals had been kept in cement-floor, 10' x 20' cages with low ceilings, and limited access to the natural world. Thanks to WSWS, these white wolf-dogs live in large enclosures with room to roam while sporting names such as Brienne (who loves to carry things around in her mouth) and her pen-mate Summer (who likes to sleep on high places and chew on bones.)

Turning to the topic of their writing process, Martin says that world building comes as easy as anything else does.

“I like the details. I get obsessed with the details about anything I’m writing. I don’t think writing comes easy for me. Writing is hard. I love having written. I love when I finish the book. But when I’m actually writing it, it’s always kind of a struggle. The sort of world-building I do, I get to invent everything. Alan has a much tougher job because he’s got to research things.”

**“YOU CAN NEVER GO WRONG WITH DRAGONS.”**

“It’s world building, but in the past,” says Alan. “And I have a real affinity for doing it, probably because of my background in fantasy because you have to create a plausible fantasy world that’s a slight deviation from reality. We basically do the same thing only George can make up a lot of the stuff and he has dragons in it.”

Alan laughs and adds, “I think in these books of mine that my mistake has been not putting dragons in them.”

“You can never go wrong with dragons,” Martin agrees.

Alan says he does not do a detailed outline because he likes to be able to improvise.



“I tend to do enough research to start writing the novel, but I continue to research the book parallel to the writing. I feel like I have to do the research myself because I find stuff for “Molokai” by just stumbling across it while looking at microfilm of old issues of the “Hawaiian Star.”

Later Martin explains the difference between science fiction and fantasy, something many readers are not familiar with.

“To me sci-fi and fantasy are just two different flavors of the same thing. They are both ice cream. One is strawberry and one is chocolate. And you mix them together to get spumoni. They are both branches of imaginative literature. I think the only difference is the furniture. William Faulkner in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech said that the only thing worth writing about is the human heart and the conflict within itself. And I don’t think it matters if it’s on an alien planet, or one thousand years in the future, or if it’s in the

Middle Ages, or on the island of “Molokai” in the twentieth century. It’s still about the characters. It’s still about love and loss and all of the things we live as human beings, all of the things we suffer. That’s what literature is all about. The rest is just the furniture—the setting.”

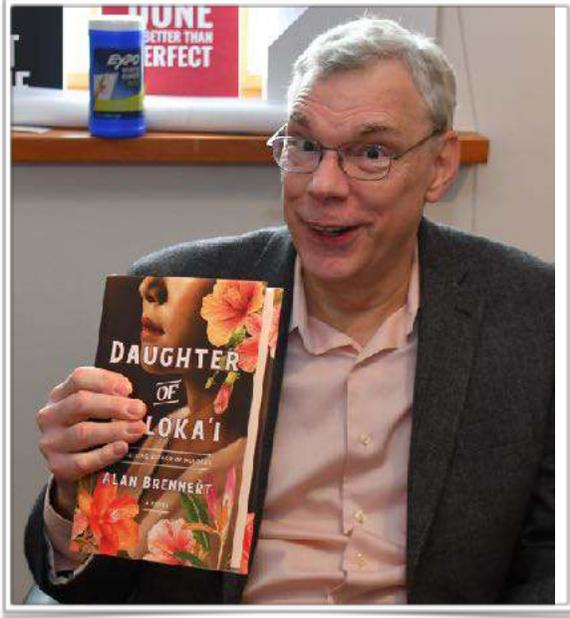
### **PSUEDONYMS ABOUND**

Martin has one registered pseudonym but he’s never published under it. The Writer’s Guild contract allows you to publish under two different names.

Alan has two pseudonyms. One is public knowledge and is a twist on his real name. He used his middle name Michael and a similar name to his last name—Bryant. Michael Bryant wrote several Star Trek episodes. Brennert’s other (never-before-disclosed), second Writer’s Guild name—that he revealed to me during this interview—is Jerry Rigg. Alan has published two scripts under that name.

Martin says one of the memorable pseudonyms belongs to the author of the original script for the “Star Trek” episode “The Trouble with Tribbles,” David Gerrold’s Noah Ward, i.e., no award.

My interview ends with Brennert providing a summary of “Daughter of Molokai.”



“This is the first book that I’ve written that is not both the history of a person and the history of a place,” says Brennert.

“Most of the book is set in California, with one scene on Molokai, and the rest on Oahu and Maui. Ruth moves to the Sacramento Florin area near an internment camp where she spends World War II.”

This sequel, “Daughter of Molokai,” is available on Amazon.

Fans of the HBO GOT series probably already know that the six episodes of Season 8 will air on April 14, 2019. Until then, fans who haven’t read Martin’s latest historical “documentary” of the early days of the Targaryen dynasty, a world flush with dragons, should pick up a copy (see the

*“...far more profound than a fast-paced thriller.  
It’s the story of vanishing wildlife that’s happening on our watch.”*

*—Graham Spence, co-author of The Elephant Whisperer*



# RHINO IN THE ROOM

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JILL HEDGECOCK

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book review of “Fire & Blood” in this issue.)

To learn more about and the Westeros wolf pack and how to contribute to WSWs visit: <https://wildspiritwolfsanctuary.org/westeros-pack> ■

Jill Hedgecock writes Books ‘N Pieces’ book review column and is the award winning author of “Rhino in the Room.”

[Editor’s note: In addition to this interview, Jill Hedgecock also learned that her book “Rhino in the Room” was the recipient of the 2018 Fifth Annual New Apple Book Awards for Excellence in Independent Publishing, a well-deserved recognition for an author who can only be described as a powerhouse in her field. Congratulations, Jill.]

## COLUMN



### THE CIVILIZATION FACTOR

“Wine is one of the most civilized things in the world and one of the most natural things of the world that has been brought to the greatest perfection, and it offers a greater range for enjoyment and appreciation than, possibly, any other purely sensory thing.” — Ernest Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon*

"Beauty is worse than wine, it intoxicates both the holder and beholder." — Aldous Huxley

“Give me wine to wash me clean of the weather-stains of cares.” — Ralph Waldo Emerson

Drinking wine can make you a better writer. But don't take my word for it. <http://bit.ly/WineWriter>

Avoid high-alcohol wines, the kind that make you sloppy and lazy, falling asleep watching some idiot television show instead of focusing your skillset.

Wines that have lower alcohol volume (not the big, bold Cabernets) might help loosen the creative juices. And, of course, wines with as few additives as possible (natural) are always better. And let's not forget the headaches that can come from your drinks, rather than the headaches from your plot line getting stuck.

Finding the correct wine is a skill. Here's a site that help you out. <http://bit.ly/Wine2Write>

And in case you think this is just a pale red tale, consider the sheer number of Websites devoted to this topic, that I list for you here.

- Red Wine Is The Correct Drink For Writing, And If You Disagree You Are Wrong <http://bit.ly/2tG1Uv7>

- Become a Wine Writer <http://bit.ly/2NymOVY>.

Cheers! And let me know what you chose and how it worked out. ■ ~*William Gensburger*

## BOOK REVIEW:



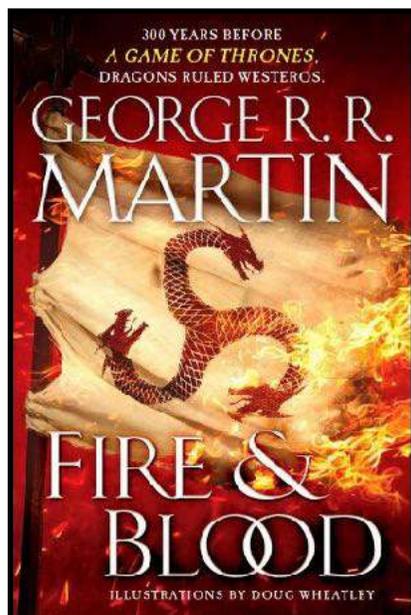
Reviewed by Jill Hedgecock | [www.jillhedgecock.com](http://www.jillhedgecock.com)

# FIRE & BLOOD

written by George R.R. Martin

“Fire & Blood” (2018, Bantam Books, hardcover, 719 pages, \$20.99) by George R. R. Martin is a monster of a book in size, scope, and content. The sweeping documentary covers 300 years of Targaryen history before the Game of Thrones dynasty. Despite Martin’s trademark plethora of characters and settings, it’s easy to get swept up in the drama of wars, king’s weddings and coronations, and most especially, the dragons. While only three of these fire-breathing creatures inhabit the Game of Thrones era, “Fire & Blood” is flush with these scaly and usually colorful beasts. What the drab Balerion (nicknamed The Black Dread), the

aerial mount of King Aegon I, lacked in ornamentation, the dragon made up for in fierceness. The Black Dread was largely responsible for overthrowing the kings of the Seven Kingdoms, along with Aegon's two sisters and their dragon mounts.



Click to learn more or to Buy this book:> [amzn.to/2Vw9oMP](https://amzn.to/2Vw9oMP)

Births, deaths, contentious wars, arranged marriages, and conniving successors characterize the epic tale where time is measured as Before [Aegon's] Conquest (BC) and After the Conquest (AC). The story spans 1 AC to 136 AC when the dragons died.

Martin's imagination seems to have no limits. In addition to memorable characters reminiscent of Games of

Thrones personalities, other descriptions of early Westeros inhabitants are familiar based on physical characteristics. Maegor I the Cruel will likely remind Game of Throne fans of Joffrey Lannister's vile behavior, while the King's fool of Targaryen era, Mushroom, will elicit memories of the little person, Tyrion Lannister. Keeping up with the host of characters and dragons can be a challenge and Martin names the Valyrian swords of key conquerors and knights too. But it's hard to begrudge the masterly crafted details which immerse readers into the fascinating world of Westeros Martin miraculously creates through words. Equally impressive are Doug Wheatley's illustrations of kings and dragons.

George R. R. Martin's impressive career has reached beyond the printed word. In Hollywood he worked as a writer/producer on "The Twilight Zone" and "Beauty and the Beast." His work on the fantasy series, "A Song of Ice and Fire", began in the mid 1990s. He has received many accolades for his work over the years including the Locus Award winner for Best Fantasy Novel, Hugo and Nebula awards. While he may inhabit the Seven Kingdoms through his prose, his home base lies in Santa Fe, New Mexico where he lives with his wife, Parris.

Not surprisingly given the popularity of Martin's fantasy novels, the book is a #1 New York Times Bestseller. "*Fire & Blood*" is the first volume of the two-part history as kings and lords divide and conquer the fascinating world of

Westeros. Sweeping in scope, the novel is sure to delight both devoted Martin readers and fans of HBO's "*Game of Thrones*." ■

## INTERVIEW

### SCARLETT HOLLOWAY

Persona and a Policy of Truth



**Q:** Savagely sweet is a catchy line. Your Website is nice, professional, stylish. How important is this to your author persona?

**A:** Author Persona is very important to me. It can honestly make you or break you in this industry. The Indie world expects a good branding, and if you don't meet those standards, it can break you.

Q: You've done a blog tour for "Policy of Truth." How did you find the whole experience and what do you believe the value of these tours are for the author and reader?

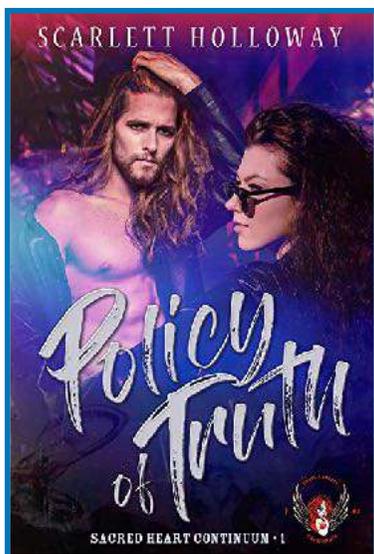
A: I commend people who do blogging. Personally? I can't write a blog to save my life. I think that the reader can gain more insight into the author and their novels through bloggers. They can see the different views of the author per each interview, and get a taste of their books by little snippets that sometimes bloggers post.



Q: What's your writing process like? Fixed time, place, beverage? Long hand or computer? How do you plot out your story?

A: Good question! Lol Everyone says I have a weird writing process, but I don't think so. I short hand chapters

on a 3x5 set of cards, then I type it all out. I use the cards as a road map. Sometimes the characters take me off road and I have to steer them back, but it works for me.



Click to learn more or to Buy this book:> [amzn.to/2EFdOU1](https://amzn.to/2EFdOU1)

Q: Your title comes from a Depeche Mode song.  
(Younger readers note: it is not a coffee order at Starbucks.)  
Why that title? It actually wasn't just the title, it's also a few lines from the song.

A: It really fit where I was going with the novel, and every chapter is written to a specific song, so in the end, it has its own OST.

Q: Tell us a bit about your pre-novel life? I had read you ran a motorcycle club? True? What got you started writing and, in particular, this genre?

A: My pre-novel life was me being a GM at a movie theatre and a paramedic. I did have my own riding club, all female and it was very interesting. Lots of drama, but that is what happens when you have that many females in such a tight-knit group. I love romantic suspense, so why not put a spin on it and throw out there and promote more female empowerment?

Q: How has the response been to the book and do you do anything in particular to market it?

A: So far everything has been very positive. A lot of readers are coming to realize that this is a realistic view on how a club is run and the daily threats they face, not your average fiction. I market it every day lol I post it in groups, I do author take overs, post teasers, you name it, I probably do it.

Q: What's next for you?

A: In March, I am releasing a dark paranormal romance / mystery, then I will be back to back releasing another trilogy in a new series that I am working on. After

that, I will be releasing a book in an Anthology, then back to book two in the DAMC series. Lots of goodies coming up! If people join my newsletter, they get complete updates on what's going on in the World of Scarlett. They can sign up at me web: [scarlettholloway.com](http://scarlettholloway.com) ■

## SHORT STORY

# JUST A LITTLE DEATH

by William Gensburger

“Life is what happens to you while you’re  
busy making other plans....” ~John Lennon  
(from the song ‘Beautiful Boy.’)

I had been there before during the days of my youth and I remembered them now as vividly as when I had been there. As I turned off the main road and down the final stretch, which led to the main gates, the years returned; I had never really left.

I had been there when the roads were thick with gravel, such as new roads are inclined to be, when we would all walk to breakfast, from the house at one end to the dining hall at the other; we were freshly showered, wearing the uniforms which, over the years, had faded slightly, no longer crisp, nor fresh-smelling. Although I had been there for so long, then, in so many moods, it was to that time that my heart returned as I approached.

The air was crisp--it had always been crisp, even in the heat of summer--and the scent of pine and freshly mowed

grass saturated it. Ahead, the clock tower loomed over me as I passed through the wrought-iron gates and came to a stop at the headmaster's house. The house was set within a small, floral garden which seemed to excrete color—no doubt the handiwork of the headmaster's wife—and in front, two large cricket ovals, still well-tended, even after all the years, spread past the crescent of red-brick houses—the dormitories.

The head master emerged from the house before I had stepped out of my car, a stocky man of fifty-five, smartly dressed in slacks and a tweed jacket. He trotted toward me with a slight wave.

"David. Welcome."

I stepped out and was overwhelmed by a momentary uncertainty about my return; had I become a student once again?

"Mr. Fisher," I said, extending my hand and shaking his.

"Douglas, please," he chided, pleasantly.

"Of course. Sorry. It's a difficult habit to break."

"You'll get used to it. Come, you must be tired from your trip. Ann's making some tea. We can settle you in later. There's no rush. Most of the students won't get here till late this afternoon."

"Fine. Thank you."

We walked up the small stone pathway and into the house. I had been inside only once before, on my first day as a student. The hallway was lined with gold-framed portraits

of previous headmasters, and I scanned them for any familiar face.

"I don't think you'd know any of them," the headmaster said. "I know I don't, but then most of these are the early ones. The others are in the dining hall. You were here during Robert Garnish's time, weren't you?"

"Yes. That's right."

"Yes, of course. Nice man. Met him once, just before he passed away. About six years ago now. We had a memorial service for him in the chapel."

"That's too bad."

"Yes, quite," he said, leading me further into the house, "but then we all have to go sometime. Which house were you in? Perry?"

"No. Barrymore. I almost went to Scott-Francis."

"Barrymore's a good choice. It's fitting, then, that you'll be taking it over. Ah, Ann, David's just arrived."

The headmaster's wife joined us. She was a foot shorter than her husband, and her hair was curled slightly, an auburn tint which I guessed made the grey less obvious. She smiled, as though we had previously met, and held out her hand for me.

"David, Welcome."

"Thank you, Mrs. Fisher. It's nice to see the place again."

"Would you care for some tea? I've just put some on."

"That would be nice."

"I was just telling David how fitting it is that he'll be get Barrymore. It was his old house."

"Oh good. That's wonderful. You must be eager to get settled."

"A little. I get the feeling, though, that I'm still a student. It will feel strange moving into the master's house."

The headmaster's wife smiled. "You'll get used to it. When were you here?"

"Twelve years ago."

"I'm not sure if there's anyone left from then. We've had a lot of new teachers."

"I believe Smithers, from chemistry, was here then. Do you know him?" the headmaster asked.

The very mention of Smithers caused me to smile. "We used to call him the mad professor. He would start each chemistry class with an explosion just to get our attention. I remember, once, it set off the fire alarm and the sprinklers turned on. Poor Smithers was never the same after that."

The headmaster delighted in the story, emitting a silent laugh. His wife smiled politely, then excused herself to prepare the tea. When she had gone we sat down and the headmaster lit his pipe as I watched from across the coffee table. Through the stained-glass windows, through the ivy which had crept across the entire front of the house, I could see the lagoon. Years earlier I had rowed there, spending countless hours on weekends within the shaky confines of a single-man skull, sailing wherever the mild currents decreed,

and struggling to balance as I pulled in the oars. It was a tricky art. Alone out there, I could see the school as a panorama. It looked like an oil painting on display. Surreal.

Presently, after two cups of tea, and further conversation about my earlier days, I left and headed out across the two emerald ovals toward Barrymore, nestling comfortably on one end of the crescent, between a row of birch trees. I had run their circumference every day, for three years, goaded into running faster by old Weber, the instructor who, despite the fact that my stomach had knotted and that breakfast threatened a reprise, would shout, from across the field "Train without pain, train in vain." And with the others on the team, I would run faster only to suffer the consequences much later, after a hasty dinner.

By night, though, I would stroll the same stretch of grass, smothered by darkness and invisible to the houses around, watching, only, the slight glow of the street lamps against the red-brick fronts, and finding a sense of security at being the only one awake.

Barrymore lay before me. My own housemaster had walked the corridors—which always smelled of ammonia from the deep cleaning—his heels smacking down on the hard wood floors. These were corridors which sunlight would splinter in; the light could never enter directly as it would diffract from the overhead stained-glass panels: the light would be streaks of red and navy-blue and yellow; rarely would it be white. The housemaster would walk, and from

the study rooms we would hear him approach, certain of who it was by the pace of his walk. We pretended to dislike him, convincing ourselves that he was a cold, hard man, and, like all the other teachers, a pious, self-centered bastard. Would I become such to my students? I wondered.

The house was unlocked and I walked in. Before even checking my own section of it—the place where I would actually live—I began down the main corridor. The walls were a dark stained wood, and from them, hanging in rows, were the plank-boards with the names of each year's students painted on them. I was listed in 1969, my name close to the bottom with three small stars beside it. They were the distinctions won: most of the students had won distinctions at some time.

There was a library at the end of the corridor which housed a modest collection of books, and next to that the assembly room which, for the rest of the time doubled as a television room. Supper would be offered at night, a cup of hot chocolate and a few biscuits as a treat between study sessions.

The room was still the same. They had acquired a couch during my absence, and that was the only thing that stood out.

"Hello, sir," a voice called from behind. I turned to face a boy of fourteen. He was wearing the blue school shirt, untucked, the grey slacks and the house colors on his sweater—brown with a yellow stripe at the bottom.

"Are you the new housemaster?"

I nodded. "What's your name?"

"Jennings, sir. William Jennings, but you can call me Bill."

"Hello Bill. I am Mr. Wilson. I believe you're early?"

"Yes sir, but my father had to go to a meeting so he brought me in this morning. It is alright, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Would you like me to show you around?" he offered eagerly.

"That's quite alright. I know my way. Oh, and tuck in your shirt. It's too early in the term to look scruffy."

"Yes sir." Hastily he complied.

"What form are you in?"

"Fifth, sir."

"I see. Well I'm sure that you'll have a nice term. It's always been a good house."

"Were you a student here?"

"Yes."

"Then your name'll be on the boards."

"It is."

"That's great."

"Yes. Yes I suppose it is. What sports will you be taking?"

"Football in the summer and cross-country in the winter."

"Soccer?"

"No, sir. Australian rules. My father says I'm pretty good at it."

"Well, then," I told him firmly, I'll expect a lot from you."

"Yes, sir."

He turned to walk away then turned back and smiled for a moment before walking out. A moment later I walked out only to find him standing underneath the boards, scanning the names.

"1969?" he called out.

"It would have been easier to ask," I replied. "Do they still have the old house photos on the wall somewhere?"

He pointed to the door at the other end of the corridor . "In the piano room."

I began to walk toward it, a steady pace so as to reduce the noise of my heels upon the wooden surface. He followed. Inside, he leaped ahead of me, quickly finding the correct year and pointing to it. I shuffled forward for a closer look. The photograph had been taken toward the end of the year. We were in our Sunday-suits, arranged in order of height, and, at the front, our housemaster sat, hands clenched and placed atop his knees. I was at the back, hair combed neatly to one side, looking no older than Jennings.

"Don't say it," I warned him, anticipating a reaction.

"I wasn't going to say anything," he protested. Then he asked, "Do you see any of them now?"

"A few." I pointed at one. "Solomon, there, died when he was hit by a car. A week after this picture was taken. And Thompson, there, died of a drug overdose last year. Binden

now runs his father's company. They've all gone somewhere, grown up. One day you might come and take a look and wonder where they all went."

Jennings said nothing; he simply continued to staring, as though the photograph held for him the same memories it held for me.

"Have you finished unpacking?" I finally asked.

"No, sir."

"Well off with you then. I'll have a bed check at ten and you'd better be unpacked by then."

"Yes, sir." He turned and raced for the door. I watched him leave, noticed the almost clumsy, yet almost controlled motions, and wondered whether I had moved like that.

I turned back to the photograph. Solomon had been my best friend. He had guided me through my early years there, always with a kind word at each of my disappointments, telling me how something good was almost sure to happen next. And he died before my eyes, one Sunday, during a trip into town. A car had swerved and struck him. I could still hear the thud of metal and flesh meeting violently, could see him still, thrown up over the hood and back onto the road as the car braked. But it was already too late; his neck had been broken in the impact.

I left the room of photographs and found my part of the house. I had been given five rooms. The living room was spacious. The school supplied some furniture, enough to flesh out the emptiness, but I would have to add to it.

I had brought five boxes with me. They were now in the living room. Most contained clothes and books, the few essential things until I could get home to bring the rest.

At seven-thirty in the evening, I had the assembly bell and stood aside as a stream of bodies came thundering down the stairs. Then I entered and the room fell silent. The boys had clustered themselves in the center of the room, not at all how assemblies had been in my day there. All eyes on me.

"Good evening."

"Good evening, sir," they chanted.

"Next time I would like you to assemble around the edge of the room in alphabetical order. That'll make roll call a lot easier. For those of you who have not met me, I am Mr. Wilson, your housemaster. I shall also be teaching in some of the English sets. And for those of you who might, at some time, whether it be now, or in the future, think me to be unrealistic, or overly hard, I take great delight in telling you that I was, once, a student in this very house. I do remember how it feels. So I hope that any problems you might have you'll bring to my attention. I am a good listener.

"We'll be having an assembly every evening at seven-thirty, except on Fridays and Saturdays. Those of you who wish to go home on the weekends, or wish to leave the school grounds, must see me for a pass. Now, if there are no questions, you can go finish unpacking. I believe Matron will have supper for you shortly, and lights-out will be at ten-thirty. All right. That's all."

The congregation filed out as quickly as they had arrived. I watched, felt the tug of youth nudge me, briefly in the same direction, as though, without warning, I might have started to run, feeling the tug of the school shirt as it worked its way out of my slacks. The urge, perhaps primordial, allowed me to find my old bed, buried within a row of beds within a dorm room which looked more like a hospital ward than a boarding room. But I remained fast, now alone in the large assembly room. The urge passed.

During supper, as the boys who were late stood in line for a cup of hot chocolate, I stood outside. The corridor was empty, yet held a fine mist which remained present in every section of the house, and outside, along the length of the ovals, and by the lagoon as it always had. The house had its own smell, aside from the ammonia-washed floors, and this seemed to spread much as the light which had, earlier, splintered in: traces felt in passing.

I walked back inside the assembly room.

"Sir," Jennings called out, "will you tell us something about when you were here."

"What do you want to know?"

"Did they have girls here then?" another boy asked.

"What's your name, first?"

"Anthony Bryant, sir."

"Yes, then had girls then, Bryant. That was the first year."

"Did you have a girlfriend, sir?" another asked. "I'm Peter Dynesdale."

"Yes, I did. Her name was Melissa."

"What became of her, sir?" Jennings asked.

"She's married. She married a friend of mine."

"Did you ever take her to the sheds?" somebody shouted from behind, disappearing from the room before I could turn around. The room came alive with laughter. I cast a questioning look at Jennings.

"That's Mitchell," he said. No sooner had he said it that he got angry glances from the others.

"You shouldn't squeal on your friends," I told him. He looked down. "And in answer to Mitchell's question, we didn't have the sheds then." The laughter returned.

"There's a girl in Jennings House, Cheryl Darling, and we call her honey," Bryant said. "You should go up to her and say can I call you honey, darling."

The boys all broke into laughter.

"I don't want to hear any name calling around here," I said.

The supper ended and the boys filtered out, careful to bypass Matron so as to avoid having to help her carry the urn of hot chocolate back to her quarters.

"Jennings," I said, just as he turned to leave, and motioned to Matron. With a frown, he complied, and I watched as he approached her, could hear the immortal words which, at one time or another, we had all uttered:

"Matron, can I help you with something?" Matron smiled, a grandmother's smile of delight at her grandchild's thoughtfulness, before handing him the bulky urn. With a disapproving glance at me, Jennings struggled out of the room, Matron close behind with the tray of dirty cups.

I wandered through the corridors until ten-thirty, then rang the bell to signal lights-out before walking upstairs to the rooms. As I entered, two boys, still wet from their showers, pushed past me and quickly climbed into their beds. I made sure each bed was occupied, feeling the trace of the past sweeping over me—the splinter of fear that I quickly get into bed before the housemaster could notice that I was missing.

"Everything okay?" I said, then, "goodnight." I flicked off the light switch, closed the door and waited.

"Jesus," someone inside shouted.

"Talk about strange."

"Crap," another joined in. "He's probably just matriculated."

"Balls," someone screeched

"He was here in sixty-nine," Jennings's unmistakable voice hollered.

"Who gives a shit, Jennings, now shut up before I rearrange your ugly face."

"Oooh," someone else sneered. The voices diminished into hushed whisperings.

I walked down to the next room, the room in which I had slept as a student. My bed had now been overrun by a large boy who, as I glanced in somewhat nostalgically, returned my stare with an indignant expression.

"Any problems?" I asked. There was no reply. "Okay, goodnight then." I turned off the lights.

"Sir," a voice whispered through the dark. "I didn't mean to be rude, earlier."

"You're safe this time, Mitchell."

I walked out and closed the door, waiting for some counter-comment.

"I didn't mean to be rude, sir," someone mimicked in an effeminate voice. "I'm just a stupid little bugger."

The others began to laugh.

Later, having returned to my rooms, I sat down and contemplated my own unpacking. The rooms seemed empty, not that I had thought otherwise during the brief visits at the housemaster's requests, but more so now. I was in charge. It was to be me who would make the decisions and govern the horde of teenagers. Somehow the room lacked authority.

As I slept, that night, images of rough, starched sheets scraping against bare legs, returned. The beds of the dormitory were rocks of protection, padded by the starched sheets and the starched pillows which somehow one would get accustomed to and later miss during the midterm breaks. They fortified the character in some mysterious way, matching only the cold, wooden floors which, by morning,

felt good to the touch. And despite the fourteen beds, and the large, authoritative dressers and closets, one could stand naked and feel a sense of space, of cool air circulating beneath arms and between legs after a hot shower—it was sensuous. Soft feelings for a hard place.

The images were more to do with sounds and smells than any one visual image, as if such a thing in a dream could actually be classified as an image of sorts, and each pervaded the mind, becoming more than just a scent, or a noise, but an integral part of the feeling of security, of being home.

It was to one such noise that I awoke; the telephone in the living room was ringing and had somehow become part of my dream. Hastily I got up, staggered toward it and answered its call.

"David. It's Charles."

"Charles?" I muttered.

"Listen, I've just received a call from Telly Longston, the aunt of one of your boys, Jennings, I believe. His parents were killed in a plane crash last night."

"Oh, no. That's terrible." The words echoed in my mind. Was this all a part of my dream? I wondered. "Should I tell him now, or wait until after he's awake? I suppose I should let him sleep. Yes, that would be best."

"David, tell him after the wake up bell. Then bring him over here. You come too. I'm sorry that this had to happen to you so early...for him too, of course. Can you manage on your own?"

"Uh, Yes, yes I'll be fine. There's no doubt, is there? I mean, they're absolutely sure?"

"His aunt identified the bodies an hour ago. It's tragic. See what you can do for him. You might want to let the other boys know, tell them to lay off him for awhile."

"Yes, of course. What time is it now?"

"Six-thirty. Not long to wait."

"Yes. Thank you for calling. I'll see what I can do and I'll bring him over."

"Fine, I'll see you then, David."

The line went dead. For a moment I held the receiver, as though, by some afterthought, he might have to add something. Then slowly, I placed it back.

A coldness crept over me. The room in which I was standing now seemed empty. And soon, I knew, I would be telling a boy of fourteen that both his parents had been killed. Yet I knew the words for they returned from some dark abyss within me.

I got dressed quickly, paced the room for fifteen minutes, wondering when would be the right moment. With each moment the decision was for the moment following. And then for the next. But it could no longer wait: I had to let it out, had to release it before it could overwhelm; I had to be the rock, not the water.

I left my rooms, strode briskly up the stairs and along the corridor to the room at the end, my heels smacking the floor. I opened the door and walked over to Jennings's bed.

And there I stopped, staring down at a small boy curled vulnerably beneath the covers.

I shook him once, hard. His eyes opened, looked up at me.

"Get dressed and come down to my rooms," I said, flatly, then turned and strode out.

After a few minutes he appeared at my door, clad only in a robe and still half-asleep. I beckoned him in, motioned for him to sit as I closed the door, then, losing the harshness which I earlier projected, sat down next to him.

"I'm sorry for what I have to tell you," I began, noticing, already, the widening of his eyes, "but your mother and father died last night."

He said nothing, offered no trace of emotion beyond the slight widening of his eyes. Then he looked down. "How... did they die?"

"They were flying home. The plane... crashed." My hand touched his shoulder, squeezed it and remained there. "I'm sorry."

"Dead," he muttered.

I nodded. "Don't worry about your classes. I'll square it away. After assembly we'll go to the headmaster's."

"It's not fair," he whispered. "It's just not fair, sir."

"I know it isn't, William. Will you be all right? Is there anything I can get you right now?"

"No."

"Listen, stay here while I take assembly. Will you be all right on your own?" He nodded.

"Good boy. I won't be long."

Outside the assembly bell was ringing. I closed the door behind me and walked to the assembly room. Inside, the boys had already lined up. I walked in and they stopped talking.

"Good morning," I began. "This will be short, no roll call. Most of you don't know that during the night, William Jennings' parents were killed in a plane crash..."

"Shit," someone said from the far end of the room.

"... I would appreciate it if you could desist from any derogatory comments, he's going through a very difficult time. So be nice, or, for those of you who can't manage that, lay off him for awhile. You don't want to cross me on this. Okay, get ready for breakfast. That's all."

I turned and walked out, back down the hall to my rooms. Jennings was still seated, his head still down.

"Does my aunt know?" he asked.

"She telephoned the headmaster this morning. Would you like to call her? You can use the phone in here."

"No, maybe later."

"Whenever you're ready."

There was a knock on the door and it opened. One of the boys stood there, a school uniform folded, in his hands. He glanced nervously at me, then at Jennings.

"I thought you might need these," he said, offering the clothes to me. I took them, placed them down on the chair.

"I'm sorry, Bill," the boy said.

"Thanks, Tony."

"If you want to talk about it....Well, I'd better go," he said, turning and closing the door behind him.

"Why don't you get changed," I told Jennings, "and let's go to the headmaster's house."

Jennings stood, took off his robe, dropping it on the couch, and slipped on his pants and shirt. "Do I look okay?"

"No, but it doesn't matter," I said with a forced smile. He nodded.

"William," Mrs. Fisher said, "I'm terribly sorry." She leaned forward and pulled him toward her, held him awkwardly. Jennings offered no resistance, pulling back only when her grip had lightened.

"Come, please, let's sit down, have something to eat. It'll make you feel better," the headmaster said, motioning us into the dining room. The dining table had been set, laced table mats protected the table from the cutlery, and a small vase of roses filled the center space.

The headmaster pulled back a chair for Jennings, waved me to one on the other side and then sat down beside his wife. A pot of tea had been placed on the sideboard and Mrs. Fisher reached for it and began pouring.

"William," the headmaster began, "have you spoken to your aunt yet?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I suggest after breakfast you give her a call. I'm sure she's worried about you."

"Yes, sir. I suppose." He looked away for a moment, then back at the headmaster. "Will I be able to stay here, I mean, now that...?"

"Of course, of course you will," the headmaster hurriedly assured him. "Don't think about it now. We'll deal with that when the time comes, all right?"

"We can work something out," I added. I knew that it could be done.

"How about some bacon and eggs?" Mrs. Fisher suggested with a smile.

"No, thank you. I'm really not hungry."

"Oh, but you must eat something. Have just a little?"

"I couldn't."

"Don't force the boy, Ann," the headmaster told her. "He'll eat when he's ready."

"I told him that he's excused from classes," I added, quietly, almost out of a wish to avoid the silence which I knew to be approaching.

"Quite," the headmaster said. "There's no rush. He can go back when he feels ready for it. I'm sure his teachers will understand. I'll update them later."

Jennings looked up. "Would it be all right, sir, if I went for a walk? It'd make me feel better."

"Of course you can," Mrs. Fisher happily announced. The wear and tear of the conversation had already taken its toll on her ability to smile. The headmaster nodded his approval and Jennings stood and walked out. At the door he stopped and turned back to me.

"I'll be okay," he said.

After he had gone the headmaster let out a sigh. His brow was knitted, a deep frown distorting his features into an expression of anger.

"Damn," he hissed, "it's grossly unfair for something like this to happen to a child. Grossly unfair."

"Poor boy," Mrs. Fisher whined, the air of composure normally surrounding her now gone--she looked suddenly older, exhausted.

"David," the headmaster said solemnly, "stay with him today. No matter how much he may want to be alone, it always helps to have someone there,"

"Of course," I replied, noticing, in my voice, the slight trace of indigence at the suggestion that I might not have thought to do so already. "He'll be okay," I quickly added.

"Would you like something to eat?" Mrs. Fisher asked.

"Thank you, no. Perhaps I'd better go after him, see where he goes?"

I stood. The headmaster gave an approving nod. I smiled at Mrs. Fisher, then left. I could understand why

Jennings had wanted to be alone: the overwhelming sympathy within the headmasters house was too much even for those who had not experienced a loss.

As I walked back to Barrymore, the students were already on their way to classes, walking in the groups they had made, with friends who, quite like each other, relied on the same basic qualities to maintain a circle of friends. I could almost name them on sight; the groups of rebellious pranksters—these looked more tardy than the rest—milling closely together, laughing intermittently at some obscure remark made by one of the others, the group of true students, the intellectuals, immaculate in their uniforms, maintaining the same stride, the same pace and direction like a formation of fighter planes executing an aerial show, and the groups of those, who, for some reason or another, wound up together. These I referred to as aimless. Their bond was weak—they might be in a class together, or on the music team, or on the debating society.

I had not belonged to any group; I was the one who stood aside and watched with unbridled curiosity at the events and the relationships taking place around me. And I would listen, from a distance, to the conversations of the others, each, in turn, detailing their morbid sexual experiences with the school's girls, daring others to get them to the lagoon where most of the school's informal sexual education took place. By night, walking the circumference of the ovals, one would have to tread warily so as not to step on

the paired bodies, united in their worm-like dances,  
betraying their presence only by the stifled groans heard  
between the hoots of an owl.

As I drew closer to Barrymore, the thoughts vanished.  
The house seemed larger, as it appeared when I was a  
student, its ivy-smothered red-brick front and red-tiled roof  
standing vividly against an azure sky. Had it been a painting  
it would have been a still-life, for although life flourished  
within and around, to view it from close by gave the  
impression of timelessness. It would always remain, even  
long after my own death.

Jennings was nowhere to be found. Somehow I had  
known this before even entering and yet, for the same  
reason, had passed through the motions of searching and of  
being surprised at his lack of presence. He would be, I knew,  
somewhere close, somewhere where he could find solitude  
and security, a place where the cringing terrors of reality  
could be dispelled, at least for a time.

And from somewhere within my own memories, I  
knew he would be in the chapel.

The interior was darkened, the only light coming from  
the outside, against the stained-glass high atop the building,  
and rimming the cloistered entranceway. The rows of  
wooden benches were empty, had been cleaned, Bibles neatly  
placed on shelves behind each. Yet the chapel felt filled, an

invisible congregation in perpetual prayer creating a sense of power, a feeling of warmth. It was the perfect place to hide.

"Jennings," I said, my voice splitting the silence like a thunderclap. There was no reply. I looked toward the altar, at the huge organ pipes leading skyward in an artistic array of lengths, at the pulpit, elevated—the eyes of the congregation would have to look up at the priest—but there was no sign of movement.

"Jennings," I said again, "are you here?"

From above I heard a sob. I turned and stared at the loft behind and began to walk there. A small door led up a flight of steps to the loft. Quietly I ascended, stepped into the small area of it and noticed a hunched figure leaning against the wall of the balcony.

"Jennings," I said, "let's talk. It'll help." I put my hand on his shoulder and he began to cry aloud, huge sobs wracking his body. He turned and held onto me tightly.

"It's...not...fair," he gasped. "It's not...fair...."

"I know," I whispered, fighting to keep my voice steady, "but there are some things in this life over which we have no control. But we have to go on, let ourselves grow, live. You have to go on."

"I want...them...back. I want them...to live."

"But they can't and you can't change that. You have to accept that. They will always be with you, in your heart. You have to go on, be somebody, make them proud of you."

"You don't understand," he said firmly. He looked up at me, wiped his eyes.

I reached into my pocket and withdrew a handkerchief and handed it to him. He blew his nose, long and hard, then wiped his eyes. "We were going to go to Switzerland for the term break," he said, flatly. "We were all going to go. I was really looking forward to it. My father promised that he'd teach me to...ski..."

"How do you feel?"

"Like it's just a bad dream. It can't be real."

I took a deep breath. "Perhaps it is just a bad dream."

"It's real," he muttered, unfolding the handkerchief and blowing his nose again.

"Yes. It's real. It's up to you now to go on," I said.

"I want to stay at school but I don't know if I'll be able to."

"Why not?"

"What if there isn't enough money for it?"

"There will be. The school has a policy just for that. They arrange with parents to ensure that there is enough put aside for the student to be able to stay. And if not, if there isn't, then they'll provide you with a scholarship, or something. But don't worry about it. You're a bright boy. There's a way."

"It's peaceful in here. Sometimes I come here just to get away. You'll probably think that's crazy."

"No, I don't. I used to do the same thing myself. Are you feeling better? Just a bit?"

He nodded. "A bit. I don't know if I can go to the funeral, though."

"You'll be able to when the time comes. If you'd like I'll come with you?"

"That's okay. Would it be all right if I went to classes?"

"Sure. Whatever you feel most comfortable doing."

He stood up. "I'd better go then." He began walking to the door. "Thank you, sir." I nodded and he disappeared down the small stairwell.

"Jennings," I called out.

"Yes, sir."

"Come see me later on, all right?"

"All right."

I could hear the large wooden door open, noticed the brief pulse of sunlight fill the chapel before the door closed again. Then all was silent.

I could feel the tugging of the past inside me, saw brief flashes of light and color, the car and Solomon tumbling through the air, could hear sirens, that deep-tearing, wailing, feeling the terror pass through me, the thought that the body was dead, heard, again, the impact—was it a crack or a thud? And then I felt it fade. The darkness closed in around me, left me staring hard to see, left only flashes of light, pinpoints racing across the inside of my lid. So long ago. So long and yet still so fresh. But not just him.

My own life had upended. The memories gushed uncontrolled now.

And I could see myself standing in the morgue, staring in disbelief at the faces of the two bodies I had to identify, crying, wanting to hold them, be held by them yet knowing that it was too late for that.

I stood up, felt my way through the darkness to the door and hurried down the stairs and out of the chapel, into the blinding sunlight. I staggered across the small lawn by the cloisters and across the oval, toward the lagoon. My pace quickened, as though I had been followed, and I knew that I had been followed, by something I could neither touch nor hold. I turned frantically, glanced back, then pushed forward blindly, stopping only when I had reached the row of birch trees bordering the oval.

I turned back, stared hard. I had to escape from the beauty, the perfection which never changed. I had to step away from the stillness, the death-like sense of self-betrayal; with each second of my life was getting taken from me, placed within the buildings, the grouting between the bricks, the hair-like roots of the ivy adhered to the bricks. They were still with me.

I took a deep breath, rested against a tree trunk, and felt safe beneath the web of greenery. The peacefulness had settled in again. I stared with longing, wishing for a friend to come running by, to have something kind to say, or to see a girl that I had an infatuation for, to smile, an innocent,

furtive glance, promising much. Both were missing, the track was empty, and the grass glistened perfectly.

"Out for a stroll?" a voice bellowed from behind. I turned, startled, yet recognized the voice.

"Smithers," I yelped. He frowned, looked hard, then casually smiled.

"Don't tell me," he insisted, "Wilson, it's David Wilson. I had heard that you were now among our esteemed ranks but I couldn't, for the life of me, remember what you looked like. Now it's all coming back."

"How are you, Mr. Smithers?"

He laughed, brushed his hands against his beard and said, "I don't think you need the formality now, unless you plan to enroll in my class."

"Of course," I said with a smile. "It's wonderful to see you again."

"And how are finding your role reversal? Settled in yet?"

"It's started quite fiercely," I told him. "One of my boys' parents were killed in a plane crash last night."

"Terrible business. I read about the crash in the paper, this morning. A terrible waste."

"Yes. I've felt awkward about dealing with the boy. I'm not sure what to say."

"It isn't easy. Don't think me rude, but if memory serves me, didn't your parents pass away while you were here?"

"Yes. Car crash," I said, feeling the control leaving me, once again. "That was a long time ago," I hastily added.

"Yes, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to reopen old wounds, but I thought that you, above most, would know how the boy felt. Don't worry, David, you'll handle it just fine. Just fine."

I looked down. "I just don't know if I'm doing the right thing. It's not the same as before."

"You have to play it by ear. Gut feeling. Go with it and you won't go wrong."

"Mine tells me that I don't belong here, anymore," I suddenly told him.

"That's something that only you can decide. If you're having second thoughts let me assure you that it's only natural. Give it some time. Play the field. There's no urgency to decide. I remember when I first came here, I don't even remember the year now, but I had just arrived here from England and missed my family like hell. I didn't think I'd last a week, what with all those stuffy-nosed professors still walking around with canes under their arms so as to be ready to dispense swift justice to those boys deserving of it. But I stayed. And I'm still here, even after all those old boys have gone. The point is, give it a fair chance. For some it comes easily, but for others it takes a little time."

I smiled. "Thank you, I'll be sure to remember that."

"I've been here forty-two years, David, and they've been the best years of my life. I will miss this place."

"Are you retiring?"

"At the end of the term. It's been a long haul. I'm due for a rest."

"I'll be sorry to see you go," I told him honestly.

"Why? Because I'm the last of the Hitler-gang that taught you? Don't be. You've got a whole career ahead of you. Wait till you see the birdbrain they've picked to replace me. I doubt if he has the know-how to rub two sticks together and start a fire. But he'll need someone like you to show him the way."

"If I'm still here."

"You'll still be here," Smithers said, patting me lightly on the shoulder. "Well, I'd best be off before I catch something and retire prematurely. If you'd like, come by the house later."

"Thank you. That's nice to know."

Smithers began walking across the grass, slow, steady steps so as not to trip and fall. I watched him as he reached the road, stepping cautiously onto it, then again up the other sidewalk and into the Common Room beneath the clock tower. The glass door closed.

Above, I noticed the slight movement of the minute hand on one clock face. I remembered that no two sides ever showed the same time, or the correct time. I remembered climbing it for the first time, up an endless series of small steps, through the oversized mechanism, past the giant bell the next level up, and onto the roof, by the base of the

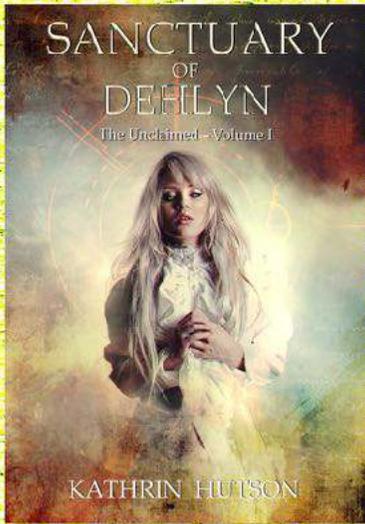
flagpole. From there the whole school spread out, secluded by the trees from the rest of the city.

I remembered thinking how easy it would have been to have leapt out and flown; the grounds seemed so perfect that even flight could have been possible. But the perfection had been in the buildings and the ovals and the warmth in those who had, at one time, passed through the hallways and the dormitories, and in those who were passing through right now. They were my charge now.

I reached down, plucked a blade of grass and slowly started my walk back to Barrymore House. ■

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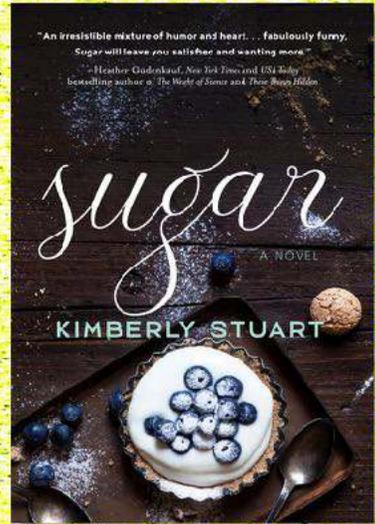
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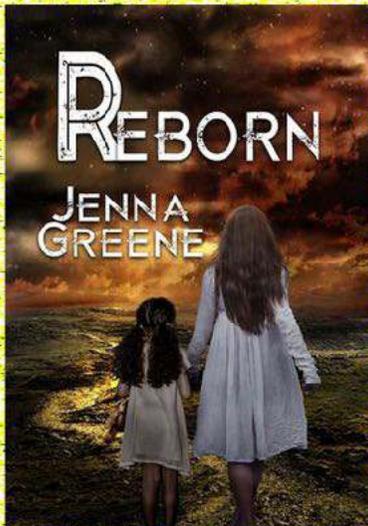
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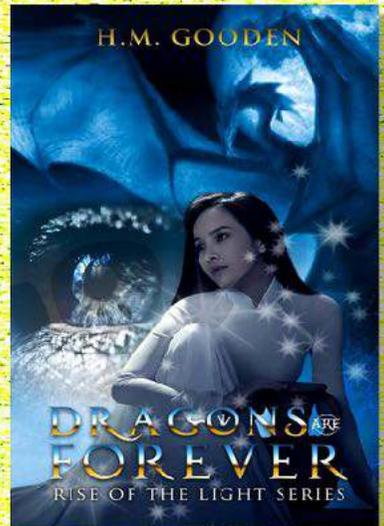
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## ARTICLE

# DIY CRITIQUE

## What's Wrong With My Story?

by William Gensburger

I get many short stories submitted each month. Sadly, most are not at a stage where I can publish them. For many authors, short stories appear to be the easiest form of writing; short, easy to finish. This is deceptive; a good short story is much harder to write than a novel.

A novel offers anywhere from 250-500 pages to develop characters, flesh out the details of scenes, include descriptive, yet non-essential narrative to fully flesh out the world in which the story takes place. You also have the luxury of slower pacing.

For a short story to work, the writing needs to be sharp, crisp, concise. Irrelevancies have no room. The reader must be pulled in from the start. The story must have a point in being told; it is not an excerpt. A short story is not a narrative; it requires action, dialogue that propels it along, marker points that the author sees, like mile-markers on a

highway. The story will come to an end, and when it does, something must have been gained in the telling or it was a pointless time waste.

I know this sounds harsh; but writing is not for the weak-hearted. Writing is rejection. Writing is like that endurance event you just come close to; you want to cross the finish-line so badly.

A vast majority of the short stories submitted to B&P Magazine are not, in fact, stories. They are, instead, snippets of a story kernel, ideas being explored through pages of dialog with little or no solidity. They may be well written, and many are; but that does not qualify it for publication.

In a short story you have a novel worth of ideas compressed tightly into around 2000 words. The story must not languish in its own adulation. Yes, you put the sentence together nicely. So? What's the point? Why should I read it? What do I get out of it? Do I really care? All questions that you should ask before submitting a story anywhere.

Every story, like every novel, film, television show, has a start point, a mid-point, and an ending of one kind or another. That said, the starting point is not the start of the story. Your reader wants to be sucked in. Start at a place that will grab hold. You can always go back and flesh in the details you had originally started with.

Let's use a film example everyone knows: The original "Star Wars" (now Episode IV). The film opens with a star destroyer chasing, and firing upon a rebel ship carrying

Princess Leia. Now, the whole story really starts when Luke Skywalker was born, raised on that nasty and barren Tatooine dirt farm with his uncle and aunt. Maybe he got up and had breakfast. They discuss crop harvests. YAWN!

So, instead of useless backstory, we start with action, grab the reader enough to make sure they linger long enough to get the backstory (Luke and his uncle and aunt discuss his going to the Academy, and how he is stuck there.)

A short story should begin at the point where the reason for the story begins. And that point should be strong, action oriented, gripping, or unusual enough to make the reader want to continue.

Quite often, even though a story is rejected, I will offer some thoughts on how to *up* the game. Sometimes this requires some juggling of where things are in the story. Sometimes this requires rewriting a stronger opening scene that leads forward, rather than just being presented. Make the reader work a bit. Do they want to know?

Here are some examples:

John arose from a heavy sleep and, after using the can, threw water across his face, stopping only to stare at his image in the mirror. His furrowed brow was.... YAWN!

How about...

It was the ear-splitting thunder of a bullet being fired that snapped John from a deep sleep. Upright, he froze, his mind desperately searching for clues. Where had it come from? Although it was loud, it had come from outside his cabin. Had he been the target?

Of the two examples, one grabs you while the other just presents itself.

Avoid clichés. Who cares if his brow was furrowed? Be accurate in action. Did he throw water across his face or splash it. Were his hands cupped or was it one handed?

Avoid boring descriptions; but don't go all exotic on me. A bullet sounds a certain way, depending what type and how far you are from it. Have you ever fired a gun? Perhaps you should go to a shooting range so you can get a good idea. There is more than sound involved. Vibrations saturate your body. Holding the gun steady as it is being discharged takes a lot of practice, otherwise it's like someone holding a barbell out for you and suddenly letting go, only in the other direction. With all the crime novels, bullets fire, pierce, shatter, thunder, crack, snap, pop, go BANG!, pinged, thwacked.... What they do not do is sound like a herd of buffalo hooves smacking the empty tundra!

Avoid writing styles that interrupt the reading style. If a reader has to stop and mutter, "Huh?" Then you have destroyed the wonder of a well-written short story.

So your story has been rejected. What do you do now? Have a drink? Curse the publisher while waving your fist holding the crinkled rejected letter? Or do you read your story again, this time in a different way. Perhaps you read it out loud so you can hear what it sounds like. Perhaps have your spouse/partner/friend read it to you.

If you were fortunate to receive comments in the rejection, examine their validity. Is there a way to adjust the story, amp it up, refine, fine-tune, adapt, add or subtract elements, reorganize, or totally rewrite?

Remember that your story is not a prize; it's a tale that you need to tell, that is important enough for you to make the effort.

So here is a question for you! Was your story worth writing...to you? If you do not say yes, then you already know what to do. Your story must be worth writing to yourself. If so, a rejection letter is merely an opinion, a tool, a suggestion or a hint at how to improve it. Are you going to give up?

Of all the stories I have come across, the rejections always come with suggestions. It is not a personal opinion of whether I liked your story theme or not; it is, hopefully, a tool to help you fix what is wrong, and then resubmit it.

I am happy when a story comes back. I will confess that it may get rejected again and again until it is just right. I have one author (no names) who submitted to me seven or eight revisions before we got where we needed to be. That author

understood that I was looking for a good story, not just interested in rejecting those not ready for publication.

What you do now is up to you. From experience I will tell you that around 80 percent of rejection end right there. Do I feel bad for the author? Of course. Writing is tough to do. Good writing is extremely tough to do. But if it was easy, everyone would be writing...wait...looking at Amazon, everyone and their puppy has a book out there.

You just know when you read a great writer, even when they are fresh and young and naive. You feel their story. It's innate. You just know it. It calls to you.

Mike Wells (<http://mikewellsblog.blogspot.com>) began his career by having his first book self-printed. Thousands of copies made that he could not sell. You can read his story on his Website, but the condensed version is that ultimately all the copies were thrown out. From there he went on to be a best-selling author. I won't spoil the story—go read it. His career has exploded since then.

Another author, John Scalzi (<https://whatever.scalzi.com>), could not sell his first novel, so he gave it away free. After thousands of downloads and followers, a major publishing company snapped him up. Most sci-fi readers know him well. Read his story on his Blog site.

What do both have in common? Go to Amazon and read the samples and you will understand. They both get you from page one, line one, and they do not let go. They are creative, complex, compelling.

So, after all this, what are YOU going to do? To steal a line from Star Wars' Yoda, "Do, or do not; there is no try."

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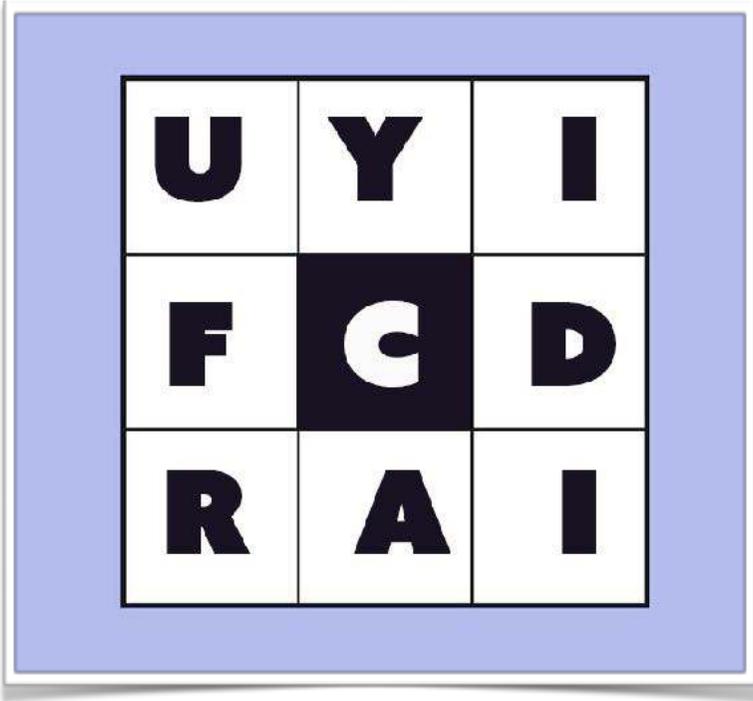
# QUESTION...



Read our PAST ISSUES at [www.BooksNPieces.com](http://www.BooksNPieces.com)

**Interviews include...** George R.R. Martin, Robert J. Sawyer, Eileen Cook, Peter James, Tosca Lee, Steena Holmes, Miranda Oh, JC Ryan, Mike Wells, Craig DiLouie, Richard Paolinelli, Grant Faulkner, Jim Christina, Robin Barefield, C.S. Lakin, Devika Fernando, Jas T. Ward, Fiona Ingram, Arabella Sheraton, Kelly Charron, Joanne Pence, Tony Phillips, Alan Brennert, Stuart Horwitz, Marc Rainer, Ellis Knox, Laura Lefkowitz, A.C. Salter, Robin Melhuish, Sarah L. Johnson, Lance Thompson, Marc Watson, Jenna Greene, Paul Alan Reuben, JS Ririe, and more every month.

## BRAIN GAME #2



Test your vocabulary against us!

List as many words (FOUR LETTERS OR MORE) that you can. Words **MUST** include the center (black) letter. If you can find a 9-letter word, you are good! There are **ONLY** 17 words. See the answers on the last page of this issue.

Example: CARD

Enjoy...and Good Luck!

## ARTICLE:

# DIY: Cover Design & Page Layout Software Choices

Authors have a wealth of available tools to help self-publish in a professional way.

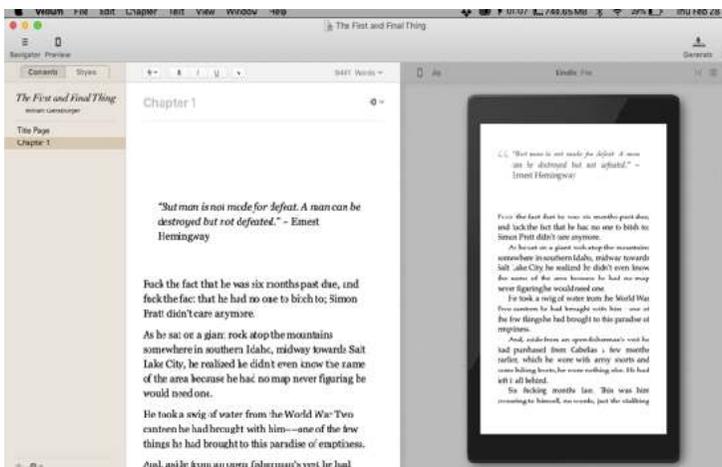
You've written your novel and now face the prospects of publishing it. You've decided to self-publish, and retain control over your work.

Following the advice in our last issue about editing and proofing your work, you are now faced with the elements of cover design and layout of you work. How do you prepare your pages, ready for both print and digital formats?

You can elect to do a layout using a word processor such as Microsoft Word, or Apple Pages, or even some other software. Elements that you need to know include formatting facing pages, headers, page numbers for print books, and how your eBook will look visually. As much as the concept of an ebook is simple, it really has many limitations that you must be aware of. For one thing, fonts are an issue you need to be concerned with. The design of reflowable text in an ebook is designed to make it readable across a variety of platforms and devices. Fancy fonts tend to complicate this and often will not translate to an ebook format.

Likewise, graphical elements and imagery pose a problem when pages reformat on the fly. While it is possible to retain a fixed format, this adds to the file size and defeats ereader features such as font resizing.

There are software options that offer an easy formatting option. Vellum (<https://vellum.pub>) is one such program, offering you a variety of styles for each element in your book that you pre-select, and which is then applied as you paste, or type, text. Once completed, Vellum (only available for Mac computers) will format your output files in a variety of formats, including print, ePub, .mobi (Kindle), as well as extra files for submission to other sites, such as Apple iBooks, Kobo and Sony. There is a one-time price for the purchase of the software, however it is well worth the time saving features it offers.



Another program is BookCreative (<http://bookcreative.com>), that also offers the ability to design your book cover (both print and digital) as well as your interior layout. Again, the trade-off is the price of the software, however the license is a one-time cost, well worth it if you have multiple books you are working on.



Amazon's Kindle Direct (<https://kdp.amazon.com/>) offers cover creator as part of the package, a simplistic cover designer that will give you a workable cover, but, in my opinion, not one that offers a high enough quality to look professional.

Writers use a variety of software to make the process easier for them. Popular programs include Scrivener (<https://www.literatureandlatte.com/scrivener/overview>), which will compile your chapters into a suitable output

format, but also offers you files for storing your research, characterization, as well as other elements related to your novel.

Cover design files can be compiled through the use of stock imagery such as Dreamstime (<https://www.dreamstime.com>), or 123RF (<http://123RF.com>), where professional imagery may be licensed per image or by subscription.

Other programs allow for text to be imposed over imagery, whether arranged on a mobile device or a desktop computer. Likewise, programs to adjust imagery as well can be found Online at reasonable or no cost.

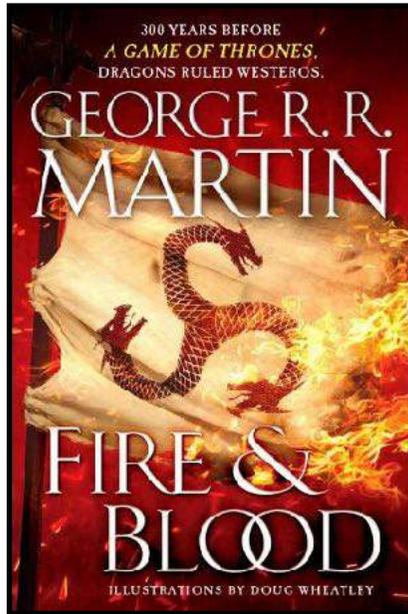
As a writer you have a lot of choices available to you. Your confidence in self-publishing depends on your confidence to try out these different techniques available. Like all things, practice is essential. Just like putting words on paper, the choice to self-publish requires work.

Most of the software mentioned in this article is available for use on a trial basis. Try it out and see how you feel. With just a little work you can save yourself a lot of money in this crucial stage of your self-publishing.

# BOOKSTORE 'N PIECES

Here are some book selections for you to consider reading. We are not endorsing any book by its placement in our bookstore. Please be sure to leave a review for the book, regardless how short. Authors need your feedback.

## -BOOKS-

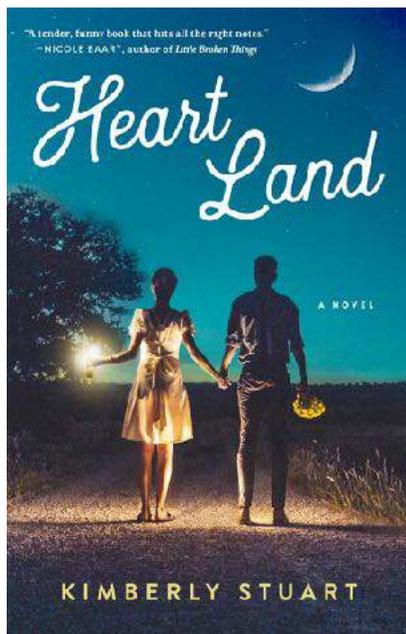


### **George R.R. Martin: FIRE & BLOOD**

Synopsis: Centuries before the events of *A Game of Thrones*, House Targaryen—the only family of dragonlords to survive the Doom of Valyria—took up residence on Dragonstone. *Fire & Blood* begins their tale with the legendary Aegon the Conqueror, creator of the Iron Throne, and goes on to recount the generations of Targaryens who fought to hold that iconic seat, all the way up to the civil war that nearly tore their dynasty apart.

What really happened during the Dance of the Dragons? Why was it so deadly to visit Valyria after the Doom? What were Maegor the Cruel's worst crimes? What was it like in Westeros when dragons ruled the skies? These are but a few of the questions answered in this essential chronicle, as related by a learned maester of the Citadel and featuring more than eighty all-new black-and-white

illustrations by artist Doug Wheatley. Readers have glimpsed small parts of this narrative in such volumes as *The World of Ice & Fire*, but now, for the first time, the full tapestry of Targaryen history is revealed.. LEARN MORE: [amzn.to/2EtRhQO](https://amzn.to/2EtRhQO)



## **Kimberly Stuart: HEARTLAND**

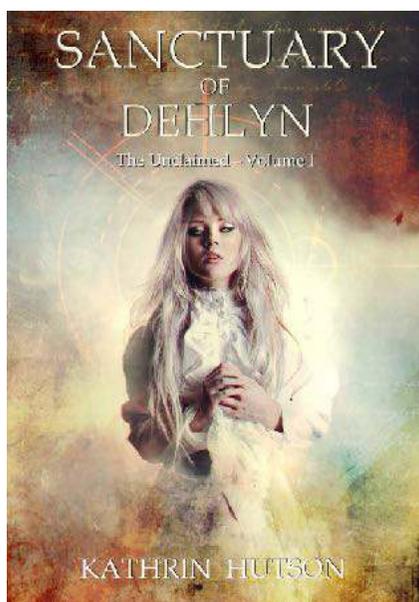
Synopsis: A story of reconnection, lost love, and the power of faith, *Heart Land* follows a struggling fashion designer back to her small Iowa hometown as she tries to follow her dreams of success and finding true love.

Grace Klaren has finally made her dream of living in the Big Apple and working in the fashion industry a reality. But when she's unexpectedly fired and can't afford the next month's rent, Grace does something she never thought she'd do: she moves back home.

Back in Silver Creek, Iowa, Grace is determined to hate it. She rails against the quiet of her small town, where everything closes early, where there's no nightlife, where everyone knows each other. She's saving her pennies and plotting her return to New York when she almost runs over a man who's not paying attention at a crosswalk. It turns out to be Tucker, her high school sweetheart whose heart she broke when she left ten years ago. They reconnect, and Grace remembers why she fell for him in the first place.

And her career begins to turn around when she finds a gorgeous but tattered vintage dress at a flea market. She buys it, rips it apart seam by seam, and re-creates it with new fabric, updating the look with some of her own design ideas. She snaps a picture and lists the dress online, and within a day, it sells for nearly \$200. Suddenly, Grace has her ticket out of here.

But Grace can't fight her growing feelings for Tucker. Sometimes when they're together, Tucker paints a picture of what their future could be like, and it feels so real. And when she finally gains the funding to move her new business back to New York, Grace must decide where home really is—will she chase her long-held New York dream, or find a new dream here in the heartland?. [LEARN MORE: amzn.to/2EFNVvz](#)



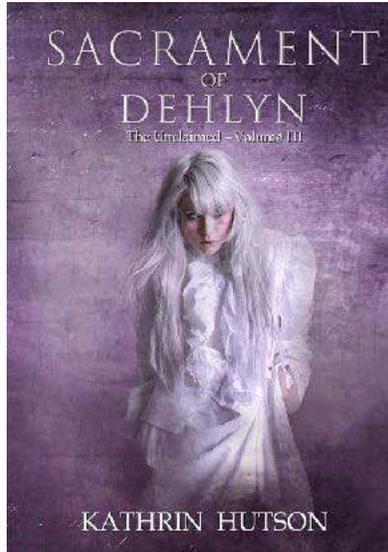
### **Kathrin Hutson: SANCTUARY OF DEHLYN**

Synopsis: When Kherron meets her, he wishes he hadn't. Beholden to the man who purchased his freedom from the Iron Pit, he cannot deny Torrahs this one request--get to know the woman-child named Dehlyn. He also cannot reconcile the gorgeous woman with the stunted, naïve, unnatural workings of her innocent mind. And yet, she's been placed under his care.

On the night he saves her life, Dehlyn transforms, revealing the otherworldly power of the creature she has always been--the creature who, for centuries, no one but Kherron has seen. She asks him to make a vow, to protect her at all costs,

and when he can do nothing but submit to such a promise, the world he knows unravels.

The immortals are at war. Beings wielding forbidden magic run rampant across Eldynia. Powerful men will stop at nothing to pry the world's mysteries from Dehlyn's mind, and all the rules are changing. Kherron's path lies at the center, but if he's to protect Dehlyn at all costs, first he must find her. [LEARN MORE: amzn.to/2tOxab3](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B089L3L3L3)

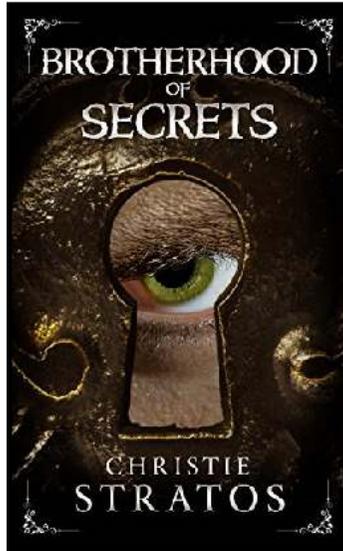


## **Kathrin Hutson: SACRAMENT OF DEHLYN**

Synopsis: Freed from the unending torment of the violet mists and his forty-eight deaths within the void, Kherron has reentered the world an entirely different man. He's broken his vow to Dehlyn, to find and protect her at all costs, releasing the amarach vessel's hold on him forever. Without this tether to the green-eyed woman with more ancient power than any one being was ever meant to possess, the path before him is his own to choose.

As a Blood of the Veil, with command over living things and the elements of the natural world, he is a protector—the voice that speaks between the natural world and the unseen. But Torrahs the Wanderer and the Brotherhood still strive to unleash The Unclaimed's vast and terrible knowledge. The foundation of balance has cracked. The Nateru have lost themselves, the amarach have been undone, and Kherron must do what has been asked of him. Not because it was foretold, but because the things he cares about as a free man now face the edge of

destruction. But is his final choice worth the cost of making it? [LEARN MORE: amzn.to/2tHkWkE](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B000APR004)

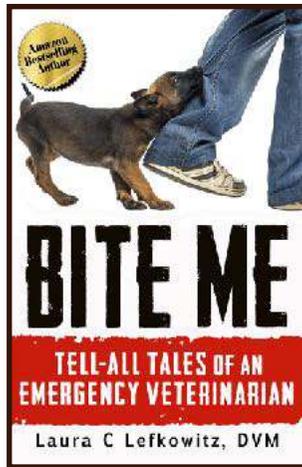


## **Christie Stratos: BROTHERHOOD OF SECRETS**

**Synopsis:** "Brothers in the art of keeping secrets." This is the mantra Mr. Locke's carefully chosen five employees must repeat together every day before starting work.

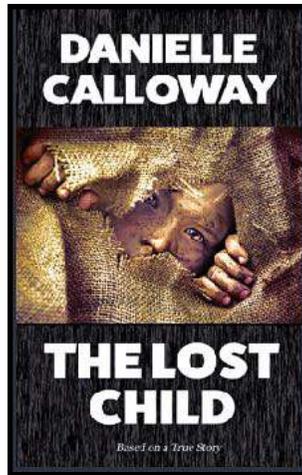
If you won't tell them your name for Locke and Key's ledger, they'll find out.

They have their ways—and many of them. Yes, these talented locksmiths can make a new lock and key set for you. They can even make a special padlock for a diary you never want to share with anyone. But just remember: when they make the lock, they keep a key—and it's only a matter of time until they use it. Day by day, each of these young, single, alone-in-the-world workers is being molded into the family they crave. A family in which each member has his use toward an end he doesn't even know exists. How do the brotherhood and the town's secrets interlock? Only Mr. Locke holds the key [LEARN MORE: amzn.to/2DKmqAo](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B000APR004)



**Laura C. Lefkowitz: BITE ME:  
TELL-ALL TALES OF AN EMERGENCY  
VETERINARIAN**

**Synopsis:** A reality based, bestselling, uncensored look at the world of modern veterinary medicine. Follow one veterinarian's story through the course of her career and experience the dramas, the traumas and the comedies that regularly take place in a veterinary emergency room. **Bite Me** gives a rare insider's view of the frustrations, the joys and the heartbreak that veterinarians experience on a daily basis and exposes the reasons why the veterinary profession is currently facing some dire and frightening challenges. A must-read for any pet owner, any person aspiring to be a veterinarian, any veterinary student, and any person who has an interest in the welfare of both animals and people. **LEARN MORE: <https://amzn.to/2UjotSs>**

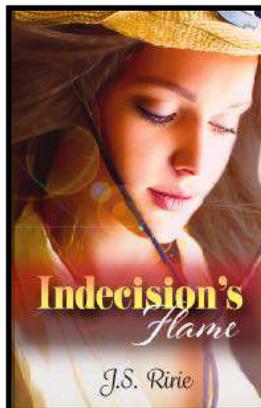


## **Danielle Calloway: THE LOST CHILD**

**Synopsis:** Nicolás is a deaf boy on the run and trying to survive in a dangerous hearing world. Lily moves to Ecuador from the US to teach the deaf, full of uncertainties and trying to adjust, she meets Nicolás. Now Lily must gain his trust to save him.

"You cry, get angry, have hope again, learn, grow, cry some more and finally your pride and belief in humanity is restored. This is a must read." ~Debra Hughes

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## **JS Ririe: INDECISION'S FLAME: BOOK 1**

**Synopsis:** Brylee Hawkins was going home, but it wasn't for a happy reunion. She was there to confront her father so she could return to the man of her dreams

and get married. But the Australian Outback wasn't the place she remembered, and the truth behind her mother's unexpected death wasn't the only reality that would toss her into a quagmire of doubt, suspicion and self-doubt. Will she be strong enough to fight the demons alone, or will she sink into a dark abyss and lose everything, including her soul? **LEARN MORE: [amzn.to/2QoW8ff](http://amzn.to/2QoW8ff)**

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## ANSWERS TO BRAIN GAME #2

FROM PAGE 96

**9 letter word:**

**fiduciary**

acidify	farcy
acid	acid
auric	cadi
caird	card
curdy	crud
curia	curd
daric	racy
farci	uric

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by Kathrin Hutson

**Sugar**  
by Kimberly Stuart

**Reborn**  
by Jenna Greene

**Dragons are Forever**  
by H.M. Gooden

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It’s the story of vanishing wildlife that’s happening on our watch.”*

*—Graham Spence, co-author of The Elephant Whisperer*



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