

Penwheels Newsletter

Fall Issue 2018

For Escapees Writers, Published or Not

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Penwheels is a private group of Escapees members who enjoy writing and discussing the writing adventure.

The Penwheels Newsletter is digitally published quarterly.

[Archives available here.](#)



Jaimie's Tips

Jaimie Bruzenak

One thing I learned quickly selling my RV books was that having a talk at the show along with my table or booth was essential. This article in [Writer's Weekly 6/7/18](#) has some excellent points, some of which I learned the hard way!

I gave a library talk where only retired people came. I did not sell one book. Another time I competed first with barking dogs from the local animal shelter only to find the fellow selling pots and pans cranked up his microphone.

Between the two, I might as well have folded my tent. I could not talk over them. If you write and sell your books, [this is a must-read article.](#)

Another excellent article, [Has Your Book Been Displayed at a Large Book Fair, How Many Copies did you Sell.](#)

If you are thinking of writing and selling a book, [this article from Writers Weekly](#) provides food for thought. You really need to think about how you will market and sell your books and if each method is cost-effective. Though I self published, I printed large quantities of books to keep my per-book cost down.

By the time I factored in packaging and postage, my margin was quite slim.

Print-on-demand books have a much higher cost per copy so you have less to work with.

My books are RV how-to books so my best deal was to sell them directly from my website (best) or sell a case of books to an RV site that wanted to sell them (second best).

Going to RV shows was only profitable if I was able to give a talk and ideally get a free booth/table. Of course with going to a show, you also have to factor in your travel costs.

Also in this issue of *Writers Weekly*, a source for our Canadian members who are [looking to break into publishing](#) articles, poems and photos.



Braggin' Rights

Joanne Alexakis

Winner of the Indies Unlimited Flash Fiction Challenge Readers' Choice

Congratulations to our very own Louis Silvestri (SKP#9919) for his short story, **Spelunk**.

(See more in the *Review* column.)



Getting From A to B

Ellen Behrens

"We need to talk to Sam about this," Jerry said. "He'll know all about it." I agreed, though I didn't look forward to the long drive.

"I don't know anything about it," Sam said, shaking his head. "You got the wrong guy."

Where did Sam come from? I thought they were going to go see him. Did they already make that long drive? I'm confused – and as a reader, I hate being confused, don't you?

As RVers, we know all about getting from Point A to Point B in our travels. As writers, we have to get our characters from here to there, too – smoothly.

To do that, we need transitions. Like the tendons and ligaments holding our bones and muscles together, transitions hold the story in place. Without them, readers get shoved from scene to scene where characters come and go and the setting changes without warning.

"It's Friday, and everyone in the courtroom is exhausted." In just nine words, John Grisham reveals three important things in this early chapter of *Rogue Lawyer*: day of the week, setting, and mood. No evocative descriptions, just the facts. This works well for the style of this legal procedural, which is narrated by the main character (first person) in a straightforward, direct way.

Julia Keller's style is more eloquent, but a few pages into *Evening Street*, after describing a facility where babies of addicted mothers are treated, she writes, "Bell had walked over here from the Raythune County Courthouse." The language is about as plain as it gets for Keller, and it gets the job done.

Their styles may differ, but Keller and Grisham both use clear, direct transitions to re-orient readers when the narrative shifts to another place or another time.

What about those tricky transitions that shift the story from backstory to scene (or vice versa)? Fellow Penwheels member Deb Sanders, in *Dead Men Don't Talk*, has heroine Daisy arriving on the reservation she'd left years before because her step-brother has gone missing. She's told he'd gotten into some kind of trouble.

"What kind of trouble?"

The word 'trouble' went hand in hand with Eddie's name. Daisy had maintained a loose relationship with her step-brother over the years, mostly through phone calls during the holidays, and discovered early on Eddie was a magnet for problems.

In this subtle way, Deb takes us from the current scene into a brief explanation of Daisy's status with her step-brother. We get the information we need yet the transition is so smooth we barely notice it – just the way it should be.

Take a look at those tendons and ligaments in your own fiction. Are you moving your readers from A to B so smoothly they barely notice it? Examples of good transitions are everywhere. Watch for them – and learn!

Ellen Behrens and her husband have been full-time RVers since 2009. Follow their travels at <http://bobandellen.wordpress.com>; find out about her books at www.ellenbooks.com. Struggling with something in your fiction? E-mail her at ellenbehr@aol.com.





Book Review

Joanne Alexakis

Lou Silvestri (SKP#9919) is a *Readers' Choice* award-winner in an *Indies Unlimited Flash Fiction Challenge*.

Silvestri's flash fiction, "**Spelunk**," is based on a photo of a view deep inside a dark cave. Voted a winner by his fellow writers—a true compliment!

Spelunk

by Lou Silvestri

"Would this be the end? I wondered. My aching foot wedged deep into the crack of the tapering stalagmite. The pain was unbearable. For hours, no matter how I twisted and turned, I couldn't get free. Hopefully, I prayed someone would find my notes to venture into the cave in search of the Shivegul.

I remembered my grandfather intriguing me with his stories of the ghostly creature haunting the cave. His eyes would blacken as he repeated the tale.

"The Shivegul was a grotesque, blood-thirsty spirit that lived in the deepest parts of the cave for over three hundred years," he would begin. "Whoever went in search of it would never return," and went on to tell of the lives lost in their searches.

I wondered if his story was true, or just made up to frighten me. That's what led me on this quest. I didn't tell grandfather where I was going tonight.

The cave was enormous. The ceiling covered with bats softly clicking and chirping amongst themselves. Hundreds of stalactites hung like icicles feeding the growing stalagmites below. Of course, I should not have come alone, but.....

A faint sound echoed through the cave. I held my breath. Did they find my notes? Were they finally here? The Shivegul?

A shadow began weaving through the calcium salt formations. Terrified, I cringed and waited. The shadow grew larger. Was it.....? A form finally emerged.

It was.....

Grandfather sat at the dinner table, wondering why his grandson was late."

For more Flash Fiction see:

<https://www.indiesunlimited.com>

Contest

Short Story Competition 2018

- ◆ My Best Story
- ◆ \$5,000 first prize \$1,900 second, \$950 third
- ◆ Aug 1 to Sept 30, 2018
- ◆ 2500 word maximum
- ◆ English short stories from anywhere in the world in any genre
- ◆ \$17 entry fee
- ◆ Winners announced Oct 15th
- ◆ Submit directly to [website](#)

The Short Story Competition curates, translates, publishes and records short stories that are read and listened to by over 500,000 people worldwide.

Any submission agrees to allow this website to use it on their site, but the author retains full ownership.

You may submit any story that you own the rights to, whether it was previously published online or not.

[Details . . .](#)

From the Editor

Want Your Story to Matter to Readers?

Have you ever read a book or watched a movie that you expected to be amazing but instead, it fell flat? Maybe on the outside, all the ingredients seemed to be there: interesting characters, a unique plot, a well-developed world, and a goal difficult for the protagonist to obtain.

Still, something was missing and it kept you from fully investing in and caring about the outcome. Often the problem causing this disconnect is a lack of compelling story stakes.

A story's stake is what's on the line if the goal is not reached. It's what pushes your protagonist to act, because if they do nothing, a negative outcome will come about. This might mean the protagonist fails someone he loves, causes the death of an innocent, or losing means a life filled with regret and remorse.

Whatever is at stake, it is a fate the protagonist wishes to avoid at all costs. In fact, their motivation to achieve the goal (despite opposition, sacrifice, and pain) is entrenched in making sure this terrible outcome never comes to be.

[Read on . . .](#)

5 Deadly Self-Talk Lines

Here's why you should fix your inner conversations now:

1. Your thoughts shape your reality: Your current reality is a direct result of your interactions with your inner voice. To change reality, change what you say to yourself.
2. External changes are fleeting: Since your thought patterns shape your behavior, any external changes not supported by a matching internal shift are superficial.

3. Most inner talk is venomously negative: More than likely, your inner voice default settings are negative. Left to itself, your inner voice will pull you down... every time.

4. Your self-talk shapes your self-concept: What you say to yourself always forms your self-concept. Your self-concept determines your outlook and effectiveness in life.

5. Your thoughts decide your feelings: Your feelings—whether positive or negative, vitalizing or devitalizing, morale-boosting or morale-killing—spring from your thoughts.

[Read more . . .](#)

Fiction Archetypes that Sell Like Wildfire

The term "archetype" comes from an ancient Greek origin. The root words are "archein," which means original or old, and "typos," meaning pattern, model, or type. Combined, the term refers to "an original pattern."

In literature, an archetype is a common character, action, theme, symbol, setting, or situation that represents the universal patterns of human nature and shapes the structure of a story. According to the founder of analytical psychology Carl Jung, the stem of an archetype is the "collective unconsciousness" of humankind.

By recognizing and incorporating the strengths and the weaknesses of each archetype, readers can learn the moral of the story. Human beings, after all, are storytelling creatures. We learn better with stories.

[The rest of the story . . .](#)



World of Publishing

Authors Beware: Scams and Publishing Companies to Avoid

Becoming a published author is a fantasy shared by almost all writers when they are sitting at their computer, contemplating the flashing cursor. To catch a glimpse of your book in the hands of someone reading on the subway is a powerful dream—one that does come true for many people each year. And as with almost any widely-shared ambition, there are also folks out there looking to make a quick buck by exploiting those dreams.

The publishing world has its fair share of scammers and disreputable companies. Let's take a closer look at common writers scams and show you how to identify the publishing companies to avoid on your journey to publication.

[Read on . . .](#)

How Much Does it Really Cost to Sell to Bookstores

An author wrote in complaining about the low discount given to bookstores by her publisher for a hardcover, color-interior book. She assumed that the low discount would prevent bookstores from buying her book. The fact is, the discount should be the least of her worries. She should, instead, consider all of the other factors involved that will drain her wallet in her attempt to sell to bookstores.

First of all, paperback color-interior print on demand books are very expensive to produce. Hardcovers are even more so. In order to not only print those, but to also allocate royalties to the author, and give a discount to distributors and retailers, publishers must price those books high.

She could purchase copies at her author discount, which is often higher than the discount given to retailers and distributors, and then sell the books directly

to the bookstore, offering them a deeper discount than they could get from her publisher or the distributor. But, when given all the information involved with those transactions, is that something she's really going to want to do?

A book's sales potential depends entirely on:

- The book itself (subject matter, quality of writing, and editing)
- The author's marketing savvy and efforts. Authors can sell more copies marketing directly to readers online than they will when trying to sell to bookstores.

[The rest of the story . . .](#)

Open Library Project—Positive or Negative for Authors

Internet Archive's Open Library project has been scanning donated print books, creating PDFs and EPUBs from the scans, and placing the scans and the digitized versions online for public borrowing—all without seeking permission from authors.

Although the IA describes these books as being "mostly from the 20th century" and "largely not available either physically or digitally", numerous books in the Open Library collection are recently published, in-copyright, and commercially available.

SFWA is among several writers' groups that considers the Open Library project to be not library lending, but direct infringement of authors' copyrights.

On hearing about Open Library, *Writer Beware's Victoria Stauss* of course checked it out to see if any of her books were included.

[Read more ...](#)