



# BOOKS & PIECES

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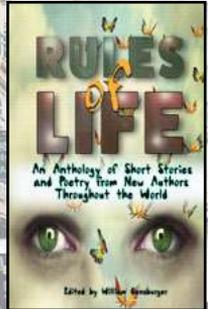
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## On Writing...

### Devika Fernando

Successful Writing from Her Home in Sri Lanka

**Q: Your background is interesting - A German education and then living in Sri Lanka. The famous Arthur C. Clarke lived there as well. What is it about Sri Lanka that you love?**

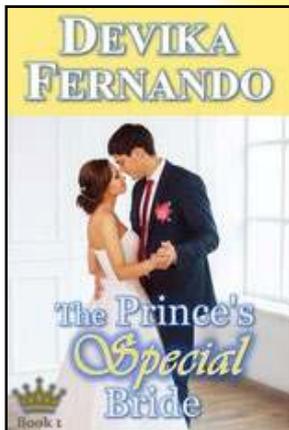
*A: I love the fact you can find nearly every climate and landscape here, although the island is so small. Then there's the colorful history and culture, with traces of the Indians, the Dutch, the Portuguese and the English everywhere you go, mixed with various religious and other Asian influences. This eclectic mix was one of the reasons why I wrote the novel "Saved in Sri Lanka", revolving around a Sri Lankan tour guide who falls in love with an Irish tourist. All that aside, there's a lot to be said for a nice spicy curry. ;-)*

**Q: Your tagline says that YOUR characters fall in love, rather**



**than fall in lust; this is a fascinating way of shifting the romance dynamic. How does that affect your storylines, your approach to creating them, and do you have to fall in love with your characters as well?**

*A: Fascinating question, thanks. I think we're all a little sick of generic stories where the characters kiss on page 3, have some nice romps between the sheets, and never really explore any other dynamics apart from physical attraction put into jeopardy because some misunderstanding or other. That's why I*



*~~~~~*



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YOU CROW ABOUT YOUR  
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→ strive to create authentic, unique characters who are drawn to more than good looks in the other person. I want to explore all the challenges that love in its many forms brings with it, and its capacity to make people discover not just their partner for life but also themselves along the way. To that extent, I do fall in love with my characters. I breathe life into them, and they breathe life into the story. If I can relate to them in some way and root for their happy ending, the story is easier to write.

### Q: What's your favorite book/author?

**A:** I always find it hard to answer that question because I'm such a voracious reader. If I HAD to pick only one author and one book, I'd go with Anne Rice (because I love her vampire chronicles) and with "The God of Small Things" written by Arundhati Roy.

### Q: What made you decide to be a writer? What led you there, steps involved? And why romance?

**A:** I was a bookworm from the time I knew how to read, and somehow, writing became a part of my love for books. I wrote my first – really short – short story when I was 7, and my first poem shortly afterwards.

I made the decision to become a romance novelist in 2013 when I saw all the news about e-books and self-publishing Online. Truth be told, I did a lot of research and

reading first, and then decided to take the plunge with my novella "When I See Your Face" (now a permanently free download). There was never any question for me that it would be romance. It's my favorite genre, although I basically read anything and everything. And I just love writing about love. :-)

### Q: What is your writing process like? Are you fixed or fluid in your writing? Do you have a set time and place for writing? What tools are used? Pen, pencil, computer only, notes, fleshed thoroughly, or just enough to get going?



**A:** My main job is being a technical writer for clients in Germany, so most of my day is spent writing texts for blogs, websites and online shops. But I always make it a

point to write fiction too, usually in the afternoon or evening. My daily overall word count is at least 6,000 words, and Sundays are often the only days when I don't write. I write ideas down by hand, sometimes also rough characterizations and plot outlines – and all my poems are hand-written. For non-fiction and fiction, I use the computer and keep it simple. Just plain old MS Word and the Internet (for research).

I guess you could say I'm a mix between a plotter and a pantsier: I do use rough



→ outlines and make notes about the characters, but if the story takes me somewhere else, I follow the flow. And I have realized that I write best if I focus on whatever scene wants to be written at a given time. I don't stick to a 'chronicle' timeline. Instead, I may write a chapter towards the end of the story early on or jump from scene to scene or chapter to chapter. Once I've written it all, I go back and blend everything together, write some short 'fillers' and revise the story before I embark on editing.

work and can offer fair prices, and they are easily accessible at all times. But I do love losing myself in a good paperback novel off and on.

**Q: How long does it take you to get through the first draft of a novel?**

**A:** That depends. I've participated in NaNoWriMo several times and written more than 50,000 words in a month, but that wasn't the whole book. So I'd say up to two months, depending on how much time I have.



**Q: Do you edit as you write or get through and then rewrite?**

**A:** I stay away from editing during writing because it tends to interrupt the flow. But sometimes I re-read what I've written to get back into a particular scene or switch between chapters, and then I might give in and do some minor editing.

**Q: Paper books or e-books or both, and why?**

**A:** As a writer, ebooks. As a reader, both. I think ebooks make much more sense for an indie author. You can reach such a wide audience, you save yourself some

**Q: What do you consider the shortfall of what you see getting published today?**

**A:** There are a lot of wanna-be's out there. I don't mean to sound condescending, but too many people give it a go because they basically think, "oh, how hard can it be?" or because they hope for quick money or have noticed 'famous' authors. I see it especially in the romance genre. And that has led to some low-quality books, especially among the millions of free books. It's as though everyone under the sun wants to give writing and self-publishing a try now, precisely because it is so easy. Those books

→ that are sometimes not even worth being called books sadly impact all of us writers because readers grow wary of Indie authors or the lure of free/cheap fiction if they've had some bad experiences.

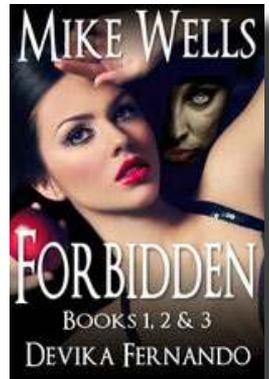
On the other hand, I love it how so many writers now have the opportunity to unleash their gift and live their dream, as opposed to having manuscripts languishing away and never receiving any feedback.

**Q: How did you come to meet Mike Wells? What was the lead up to deciding to co-write a book: *Forbidden: Book 1*.**

**A:** I'm happy you asked me about this because I consider myself lucky that we crossed paths. I don't remember how exactly I came to 'meet' Mike on social media, but he was a Facebook friend (just a connection I shared with tons of other writers) and we were connected on Twitter. I had also downloaded some of his free books like Book 1 of his bestselling thriller series "Lust, Money & Murder". One day, I saw a Facebook post by him where he mentioned wanting to co-write a book with someone. I found the idea intriguing, left a comment and shared his post... not even considering



that applying myself would be an option because I write romance. As fate would have it, Mike sent me a message and told me more about his idea, and we discussed matters in detail. The rest is history... ;-)



**Q: And how did you find the experience?**

**A:** I'm glad that Mike convinced me to take a leap of faith because co-authoring the romantic suspense series "Forbidden" with him was an amazing experience. He created an outline to work with and we communicated regularly (not just during the initial writing stages), and that made things a lot easier than they could have been. I learned so much from Mike, and I can't wait to embark on a similar journey with him again.

**Q: Do you see yourself focusing beyond romance in the future? Or do you believe your readers still believe in princes? Royalty? And why?**

**A:** I write in several sub-genres (contemporary romance mostly, but also paranormal romance with my "Fire Trilogy" and romantic suspense



with Mike). And I don't have any plans on ditching my favorite genre. But I might try my hand at dystopian YA one day in the future.

I chose royalty for my latest books because I was looking for a different kind of hero, away from the general types like billionaires, rock stars, bad boys and shifters. And I think it adds fascinating details on so many levels – making up fictional kingdoms, having common people be thrown into all the grandeur and splendor, highlighting the conflicts that social status can bring while at the same time stressing that deep down royals are normal people too. I also love writing multicultural romances like “Saved in Sri Lanka” and “Seduced in Spain” because I can share different cultures and make readers explore various countries alongside me and my protagonists.

**Q: How does your process work with Mike, from two different locations?**

**A:** During co-authoring, we mostly rely on e-mails. We have outlines in Word that we work with. And we message each other on Facebook if there is anything we want to discuss. It's what I love so much about the Internet and also about the 'modern' way of writing and publishing: it's so easy to stay connected. Not even time differences are a real hindrance.

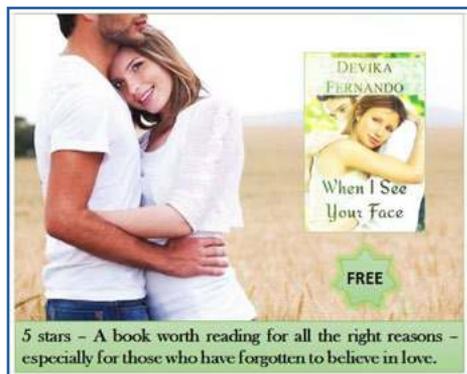
**Q: So what is happening currently?**

**A:** I'm currently working on a third multicultural romance titled “In Love

in Italy”, and I've got many more royal romances planned.

To those who want to get a taste of my writing, I recommend signing up to my Romance Readers Club here (<http://eepurl.com/bK6AzL>). Members can instantly claim 3 free e-books, and they'll receive newsletters with multi-author giveaways, book prices, interesting sneak peeks and updates.

I also love to connect with my readers and with other authors on social media. People can find me on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/devikafernandoauthor>) and Twitter ([https://twitter.com/Author\\_Devika](https://twitter.com/Author_Devika)) and basically everywhere else where writers usually hang out.



[Editor note: A huge thank you to Devika for her enthusiasm with my questions. When you follow her on one or more of the social media platforms, be sure to let her know you read the interview in Books 'N Pieces Digital Magazine. And be sure to click the book links mentioned in this article.] If you are an author and would like to be interviewed for a future issue, please email us at [info@AltPublish.com](mailto:info@AltPublish.com) or from our Website at [www.AltPublish.com](http://www.AltPublish.com).

## SHORT STORY

# Black Beauty

by Henry Ohaegbulam

I thought Idris had gone mad; he had disappeared because Baba swore to massage his penis with Cameroon pepper when he returned from the mosque, and everyone knew he wasn't joking. He had caught Idris breaking the sacred fast in his bedroom again. The first time, he had given Idris about a hundred strokes of the cane on his buttocks, so hard that he couldn't sit for a whole week. Baba didn't tolerate such things in his house; he said his house was sacred because Allah dwelled there, and I had to believe him because I wasn't supposed to doubt whatever he or Maami said. I believed him even more after I was told that Allah had a fully furnished bedroom upstairs! There was a plasma television, a two horse-powered air conditioning system, two stereo speakers, a bed and some other luxurious equipment, yet everything was covered with dust. When I saw the thick dust, I assumed Allah's servants were being lazy and didn't want to do chores. I remember the day I asked Baba if I could help them clean up Allah's room, he flogged me the way he usually did whenever I committed an unpardonable offence like being late for early morning prayers, or complaining after he sent me on an errand. He said, "You

do not try to help a sacred deity like Allah or the penalty would be sudden death." I had cried like hell; not because his lashes were painful and left bloody bruises on my body, but because I was so scared; I didn't want to die a sudden death. Idris consoled me, he said the story was one of Baba's superstitious stories that he said to scare us and have his way. If there was any Muslim who believed in superstitions, then it was Alhaji Garubar Bello, my father.

Maami isn't as old as Baba, he is in fact over half of her age. She was only 16 years old at the time when her parents gave her to Baba who was 33 years old at the time – she didn't tell me that, Idris did. He also says that Maami is only older than him with 16 years. She had him three nights after their Niká. He also told me that Maami was Baba's second wife, his first wife had no surviving children for him; her first baby died minutes after birth, her second died at age two, her third died immediately after birth like the first, then she became pregnant again, this time, she miscarried. After all these failed attempts of making Baba a father, she got tired and began seeking solutions; she found one in Jesus and as you would expect, she changed

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→ her name and became a Christian, and she even joined a local church as a worker. God did it for Hanna and Sarah, so He could do it for her as well, but Baba wouldn't hear of it. The first time she went to fellowship with the other Christians, he beat her up with an aluminum rod– he beat her so much she fell into a coma. The second time, he gave her heavy blows and she was admitted at the Islamic health center. When she recovered, she came home, packed her bags and left the house quietly. When Baba returned and saw her room empty, he began to shout curses. Idris reckoned that he had complained because he wasn't finished with her yet; he still needed her warmth in his bed at nights, not because he still loved her.

Maami's parents seemed to have given her to him for money because Baba and his people were wealthy; they went very often to Mecca to pray, she had been hesitant at first; she returned to her father's house twice complaining that Baba was a monster when he was doing it. Her father sent her back with a goat as an apology to Baba and his family. The second time, he had personally returned her and told Baba to increase his force when next he was having her; he also threatened to give Maami a mixture of cement and water to drink the next time she came visiting without her husband's consent. Idris told me all these things. I still find it funny how he had learned them; he was still very young at the time and Maami didn't discuss such things with us, neither did Baba.

Maami was just as strict as Baba, or

even more. Baba made the rules, she administered them, monitored them and gave the pre-punishments to offenders before Baba came and gave the final punishment. She was also an obsessed Islamist, she made sure no one missed morning prayers or ate during the Ramadan fasting – she personally locked up every access to food. She flogged like Baba too. Once, she flogged Idris with koboko because she saw posters of the Manchester Football team on his bedroom wall. Afterwards, she swore and replaced the posters with those of Sheik Niass.

Maami wasn't too educated but you could hardly know, she spoke English and calculated money like a professor, Idris told me that she had dropped out of school during the period she was married off to Baba and because Baba himself had no value for female education, he didn't bother to send her back to further her studies; he only sent me to school because Maami begged him. After much argument, they finally agreed to let me go through primary and secondary school before getting married to Bashiru Haruna; my betrothed.

I have finished my secondary studies and my WAEC result was pretty good, I had 'Bs' all through except for the Islamic Religious Knowledge in which I got a C. I was punished when Baba saw my result. He discussed with Captain Haruna to come and take me to his son quickly before he could have a chance to murder me, but fortunately Bashiru wasn't ready for our marriage because his father thought it wise to send him to school in the US just



→ after our WAEC results came out. Idris told me to pray that he found a white girl there who would be prettier than I am. That would delay our marriage and give him enough time to plan an escape route for me, for us. He was the only one in our family that didn't want me to get married.

Idris had been expelled twice, the first time was from secondary school for examination malpractices, and the second was for cultism affairs at the university campus. Baba vowed never to send him to school again.

Idris began to change the day Baba threatened to disown him for missing prayers three times in a row. His reasons were that the prayers were usually long and his knees and forehead were beginning to darken from spending too much time rubbing against the ground.

It was a Monday and I was getting ready to leave for my Monday catering class. Baba had enrolled me because he thought that my bean balls were too peppery; he was a man who believed that a woman's place was in the kitchen and in the bedroom, of course, although he had only sent me to learn how to cook because there were no schools that taught a woman how to do the second thing.

I was looking at my reflection on the window louvres because I didn't have a mirror. I hadn't noticed Maami had come in. Quickly before she could notice, I cleaned off the lip gloss I had applied some seconds earlier.

"Where's your hijab?" she asked me suspiciously. "Its in the laundry ma," I lied.

"So all of your hijabs are in the laundry eh?"

"No ma," I shivered. Maami had warned me never to leave my room without wearing a hijab. At first, she only made me wear them during those cold months when the heat was minimal but after she had observed how fast my breasts and backside were developing and how Idris' friends stared at me whenever they came visiting during Eid-ul-Adha, she changed her mind, and I now wear them every time I am leaving my room. She hardly bought me any trending clothes, because I hardly wore them.

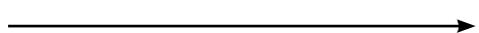
"I'll wear this," I quickly said presenting one before her temper would rise.

"Make sure you show yourself to me before leaving," she said and turned to leave.

I hurriedly slid my scarf over my head and wore the hijab carefully over my red tank top and black skirt, I left to Maami's room to show myself to her. She ordered me to go back to my room and wear a tighter bra.

The road wasn't busy and I got quite early to The Caterers'. As usual, I helped the other girls with the cleaning; the same girls who used to call me a snob because I hardly spoke to any of them except during paired or group cooking practicals. I hadn't been trained to keep friends so I couldn't successfully keep up a conversation no matter how hard I tried, except with Idris of course.

I usually joined the other Christian girls with their morning prayers because



our proprietress had insisted that we began each day with prayers and we always did though she was hardly around, the other Muslim girls joined as well. We held each other's hands, forming a large circle while I watched the other girls sing choruses joyfully. I didn't join them sing, I couldn't because I didn't know any of the songs they sang but they thought I wasn't singing because I was being proud. I was holding Pat, the only boy in our class on one side and Remi, the albino, on the other side, when a thin figure rushed in through the door and separated me from Remi, I turned to look at the person who was holding me with such soft palms and was shocked to find one of the most prettiest girls I had ever seen. She was new.

After the prayers, Maggie the head of the students came to the middle of the circle and spoke.

"Good morning every one." She began. "I'm pleased to announce that a new student would be joining us today." She smiled and every other girl made cheerful noises except me. They were eager to make new friends, they usually cheered whenever a new student joined the class. "Come and introduce yourself," Maggie called out with enthusiasm.

The thin girl walked up to the center of the large circle. She was wearing a black pair of trousers and a green polo with a black pair of masculine sneakers, she wasn't the timid type.

"Hello every one, my name is Amaka Nwachuwku, but I'd prefer you call me Success because I want to be a successful

cook when I grow up."

Everyone laughed again, except me. I admired Success, I felt intimidated by her stylish appearance, I suddenly began to feel uncomfortable with my hijab. The other girls crowded around her and they spoke as if they had been friends for years. I decided to step out to take some fresh air. I was glancing through the pages of a cookery book, trying to appear busy when Pat walked up to me.

"Zara," he called.

"Good morning Patrick," I greeted him back, happy to have found company.

"Why are you here?" he asked, "The others are in a meeting with the new girl inside."

"Oh!" I exclaimed. I peeped in and saw the others had formed another circle. I returned the cookery book and joined them.

"We were just telling Success about our curriculum," Rachel sneered in disgust. "The boss doesn't need to come."

When I got home, I met no one. I went to my room to find the clothes I would wear the next day—I was trying to find something that would resemble Success' choices.

There was a soft knock on the door, I thought it was Baba or Maami, I hurriedly hid all the clothes I had brought out from among my old clothes. I ran to open the door and was consequently surprised to find Idris standing at the doorway.

"Are the old folks in?" he whispered, referring to our parents. "Ah!" I covered my mouth. "They're in the kitchen!"



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→ Idris laughed at my joke. “You are wearing lipstick, you won’t do that if they’re in.”

I laughed hysterically and suddenly broke into shrill sobs. I hugged Idris and he held me tight, I had missed him so much, he had been my only companion and ally in the house. “I want to leave with you,” I finally said.

Idris was hesitant at first but I told him about my suffering and the loneliness I was going through in the house. Finally, he agreed. He helped me pack a few of my dresses in his backpack. Afterwards, he broke into Baba’s room and took some of his dollars, then we carefully closed the door and were soon out in the streets.

Idris led to me to the bus station and we took a cab to the market place where we met a mallam, he was probably one of the Bureau De Change people that crowded the market. The man led us to an office and Idris handed him the dollar bills. He dampened his fingers with saliva and began to examine the money. Seeing if they were original, he began to count it in a very funny manner. Idris and I made signs to each other and tightened up our faces to keep the laughter from bursting out. Suddenly, the man stopped counting and shook his head violently.

“Where did you get these dollars from?”

“It’s mine,” Idris stammered.

“No,” the mallam said. “You’re thieves, these dollars are marked with Alhaji Bello’s signature.

“We are his children!” I quickly blurted out. “He sent us.” “Shut up, thieves, fājir, prove it!”

Fortunately for us, Idris still kept his school ID card and he showed it to the man. “See, the same surname,” he said. I took out my phone and searched for one of our family pictures. I showed it to the man and slowly, his lips curved into a smile. “Chai!” He exclaimed, “My children, forgive me.”

We frowned at him while he began recounting the bills with a smile on his blotched face. “Its three-hundred and twenty dollars,” he announced.

“We know,” Idris said. “How much would that be in Nigerian Naira?”

The man took out an old calculator roughly bound with transparent sellotape and punched it. “That would be one hundred and thirteen thousand, six hundred Naira.” he said.

“Please hurry up we have to rush to our father’s errand before it gets dark” Idris lied.

The mallam rose and dipped his hand into his right pocket, it came out with the biggest bundle of naira notes I had ever seen. Carefully, he began counting.

“Here you go.” He handed the Naira notes to Idris who counted carefully to make sure it was complete – it was. We rose to go.

“Kai!” the man exclaimed. “Alhaji Bello is a generous man, hasn’t he taught his children to be too.”

“No, he didn’t.” Idris understood that he meant he wanted a tip. “He sent us on an errand with the money.” I nudged him and he hissed submissively. He reached out into the backpack and took out another note.

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→ He handed it to the mallam.

“Allah bless you, greet your father for me.”

We left the market place and took a bus to a dirty street. When we alighted, Idris told me that the street was a place for hustlers and I need not be afraid.

“Anywhere is better than home,” I said.

Idris led the way to a dirty tall building, its windows were without any louvres only a few that were dusty and cracked.

He opened the metal door and led the way to the last floor. He knocked at the door and a muscled boy opened up.

“How far?” He asked. His eyes were fixed on me.

“I just dey,” he replied and held my hand. “She’s my sister,” he added.

We went in and sat down on one of the mismatched torn sofas in the living room, everything looked old in there, just like in a museum. The only new thing I saw there was the wall clock that was blinking 6:32pm.

Idris introduced the boy as Sodiq Muon. He asked me to be careful of him and the others.

“Which others?” I asked. “They’re at work, all six of them.” “Six!” I said, horror struck.

“Don’t be scared, they’re completely harmless.” Idris looked at where Sodiq sat in the corner; he was spreading a whitish substance onto the surface of a newspaper, beside him was a pair of manicure scissors.

“Let’s go and eat,” he whispered.

When we had finished eating and got back to the old apartment, all the boys

were back, I counted eight, Idris inclusive. The youngest of them seemed to be five years older than me. A meeting was called where I was introduced and Idris warned them not to mistreat me. The way he did made me scared. When it was time for bed, every one retired to the rooms. I, Idris and another boy called Shalom, stayed in the living room. I hardly slept that night; the heat, mosquitoes and violent snores from the flat nearly drove me into tears, and I prayed fervently for morning to come quickly.

By the time I had woken up, all the boys were out, except for Idris and Sodiq who were still sleeping.

“I think I’m sick.” I said to Idris.

“What?”

“All my body aches.”

“I will get you some food and drugs,” he said and went to fetch his backpack for some cash, but he stormed back a few minutes later.

“Zara!” He called, “Did you take our money?”

“No,” I said.

He sat heavily and tears rolled down his eyes. “They’ve taken it.”

“Who would have done such thing?” I asked wide-eyed.

“Dunno who,” he trembled. “What are we going to do now?”

“Let’s go home,” I suddenly said, but Idris wouldn’t listen.

“We cant go back now, Baba would kill us,” he said, “and how would we explain the dollars?”

“You should explain it to him, after all



→ you took it.” I suddenly got angry at Idris.

Shocked, he looked at me for a time, then he shook his head and left the house. I reached out for my phone to call Maami, at least, to tell her where I was, but I couldn't find where I left it before going to bed. I got up and searched but it wasn't in the room or my pockets. I sat down heavily and cried. I waited for Idris, but he did not show up. I felt like vomiting, I left to look for where the bathroom was but I met Sodiq.

“Fine geh!” he called out and grabbed my chest.

I screamed and ran back to the living room. He followed and caught me before I could get to the main door. With a heavy hand, he covered my mouth, the other tore off my hijab. I fought against him, but he was too strong, probably still under the influence of the drug he took. He lowered his trousers and tore off my skirt. Slowly, he had his way, and left me down there in the mess of shredded clothes, blood and semen. He returned to the couch and quickly fell back into a heavy sleep.

Idris came back and found me in that state. He went wild with anger, his noise woke Sodiq who tried to escape, but Idris caught him and hit him hard on the head. I watched them fight each other like lions; sometimes Idris was winning but most times, Sodiq triumphed. Idris looked half-dead as I watched Sodiq strangling him. Quickly, I took the small metal table from the center of the living room and brought it down hard on Sodiq's head. He fell back and Idris suddenly gathered up the last

strength left in him, grabbed the manicure scissors from the couch and stabbed Sodiq's throat, and again on his chest, and one last time, on the navel. Sodiq coughed and lay motionless in a pool of blood, dead.

“We must leave now!” Idris said weakly. “I'm so sorry, did he harm you?”

I sobbed, I couldn't bring myself to tell him that I had been raped.

“We must leave now,” he repeated.

We quickly changed our clothes and washed off, I looked at my self and at the corpse of my rapist and began to cry again.

“Stop crying,” Idris said, but he was crying too. “No matter what happens I will always protect you. You will always be my black beauty.”

Henry Ohaegbulam is the founder of the Young African Writers League, a new community of African writers. The group is primarily set to provide free consulting services, writing tips advice and publishing. The group is also the organizer of two new writing prizes; the Henry Adolphus Short Story Prize (annual contest) and the Young African Writers Prize (quarterly). You can learn more at <https://yawleague.blogspot.com>

There are only two types of people in the world: those who believe they are important and those who believe they are not. And, of those believing they are important, they find importance is an illusion, for like all things on Earth, time erodes it away. Consequently it is a safe assumption that there are no people of importance—merely people with attitudes.

—William Leisler Burt Foster

# Trade Secrets:

## Writing As The Other Woman

An interview with Fiona Ingram  
aka Arabella Sheraton

Arabella Sheraton is the popular author of many romance novels, especially Regency Romance, taking the distinctive styling of her writings and applying a historical context. And yet behind the veil, the masterwords come from author Fiona Ingram, whose childrens' and teen reader series, have also found popular success.

Fiona was kind enough to tackle a few of our questions:

**Q: Do you publicly acknowledge Arabella Sheraton as a nom de guerre? And how did you settle on the name - inspiration for the choice?**

**A:** *I didn't at first. I wanted to keep my two personas separate, but when I did start telling people (after swearing them to secrecy), I found that people were intrigued, interested, and I got more 'coverage' for both Fiona Ingram (myself) and Arabella Sheraton (my nom de guerre). The name came about from a Georgette Heyer novel, Arabella, and the Arabella Sheraton Hotel in*



*Cape Town, South Africa. It sounded so Regency-ish that I just had to adopt it.*

**Q: What made you decide that Regency Romances were the way for you - and for those who do not know what an RR is, could you explain that?**

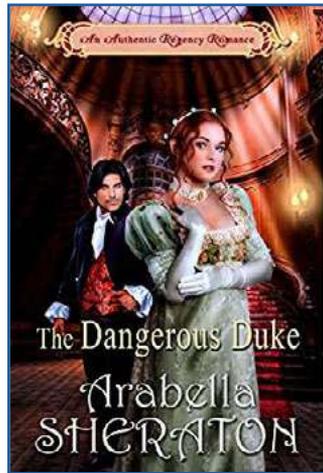
**A:** *Regency romances are a subgenre of romance novels set during the period of the British Regency (1811–1820) or early 19th century. Rather than simply being versions of contemporary romance stories transported to a historical setting, Regency romances are a distinct genre with their own plot and stylistic conventions. These derive not so much from the 19th-century contemporary works of Jane Austen, but rather*



from Georgette Heyer, who wrote over two dozen novels set in the Regency starting in 1935 until her death in 1974, and from the fiction genre known as the 'novel of manners.' In particular, the more traditional Regencies feature a great deal of intelligent, fast-paced dialogue between the protagonists and very little explicit sex or discussion of sex. I loved reading Jane Austen's novels, and my mother had all the Georgette Heyer novels so I ended up reading those many times. One day my aged mum said she was tired of Big Name Publisher's Regency and historical romance novels all sounding the same and could I write her

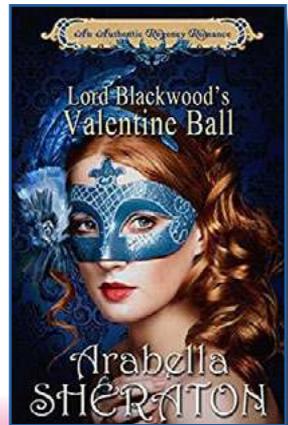
one. Ever up for a challenge, I said yes.

**Q: How old were you when you first tried to write and what did you write first (short story, novel etc)?**



**A: I have written comical poetry and family plays (I have four brothers so always a large cast of willing players), as well as telling my brothers and their friends spooky stories since I was ten. My first real story was an on-going serial**

called *Gruesome Gables*, and involved five children (us) trapped in a haunted house, fighting off skeletons, vampires, ghosts and other monsters. We always won!



**Q: Your first romance was *The Dangerous Duke*. How did that form?**

**A: That was when my mum asked me to write her a Regency romance and I said, "Sure, why not. How about *The Dangerous Duke*!" The rest is Regency history and the beginnings of Arabella's stellar writing career.**

**Q: What is your process for writing? Are you rigid or fluid with your writing, set time of day, set place, set conditions? What steps came after having readied your first romance? How did you come to choose the publishing route and what were the pros and cons?**

**A: I can write anywhere, any time, but I prefer my little office at the bottom of the garden. I have an editing job, plus I teach Online novel writing, plus I have to market for Arabella and myself, so as you can imagine, time is short. I think a**



Fiona Ingram, Author

*lot about what I am writing at the time, so when I get a gap, it's all there in my head. I am self-published as a middle grade author. As a romance writer, I continued to write them for Mum, and by accident,*

*through a writing newsletter, I found a publisher that loved the books. Now I am a hybrid author. Pros and cons? I think those apply to any form of publishing. The most important thing is to make sure your work meets the highest publishing standards, and to get your books into readers' hands.*

**Q: Typically, how long does it take you to get through a first draft of a novel? Do you tend to revise as you go or is it plotted all the way through?**

**A: *The Dangerous Duke*** took me a year to write, simply because I hadn't written a romance before. As I have written more romance books, the time it takes is shorter. I think this is because one becomes better at anything the longer one does it. I think of either a title and create a story around it, or think of a story and create a title from it. I jot down all the characters, relationships, and major plot points, then I start typing. My middle grade novels are part of an adventure series and take a lot more time and research, although I still plot and create characters etc using pen

*and paper first.*

**Q: What is the best feedback you have received from a reader?**

**A:** As Arabella, that my romance books are just like reading Georgette Heyer

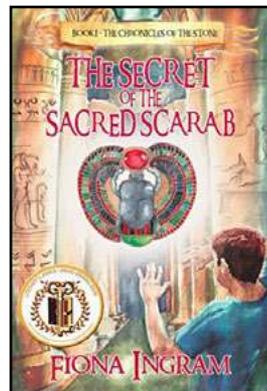
– what a compliment. As Fiona, that my middle grade adventures are just like Harry Potter, but without magic wands. Also another great compliment.

**Q: Why do you believe the romance market is still a strong readers' market?**

**A:** Romance taps into that deep longing in all of us to be loved, appreciated, cared for, and made to feel special. Romance novels tell us that dreams are possible and although reality bites, romance reminds us of those dreams.

**Q: Book or e-book preference and why?**

**A:** Absolutely real books. I grew up with real books and the feel of the books, the turning of pages, seeing all one's books in a huge set of bookshelves (which I have in my home) is just not the same as a reading device. That said, the convenience of an e-reader is unsurpassed, but somehow a real book has a familiarity than can't be



→ replaced.

**Q: What lies ahead for both of your author personalities?**

**A:** As Fiona Ingram, I am about to launch Book 3 in *The Chronicles of the Stone: The Temple of the Crystal Timekeeper*, another exciting middle grade adventure.

As Arabella, I am working on (wait for it!) a time travel murder/mystery Regency romance entitled *To Murder a Marquis*. I have always wanted to write a murder mystery and now here's my chance. And who doesn't find the idea of time travel intriguing?

You can find both of us Online:

Fiona Ingram: Twitter [@FionaRobyn](#) and please visit [www.chroniclesofthestone.com](http://www.chroniclesofthestone.com)

Arabella Sheraton: Twitter [@ArabellaSheraton](#) and please visit <http://regencyromances.webs.com/>

[Editor note: A huge thank you to Fiona for answering all my questions. I hope you found her answers useful. Please do follow her on her Twitter accounts, and be sure to let her know you read the interview in Books 'N Pieces Digital Magazine. You can also click any of the book links mentioned in this article to get information on the whole series of each author's name.]

If you are an author and would like to be interviewed for a future issue, please email us at [info@AltPublish.com](mailto:info@AltPublish.com) or from our Website at [www.AltPublish.com](http://www.AltPublish.com).

## EDITORIAL:

# Is There Anything Older Than the Rolling Stones?

by William Gensburger



On Dec. 1, the Rolling Stones released their first album since 2005, widely applauded as a truly solid Blues offering titled *Blue & Lonesome*. This latest offering adds to a career of 29 studio albums, 18 live albums, 29 compilation albums and 109 singles.

With a career that began in 1962, there is little doubt that the Rolling Stones have survived the test of time, both musically and in life; although they stand on the cusp of being older than dirt itself.

Rather than review the new album, which has been universally hailed a five out five stars by most review publications, I thought I would focus on the longevity of the band, their many meanderings and the life lessons that they have offered the rest of us.

They have outlasted the Boeing 707 and 747, both long retired, along with the NASA Space Shuttle program. They have outlived many astronauts who walked the moon, half the Beatles, most rock and roll groups from their generation, and more.

Audio cassettes, the computer mouse and silicon breast implants were invented the year the Stones hit the scene. That year the first telecommunication satellite was launched. The milestones amass like so much luggage that it is hard to keep track.

Musically, the Rolling Stones have outlived Reel To Reel, Vinyl LP's, 8-Tracks, cassette tapes, and even the popular Sony Walkman – remember those? They have surpassed those flimsy things into the digital age, MP3 music and, ironically, have lived long enough to see their albums available again on the newly popular vinyl LP Records.

All the while the “boys” lived a heavy rock 'n roll existence complete with women, drugs – lots of drugs from weed, to cocaine and heroin – as well as the ordinary alcohol and cigarettes, most of which they now claim they gave up three decades ago! They certainly survived against the odds, despite the weathered faces – Keith Richards' facial grooves have a similarity to the surface of Mars; weathered, worn hard, but still showing signs of life.

And let's not forget that they still remain

musically relevant.

Front-man Mick Jagger, now a senior 72 years old, is expecting his eighth child. Collectively the group has 19 children of their own, ranging from one month to 48 years old, 17 grandkids (Mick Jagger has one great-grandson). Charlie Watts has one child, Keith Richards has four kids and four grandkids and Ronnie Wood has 6 kids and 7 grandkids, adding to the adage that a rolling stone gathers no moss.

[Blues & Lonesome](#), which features another icon, Eric Clapton playing on two tracks, as well as a haughty music video for the track Ride 'em down that features the rebelliously broody actress Kristen Stewart driving a hot, royal blue classic Mustang while acting like a model for designer jeans, a bit of an odd mix, but who cares; it's the Stones playing great music and everything else becomes irrelevant.

Word has it that this is not their last album. Like I said, older than dirt and a good thing too. In this age of endless change, some things shouldn't change.

You can listen/buy the CD/LP [HERE](#).

***All things are of equal importance; the problem being that importance is of little significance.***

**BOOK REVIEW:** [Note, this is an unpaid, honest review]

## **THE SEVENTH ISLAND – A Stone & McLeish Thriller**

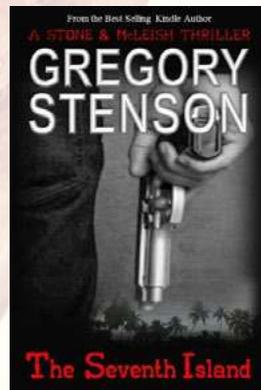
by Gregory Stenson

### **Our Review**

Stunningly compelling, with a fantastic Caribbean setting thrown in to delight, it's hard to not be drawn into the action Brad Stone finds himself in; chased, shot at, needing a guard, arrested, and a race against time to prevent a murder, all in the name of solving a great mystery.

Interviewed by a reporter (with her own secrets), the well fleshed-out character of Brad Stone, and the intricate details of the setting that brings it all to life, compels the reader onward, hoping for a sequel.

Gregory Stenson's "[The Seventh Island](#)" offers a great read.



### **Other Reviews**

"...the story gripped me from start to finish, I read it in forty eight hours and as soon as I finished the book I started the sequel Dead Mans Justice."

"...unputdownable, clever, intelligent..."

"I actually could not put this book down ... It's beautifully written , with a great storyline – suspense that keeps you going until the end.."

"This was a fantastic book – the story is full of clever twists and turns, I just could not put it down."

Read a sample, or buy the book [HERE](#).

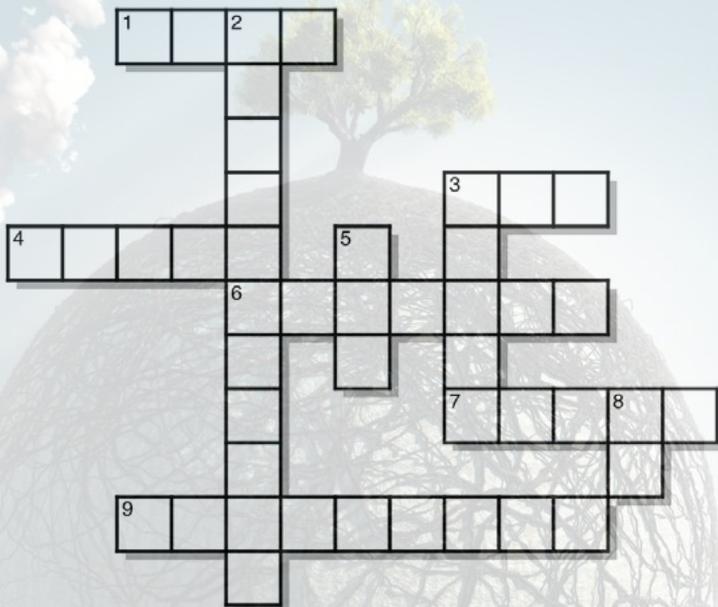
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# Books'N Pieces Puzzle



## ACROSS

- 1 What Superman's S stands for
- 3 Is to pen as water is to cup
- 4 From where did the moon originate
- 6 All That title
- 7 As in belonging to them
- 9 What is Henry Cavill's Superman costume missing

## DOWN

- 2 Meaning beauty
- 3 Signs You Might Not Be An title
- 5 What was the storage capacity of original hard shelled storage disks
- 8 Which Star Wars film has Alec Guinness

# Ophelia

by Kath Loste



Theme: Keep a small galaxy. Only take some space and stars but never the things you can't control. For the stars may die. The planets may refuse to revolve around their stars. Or simply, everything may go out of sync.

Art hand-painted in watercolor and ink.

In each issue of Books 'N Pieces, we hope to feature more artwork. As such we invite you to submit your work to us, including any information about, as well as a sale price (if any). If we like the work, we will feature it at no charge, and hopefully you can make a sale from the exposure.

Simply submit from our website at [www.BooksNPieces.com](http://www.BooksNPieces.com), or email to [info@AltPublish.com](mailto:info@AltPublish.com). We will let you know if we can use it, and secure appropriate permissions from you.

In the upcoming release of **RULES OF LIFE**, an anthology of short stories, and poems from around the world, we selected one piece of artwork to also be featured in the book.

Because of the nature of the book, it will have to be placed on the back cover to retain the full-color image. And so we are also printing it here so that its creator, Kath Loste, can enjoy it.

## About the Artist

Kath Loste is a freelance writer and a self-taught artist.

Currently, she is taking up a degree in History and Political Science in the University of the Philippines.

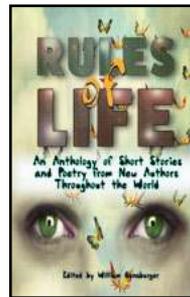
Just like any other teenager, she spends most of her free time in her social media accounts. However, on her more productive days, she takes her time learning the art of watercolor painting.

You can see her work featured in the upcoming release of **Rules of Life**.



**Rules of Life** is an anthology of approximately thirty short stories/poems written by authors throughout the world.

The anthology started as a short story contest that drew well over 400 entries. The compilation is an excellent example of new writers and the strength of the written word. **Rules of Life** will be released in both paperback and e-book formats early May. For more information visit [www.AltPublish.com](http://www.AltPublish.com)



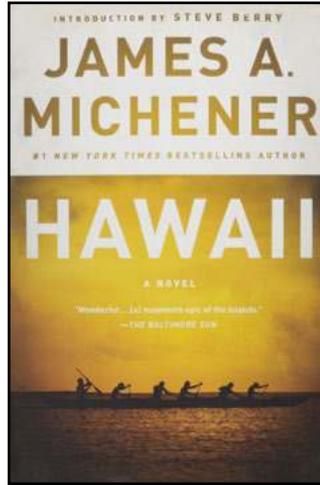
# The Changing of Writing!

## The Odds of Getting Published

Writers today face a changing audience; sadly one with fewer life experiences, a smaller vocabulary, and a diminished attention span.

The days of opus-sized novels akin to the works of [Tom Clancy](#), [James Clavell](#), and [James Michener](#), to name a few authors, are gone. These authors could produce compelling 1000-page books, packed at single space, 11 point typeface and small margins, grabbing your attention on the first page and holding you through the end. But that was a different time, before the visual medium of sit-coms and action movies with small plotlines took over. That was before school classrooms diminished the expectations of students discovering the joy of reading meaty stories, allowing their brains – instead of their iPads – to provide the visual imagery.

In contrast, the best sellers of today are generally hyped off the success of popular films, such as the Twilight series of books; simplistic plot elements that rely on fantasy and lust to keep the viewer happy. The hardcover version of the film – even though the film was based on the books – offered double-spaced lines, larger font



sizes and generous margins in order to pad out the girth of the novel and justify the selling price. In addition, the literary style focused mostly on dialog with enough narrative to flesh out the story. In short, it is the kind of book that translate to film extraordinarily well since it is written from a visual point of view.

These books may reach 600 pages after all the adjustments, yet would present as half that size if printed as most paperbacks are done, and even less when compared to how they used to be printed.

Of course, one must understand that the world of today is a visually-cued world, not one of language so much as gestures and shortcuts. With video games dominating the imagination of youth, and technology enhancing it with the rapid evolution of virtual reality, it is surprising that books still exist. But there is a reason for that.

When e-books burst onto the scene, dominated by Amazon's Kindle, they offered the portability of a smart phone or a Kindle Reader, to carry a library worth of material. The e-books were less expensive than their printed counterparts. And you could read free samples before committing



→ to a purchase.

Additionally, book size dropped, with most modern novels spanning two to three hundred pages, often less. These easy reads are frequently made into serial novels, retaining the same characters and regurgitating them through differing scenarios.

Likewise, the romance genre has a huge following, from tame to sinful, appealing to the tastes of women seeking an enhancement to their lives, or an escape to a world that is exciting and safe and highly sexually charged.

With the ever-rising costs of printing, publishers are less comfortable taking a chance on new authors unless there is some certainty for a profit.

And so the stable of writers that continually churn out material are a handful of names such as [John Grisham](#), [James Patterson](#) and others who can tell a good tale and still write well.

Don't misunderstand this to be a complaint, for one can hardly begrudge a known author from indulging in their livelihood. It does, however, reduce the market for new writers who resort to self-publishing as a result, only to drown in the ocean of badly written and poorly edited books available Online. Add to that Audio-books, a very popular newer form of listening rather than reading, and the marketplace and manner of finding an audience has totally changed.

So what is the best way to become

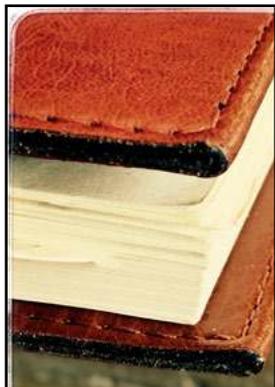
a published author and develop and audience and perhaps, even retain enough money to make it a career? You could go to the few remaining bookstores and peruse the endless how-to books, many written by authors with little to no successful credits beyond the "How To Succeed As A Writer Without Really Trying." Or you can accept my advice, the same advice many well known authors will give you. Write. Keep writing. Don't stop writing.

Writers have to write. And a genuine writer is not one who does so for the fame, glory or money; but because if they do not write they are unhappy and lost.

The history of writers who never sell, who never sell much, who write one book, who do not sell anything until later in life, is endless.

Famous names like [Philip K. Dick](#), one of the most prolific writers, who eked out a living by churning out massive quantities of material, albeit good material for the most part. If you do not know his name, you most certainly know the film adaptations of his works, all of which came after his death, and along with reprints of all his novels, have left his estate (children) with a nice chunk of change! Movies like Blade Runner, Total Recall, Minority Report, Scanner Darkly, just to name a few, with many more to come.

Then there are writers like [Mike Wells](#), whom we interviewed last issue, a prolific author who is passionate about his work and precise in his plotting and execution of each novel, all e-books, and some



→ good successes that he enjoys.

I throw all this out there because there is no one right way to sell your book or to publish your book. There is a common thread, however, and that is to keep writing your books because the more books you have the more you will sell and the greater your exposure. And all that does translate to sales and also looks good to mainstream publishers who may make an offer, regardless whether you choose to accept it.

There are more writing tools now than ever before. From plain notepads to fancy notepads to digital notepads, to voice to text notepads. There are even writing programs that will develop random storyline plots for you to start with.

And finally, there are the publishing options. It takes no talent to use Amazon's CreateSpace platform, or their digital arm, Kindle. Simply write, upload - they even have a cover design program. After that, your book is live and you are exactly like one strip of paper, cut out from the telephone directory of your area, with your name and contact information, all thrown into one big mixing bin so the world can find you and buy your book. If you have gone this route you know already that sales are weak. No one knows who you are. No one has reviewed your book except your mother who, in her pride, announced she was your mother and your book was sheer genius.

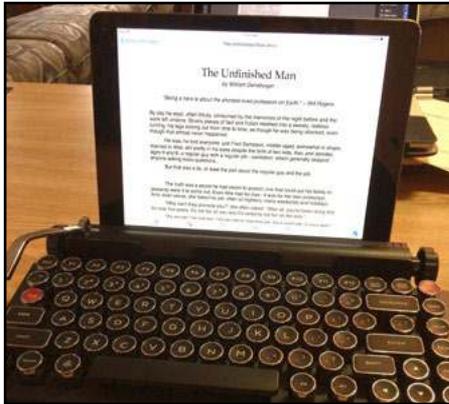
There are independent or small

publishing companies, most of whom are legitimate, however, will charge you for the services they provide. And that is fair, if you have the money to spend, which most writers do not have. And that's just the companies that actually try to sell your book, not the ones (Vanity Presses) that run off your ego and your pride, and

accept your book and charge you for services, a set amount of copies, and nothing more happens aside from the stack of 1000 books sitting in your garage.

If a publisher is truly going

to partner with you, then there should be no cost involved and they only make their money when your book sells. This is royalty sharing, and also the way Alt Publish conducts its business. More, your royalty share should be 50% of the royalties paid. The publisher is working for free to get your book ready and then getting the marketing end done so that you have exposure and (hopefully) sales. You wrote the book and revised it after you had the publisher edit and make suggestions they felt were needed. But beware! Read the contracts before you sign anything. You should never give up your copyright unless you are bought out. You should never have to buy retail copies.



→ You should not be

obligated for payments of any kind. All that information should be written in the contract.

When in doubt consult a lawyer. Can't afford a lawyer? Go Online and find



books and magazine, without killing trees, will remain.

Already flexible screens with printed readouts are available for fighter pilots. Smart-phones are becoming curved, just as televisions have become. Virtual reality will permit your book to be immersive; perhaps you can virtually sit with the author as he or she reads their novel, interacting with you.

In the meantime, the only thing you can do is to keep writing. Not only because you may succeed, not only because you have to; but also because without writers, reading will become a lost art form, so the fate of the reading world rests on your shoulders.

Now, don't you feel better?

~ William Gensburger

Online lawyers – they charge a flat rate and you can post the contract and ask their opinion, get an answer and demand a revision.

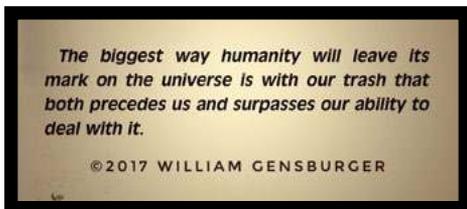
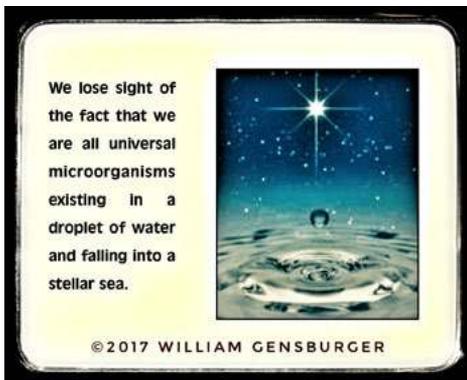
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The changing face of writing is just a fact of life. Things change. One day a new form of publication will exist, a soft paper-like substance with digital ink, in full color, with photographs and video embedded. The giant printing presses will die off, but the substance of writing and publishing

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## Answers to Crossword from Page 22



## BOOKS WE SUGGEST

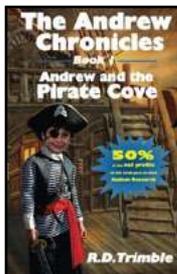


### Forbidden, Books 1, 2 & 3: A Novel of Love and Betrayal

by Mike Wells and Devika Fernando

While Celeste Sotheby is reluctantly engaged to wealthy English aristocrat Robert Astor, she gets pregnant from a one night stand. Her estranged twin sister, Jayne, an American, comes to her rescue.

[CLICK FOR MORE](#)



### The Andrew Chronicles: Andrew and the Pirate Cove

by R.D. Trimble. Say Yoho!

Set sail for adventure in the exciting first book of The Andrew Chronicles! Andrew is a seven year old in the second grade. Suddenly and without explanation, he finds himself in a two story flat in 17th century London.

[CLICK FOR MORE](#)



### Old Man's War

by John Scalzi.

John Perry did two things on his 75th birthday. First he visited his wife's grave. Then he joined the army.

The good news is that humanity finally made it into interstellar space. The bad news is that planets fit to live on are scarce—and alien races willing to fight us for them are common.

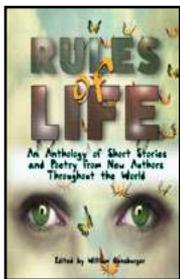
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## UPCOMING 2017 TITLES

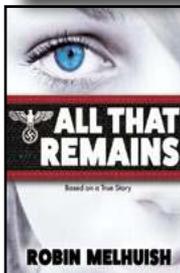
FROM ALT PUBLISH & BEYOND



### RULES OF LIFE

An anthology of short stories and poems from around the world. These stories have been gathered from the recent writing contest sponsored by Alt Publish. With over 400 entries from everywhere around the world, the best have been selected for this anthology.

**Publication date:** May 10, 2017 | **Publisher:** Alt Publish



### ALL THAT REMAINS

by Robin Melhuish

It's 1976, the Second World War has been over for more than 30 years, but still there are rumours of hidden Nazi treasures. Alastair Wainwright, an Englishman and passionate German stamp collector, finds a letter from 1945 that leads him to uncover a trail of love, deceit and corruption that spanned the war years. Finding a letter may not be unusual in itself, but the chances of finding the reply to that letter on Houses of Parliament notepaper is. These two letters may be the clue to possibly solving the last big secret of the Third Reich; the German War Chest, which all but disappeared in 1945. **Publication date:** May 20, 2017 | **Publisher:** Alt Publish

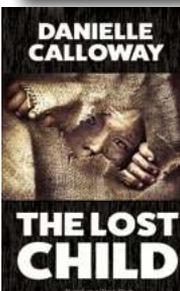


### THE UNFINISHED MAN and other stories

by William Gensburger

This collection of short stories covers a wide range of themes from a dystopic future tinged in Japanese culture, a view of a marriage through the eyes of a dying cat, to the fantasy of the man who must clean up after the superheroes, and many more.

**Publication date:** May 30, 2017 | **Publisher:** Alt Publish



### THE LOST CHILD

by Danielle Calloway

He was just a small, deaf child, unseen to the world. Escaping from an abusive home, he wanders the streets of a small town in Ecuador, aimless until he is befriended by a police detective and a young social worker who has come to teach the deaf. Based on a true story, discover the journey of his life in a world that has no use for him, and the heart wrenching choice that he must make.

**Publication date:** June 20, 2017 | **Publisher:** Alt Publish

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Where Writers **NEVER** have a cost or obligation.

# RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF A SCAM OR A VANITY PRESS



**NO COST  
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For a new writer trying to get published it can be a very frustrating experience. There are so many so-called publishing companies that look attractive, including a few with glib television ads, promising to walk you through every step, get your books into physical stores - actually they say "available to" which means nothing. It is easy to fall into the trap of their contract and find out you have production costs, fees or obligations to buy a set number of copies. A respectable publisher, no matter how small, will NOT charge the writer in order to get published. This flyer offers tips to help you navigate your way to publication.

## What to Watch Out For When It Comes to

### VANITY PUBLISHING

These companies **accept EVERYTHING** no matter the quality because **they make their money on pre-set copies purchased by YOU!**

Many Vanity Publishers will **REQUIRE a large quantity printed ahead of any orders.** You are, in essence, buying these copies and it will fall upon you to sell them, if you can.

Vanity Publishers are catering to your vanity and the sense of pride they know you will feel by getting published. They run on high turnover and remain **uncovered by your sales.**

**AVOID VANITY PUBLISHERS!**

### SMALL PUBLISHERS

These companies range from honest to deceptive. Many advertise heavily, in print and on television, offering everything from a focus on Christian management, to their many success stories in order to sucker you in. The devil is in the details you must decipher.

You have to **read their contract** very carefully to find out where their catch is. Often they **require YOU to obtain your own covers, do your own editing and proofing** before they step in.

They may also **require you to purchase a set number of copies, and also offer you author purchases at a higher than cost rate.** While they will list your book in the same markets as everyone else, they will not be marketing for you. You may also be **REQUIRED to turn over copyright** to the publishing company.

**TIP:** A legitimate small publisher will **NOT** charge YOU! You **WILL** NOT have to purchase a minimum quantity of books. You **WILL** NOT have too pay for your cover designs or editing and proofing (often two of the more expensive costs that can easily reach several thousand dollars on up.) You should **NEVER** turn over copyright of YOUR work. **ALWAYS** ask for a copy of their **CONTRACT** up-front.

### ALT. PUBLISH



**ALT. PUBLISH** is an independent publisher, operated by a published author.

**ALT. PUBLISH** is very picky, often rejecting submissions; however we offer a detailed critique to help authors look objectively at their work. We often recommend resubmission after material has been reworked, although there is still no guarantee of acceptance.

**ALT. PUBLISH** authors accepted incur **NO COSTS** at all. We **EARN** when your book **SELLS** and receive a royalty share - we are invested in your sales and work to increase sales of your book!

Our contract is available on our website at [www.AltPublish.com](http://www.AltPublish.com)

## The ALT.PUBLISH Procedure [Timeline: Approx. 13-25 weeks upon acceptance]

1

Submission of work to us.

2

Accept/Reject with critique

3

Edits/Revise Cover/ ISBN

4

Advance Reader Copies ARC sent

5

Final Layout &amp; Publication