

CAVALCADE EDITION 2019



NK
LITERARY CAFE
MAGAZINE

International Appeal

Introducing
J. L. Campbell

Reaping the Black Harvest
by Sierra Kay

Sister Scribes
by Karen D. Bradley

Rihanna: Literary Jewel
by Kisha Green



As I type these words, I'm preparing for one of the most exciting experiences in my life--The Cavalcade of Authors hosted at the Atlantis Resorts in Paradise Island, Bahamas. We have several book clubs on the island who are set to come out and meet authors from the States who pen novels that they are certain to enjoy. Hat tip to: Reading Between the Wines, The Renegade Sistas, and A Novel Bunch as well as Dorcas Bowler of the Bahamas Library.

This issue is especially dedicated to the craft of writing, but also gives a nod to literature that reaches and covers the African Diaspora. Introducing romance novelist, J. L. Campbell, our Caribbean Literary Jewel, who hails from the beautiful Island of Jamaica. She, too, is venturing from one warm romantic space to visit the Bahamas and then to Chicago for the Cavalcade next year. Karen Bradley pens an experience of the ups and downs of writing a novel with her sister. Shannan Harper of Harper's Court has an awesome review of Terri Ann Johnson's Faith Alone.

On a sad note, we say farewell to one of our literary angels.

Additionally, I'd like to introduce you to a uniquely talented group of authors that are aptly named, NK's Tribe Called Success. Pages 34 and beyond gives you a taste of the most awesome literary offerings that you'll find in two anthologies: Sugar and Spice. This issue has a little something for everyone.

Safe travels through your journey; wherever it may take you.

Naleighna Kai
Editor-in-Chief

J. L. Woodson
Art Director



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(More to come!)

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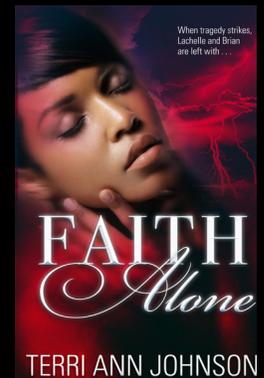
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a story to tell*

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Joy L. Campbell

Our Caribbean Literary Jewel



What challenges have you faced breaking into American romance?

It's been an interesting journey. When I was first published, nobody knew who I was and too late, I realized the importance of a platform. I didn't understand then, that I'd be handling much of the publicity my book. In my inexperience, I thought the publisher would have done more.

At the time, I had no advertising budget to attract readers so I had no choice other than to learn the ropes. Social media was very helpful in getting me connected with readers and more experienced writers, who helped me understand the business. Being part of online reading groups helped big time, plus reading oodles of articles on book marketing and promotion.

My stories are mainly set in Jamaica, so I looked at that as an advantage. Once people tried my books and realized they could identify with the stories, I gained more readers.

Describe your writing life. Day or night, quiet or noisy and etc.

I write any time of day and developed that habit before I was published. The stories came hard and fast, so I used every available minute—before work, during lunch, and in the evenings. Now, I still write any time of day, especially when I have a pressing deadline.

Music is a no-no and I also don't concentrate well with people talking around me. The odd thing is, with the television running as background noise I get plenty of writing done.

Critiquing gets me in the mood to write. So, after I've read someone else's work, it makes me eager to settle into mine and pick up where I left off. We're told not to edit while we write, but I always read what I wrote last time. In doing that, I catch the rhythm of the story, plus my characters' voices, and the mood and tone of the previous scene.

What has been your proudest literary achievement?

Over the years, I've won several awards for short stories entered in the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission's Creative Writing Competition. However, I'm really proud of *Dissolution*, the second book I sold.

I got back the rights and republished it in 2015 and it continues to sell well. The comments and reviews have let me know my time was well spent on this story about a family thrown in crisis due to infidelity on the part of the husband. The novel appealed to people in a way I didn't anticipate and sometimes I think, yeah, I did that.

How has social media helped you in your literary career?

I've learned that social media isn't the be all and end all of marketing and promotion. It's a start, but shouldn't be the only way a writer sustains his or her career. Being on various networks has been a great way to connect with both readers and writers. I never would have met as many people as I'm now connected to, were it not for the internet and various networks.

What has been the most valuable lesson you learned as an author thus far?

I've learned the value of staying consistent. I know writers who have given up simply because sales are dismal and there's no encouragement to continue. I love writing, so whether sales are little or large, I'm in this as long as I have the strength to write.

Some smart person said a career in writing isn't a sprint, but a marathon. This is how I think about what I do. Despite what I believe, I never know which book is going to sell well and which one won't. With that in mind, more than thirty books later, I continue penning stories as they come, knowing I'm working toward my goals.

How has the reading community in Jamaica responded to your work?

It may seem weird, but my readers here on the island find me online. The same as Jamaicans in the diaspora. Other than having *Dissolution* in the local libraries, I haven't done enough to promote my books in Jamaica. This is something I intend to change in the short term.

One word that best describes your writing?

Eclectic

What's next for your writing career?

There are some stories that have been calling my name for a while now. They will most likely be classified as edgy Christian fiction, but I won't label them 'Christian' because they won't be typical faith stories. I'll be releasing these starting early in 2019.

What do you think about the current state of the literary industry?

It still amazes me how indie writers have shaken things up in the literary world. In 2011 when I decided to self-publish an anthology, there weren't many people taking the leap. Since then, so many persons have made their dream of being published writers their reality.

I'm happy to see people of colour being represented in the stories being told, especially romance, which is a personal favorite. I also believe, that as far as traditional publishing goes, we still need more stories with characters that look like us.

Speaking as an editor, it's disturbing to see books riddled with errors being sold as finished products. What's more surprising is that these books sell. I'm hopeful that as these writers mature, they recognize the necessity of improving their skills.

Are you #teampaperback or #teamebook?

#teamebook mostly. An ereader makes life so much easier. Mine goes everywhere with me. Still, I like the feel of a paper-and-ink book in my hands.

What are some words of advice to new writers considering a career in the literary industry?

My best advice is this: learn the craft. There's nothing better a writer can do to equip himself/herself than knowing as much about writing as possible. We'll never know everything, but it's important to learn the basics and continue to read and study.

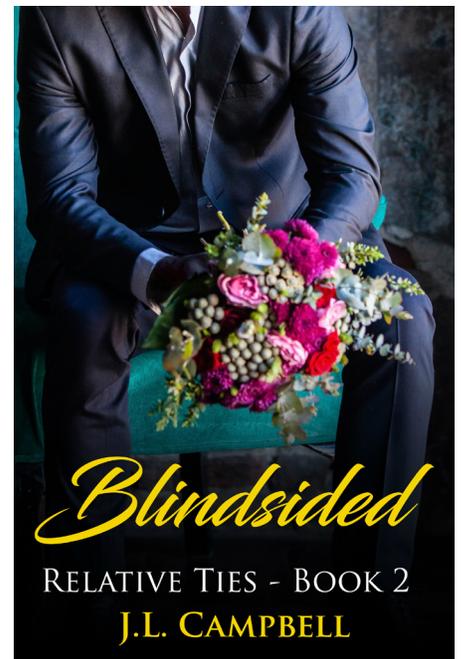
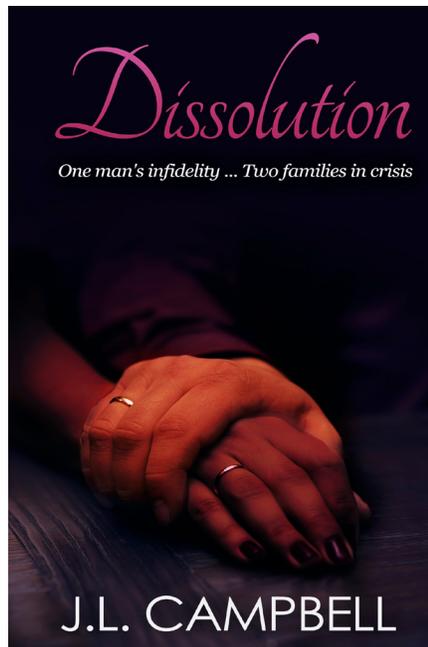
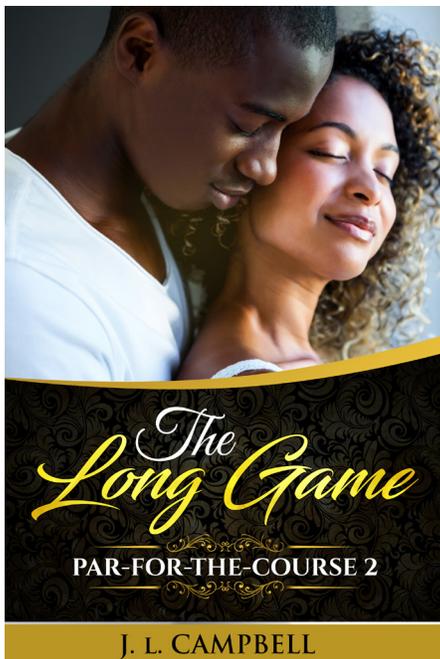
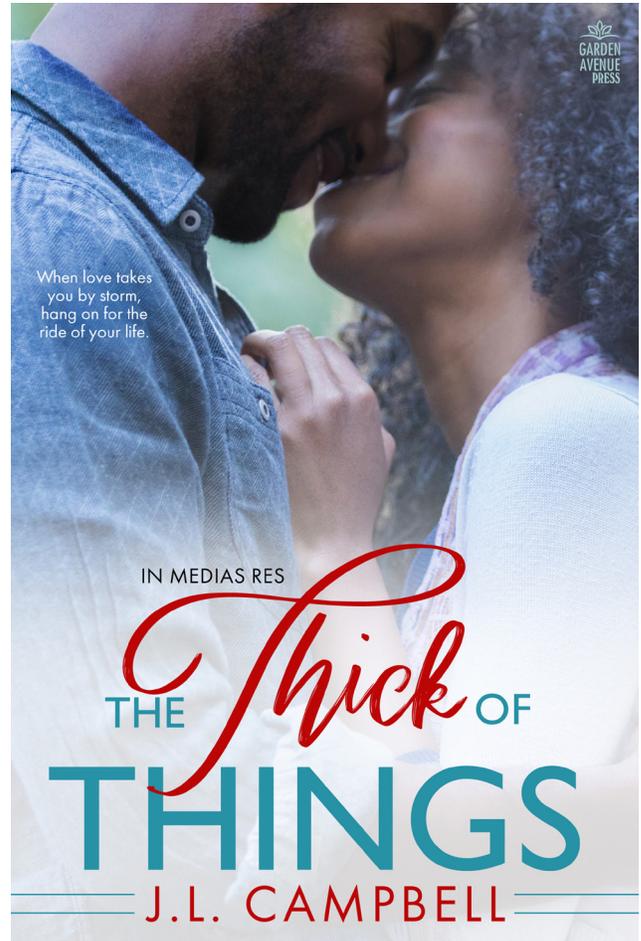
It's also critical to align yourself with people who you can learn from. Even if you have money to hire a publicist, it pays to know something about marketing and promoting books. The internet is rife with information. It's part of our job to make the best use of what's accessible to us.

Tell us about your latest release.

The storyline for *The Thick of Things* came to me because of my job. At the time, I was at a resort working at a golf tournament which included people from other islands. I wondered what would happen if a female volunteer was attracted to one of the players, threw caution to the wind, and did the unexpected. The seed for the novel was born two years ago and germinated over time with the story line expanding and characters being added.

Readers have been very receptive to this tale of a forty-something woman finding love again after being steeped in grief from the loss of her son and a pending divorce. The book was released through a publisher in March of this year.

I should also mention that I'm part of the *Spice* anthology, headlined by Naleighna Kai. I'm expecting big things from *Sugar* and *Spice*.



Reaping the Harvest



On August 7, 2018, I sat at the Gene Siskel Film Center in Chicago and experienced success by attending the screening of *Then There Was Joe* at the Black Harvest Film Fest.

Although it has been in existence for twenty-four years, this movie was my introduction to event, which is an annual exploration of African Americans and the African diaspora through independent film.

As a rule, I will mark my calendar with the release date of the next Marvel movie (still love those by the way). Yet, I didn't show support to those independent artists struggling to amplify their voices over the constant

din of the new blockbuster movies that studios spend millions of dollars Jedi mind-tricking us to love.

However, at Black Harvest, movies can run in the thousands instead of millions. Budgets can be determined by how much was raised through crowdfunding or the limits of the writer/director's savings account. Yet, the stories are no less rich and dynamic than those of their higher yielding counterparts.

Then There Was Joe was written, directed and starred in by Justin Warren and featured actor/comedian Ray Grady in a film exposing the difficulty that can happen when navigating sibling relationships. (Preach) The premise is a straight-laced law student, struggling to study for his bar exam, is responsible for keeping his older brother out of trouble as he awaits his trial.

Had *Then There was Joe* been rubbish, I would've written off the whole Black Harvest Film Fest. It would have gone into my, "That was an interesting experience" pile never to be resurrected again. But it wasn't. I laughed. I was touched. And I could feel the audience connect with the material. And as a writer, that's all we really want. That and a few Brinks trucks full of money backing up to the house. (Still waiting, Brinks.)

At minimum, creatives want people to understand their vision and enjoy the journey. Scanning the audience's reactions and hearing the engaging questions asked of the film's stars after the show, meant that the creative's goal were reached.

I have sat in movie theaters watching rubbish on the screen and had been upset because I knew I wasn't

getting those hours or dollars back. Yet, I didn't have that experience once with the movies I chose to view at Black Harvest.

Hearing filmmakers speak of filming in their parent's home or visiting car shows in neighboring cities to find vintage cars for their period films was inspiring. The determination to live as filmmakers/artists and share their stories with the world are the kind of tales that keep other artists moving forward when defeat is knocking on the door and peeping through the window.

These filmmakers didn't do it alone. Each one of them had a tribe of family members, buddies, and old bosses who had lent their time and talents to help complete each project.

With *Then There Was Joe*, the hero of the day was James "Butch", Justin's father. He played the father/judge in the movie, filmed the Q and A with Ray and Justin at Black Harvest, handed out ballots and sold videos after the movie completed.

Justin Warren wrote an entertaining script that had the audience laughing at the comedy and silenced by the drama. Ray Grady as Joe, is an enormously talented comedic actor that I definitely have an eye out for the next time he passes through town whether on stage or screen.

The Black Harvest Film Fest overall is an amazing experience that deserves a full run of sold-out shows. It's not just to support independent film for the sake of supporting independent film. In an era where so much entertainment is created to speak to the lowest rung of society, it's refreshing to watch quality storytelling. Hopefully, I'll see you there next year.



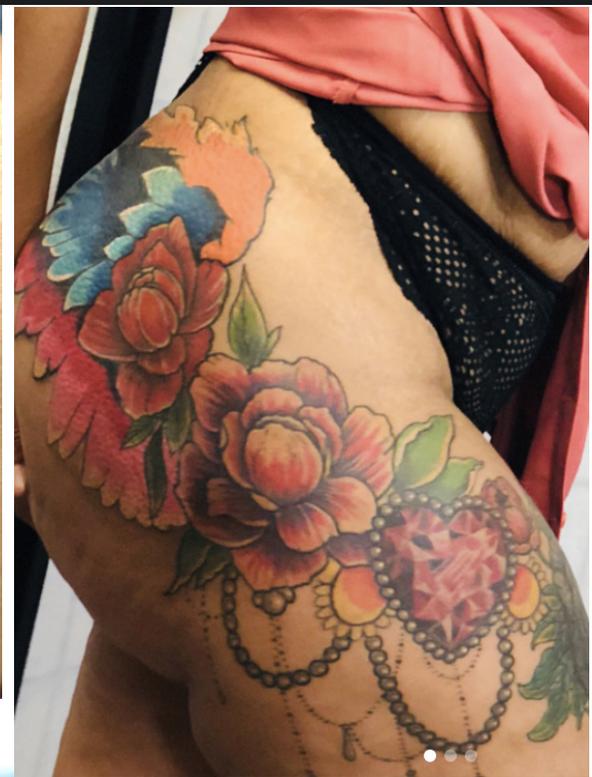
Sierra Kay has an M.A. in Writing from DePaul University, won a Nuyorican Poets Cafe Short Story Slam, participated in comedy fests as a member of the writing teams for Spankx and N20 Comedy. She also writes poetry and suspense novels. Obviously, she'll try anything at least once. Her two novels From Behind the Curtain and In the Midst of Fire are available online. Learn more at sierrakay.com

Hiram "Shogun" Harris



**Shogun is a featured artist at the
14th Annual Cavalcade of Authors
at Atlantis Resorts in
Paradise Island, Bahamas**

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Sister Scribes



With no rules, no set plans, and minimum discussion on the storyline; my sister and I set out on the task to write a novel together. Anyone that knows me knows that while I feel I'm a good storyteller I'm not necessarily a good writer. My sister is the real writer in the family. When people find out that we're both authors, their first question is, have you written anything together? Several people who have read both our works thought we had similar writing styles. I didn't agree, but found it fascinating, which was one of the reasons I brought the idea of collaborating to my sister, Jenetta.

The project was an interesting and challenging experience overall. The minimal discussion of the storyline kept things exciting, but it also created challenges. Eighty percentage of the time when I write, the entire story is in my head before the pen hits the

paper. Since we hadn't mapped out the story, all I could do was cross my fingers and hope she saw where I was headed. Sometimes she wrote just enough to screw me up as far as getting to my next plot point. This forced me to revamp and reflow the story in my head. One time she killed off a character that I'd plotted some major points for and it forced me to manipulate the details back toward my desired ending. I must confess, I had a little fun at my sister's expense ending my portion at her least favorite type of scene to write, just to see how she'd wriggled out of writing it. After we finished the novel, we laughed about the curve balls we threw each other throughout the process.

The biggest challenge we faced was not having full control of the story. Once I wrote my portion

and emailed it to my sister, I'd have to wait patiently until it was returned. Sometimes, I had to wait so long that trying to get back into the flow was like starting an old, unused car in the dead of Chicago winter. We had a huge hiccup on the road to publishing when we discovered we couldn't use the original title. It linked to a "live girl" website and would have been a promotional nightmare. The process of coming up with a new title was frustrating. I favored one. She favored another. We had to work through it until we could both agree on one that worked.

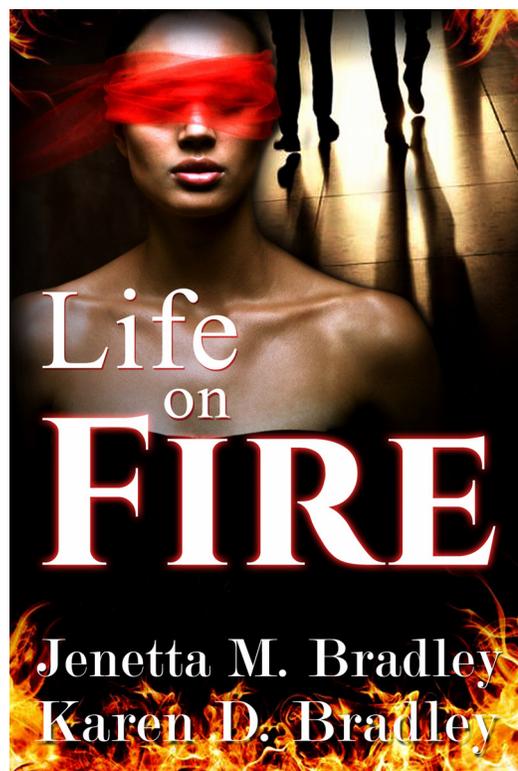
When I came up with the idea of writing a novel with my sister, it was really about seeing if she'd continue to make time for the thing she loves as well as making writing fun again. Life happened and at some points in time she was writing less and less. She made it sound like writing had become a chore. The title changed to Life on Fire which was fitting because I wanted her to set my sister's life ablaze only in the best of ways and burn down anything holding her back. I didn't want Jenetta to settle into her new norm, but continuously reevaluate and readjust to get back on track to the targeted outcome. My sister's past cannot be altered but I could hand her a match in hopes she'd relight her flame and attempt to introduce her to people who I knew could add fuel to her fire or fan the flames. The responsibility of controlling the blaze, or the lack thereof, is on her. Same way it comes to being on me in my own life.

Though as a person who encourages others to do their level best, we want people's talents and skills to set the world on fire and blaze across the sky touching and changing lives along the way. Yet, we can't keep throwing fuel on the fire if the person is mentally not ready. An uncontrolled blaze is a wildfire that leaves destruction in its wake.

The experience tested my limits, taught new lessons and pushed me outside of my comfort zone. It also reminded me to be patient with myself during the process of moving out of my own way. The goal is to live life full-out, not to be consumed and devastated by the attempt. However, there are times when life will require people to step out

of their comfort zone when they're not ready then learn and grow as they go.

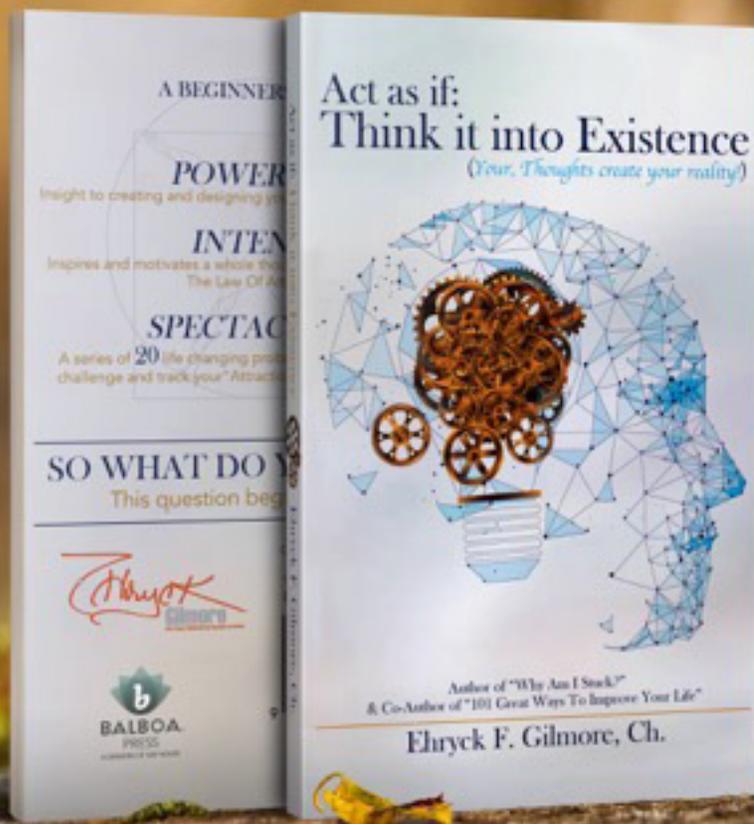
Producing Life on Fire with Jenetta was an enlightening experience from the writing process to hosting panel discussions in two different cities on the same day. It allowed me to take opportunities that I would have declined had I wrote the novel alone. The process also reminded me of the importance of being surrounded by people who aid and abet in our goals. My most important take-away was that life isn't about having full control but having the ability to be fluid with our plans as things continuously change to still accomplish goals.



Karen D. Bradley has penned several contemporary fiction novels—Shattered Illusions, Love Runs Deep, and Life on Fire. Recently, she ventured into film making by writing and producing a short film based on one of her novels. Visit Karen on the web at www.karendbradley.com



Think it into Existence



Act As If: is to be proactive and not reactive.

Act As If: is to be determinately deliberate in creating your Desire.

Act As If: is to live a purposeful, passionate life.

Act As If: is to become confident and committed.

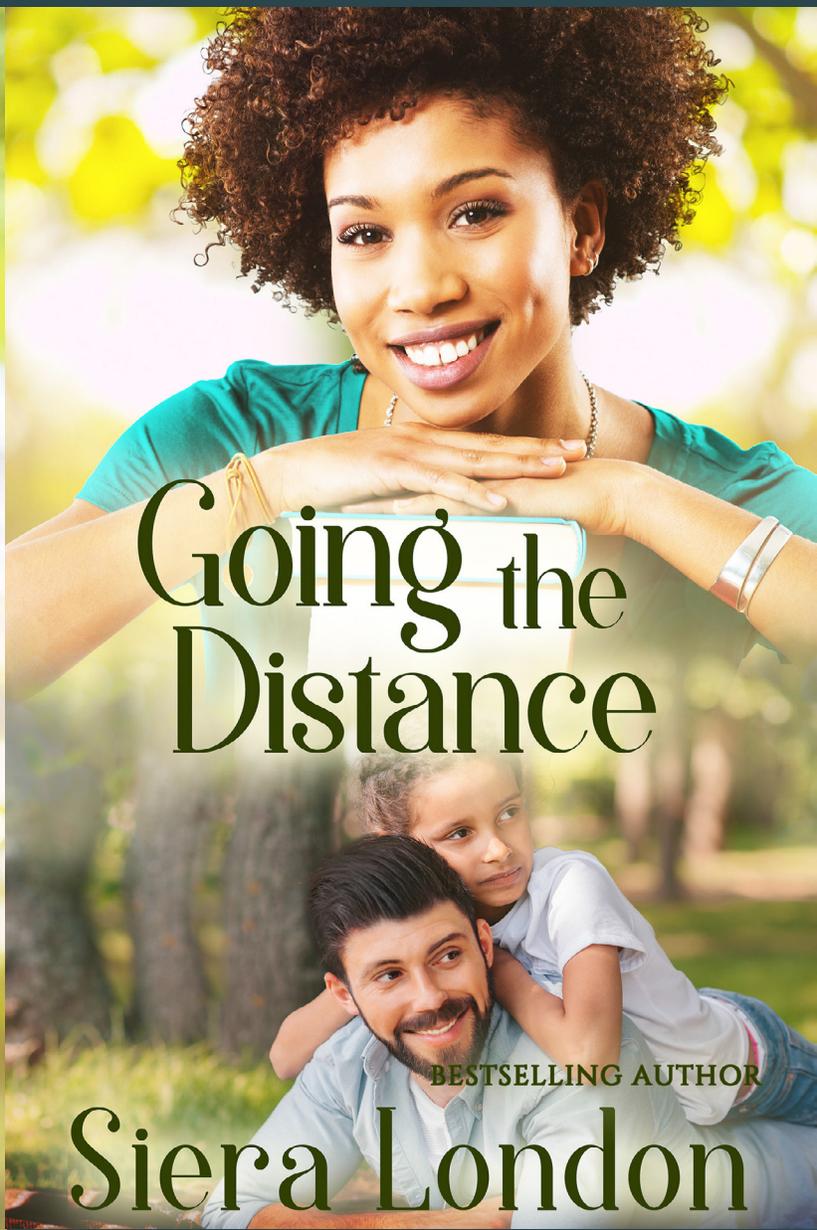
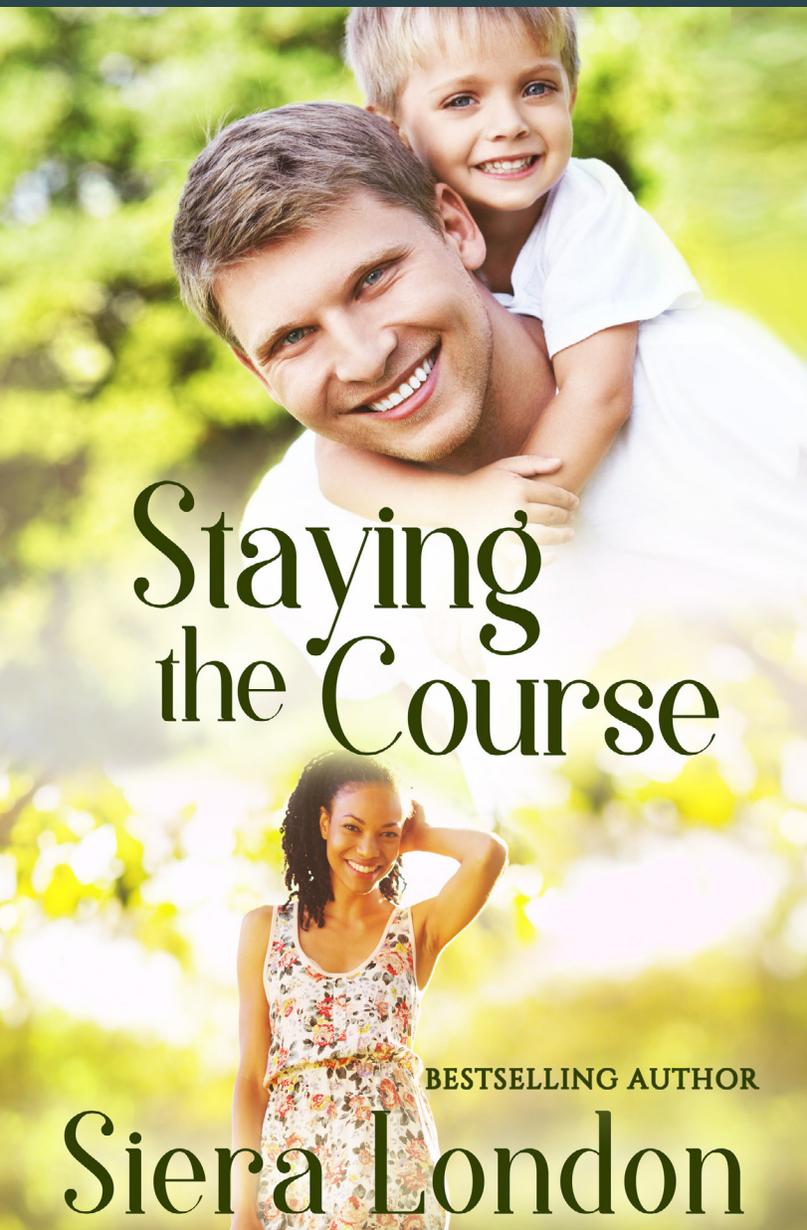
Act As If: is to live and not simply “exist”

Act As If: is to go beyond “What Is”, to take positive, decisive action in the Now!

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Don't Talk About it . . .

Be About it



“ ... pushing past my personal challenges
became part of the process.”

London St. Charles

Authors, be warned. Short stories take just as much time and attention as a full blown novel. When initially approached about being part of the Sugar anthology project, I was elated. I had great story ideas, many which I'd already started for future novels, so I picked the best fit and dove in fingers first. Halfway through, a stop sign slapped me in the face. The material was more fitting for a full-length novel. The anthology was a composite of short stories. No matter how I tried to condense the work in progress, change from three points of view to one main character, a big chunk of the story would be missing. So I saved and dropped it back into the "manuscripts in progress" folder on my desktop. That scenario happened five times. Five.

The pressure was on and not in a good way. Sitting at the computer and staring at a blank screen was killing me, not to mention this came between the time for my oldest daughter's senior year activities; prom, graduation, and getting finances in order to send my child to the college of her choice. On top of that, weighing the pros and cons of transferring my youngest daughter into a new school. Let's not forget extracurricular activities that keep me running like an elite track star in her prime. Oh yeah, and let's not forget my day job. Racking my brain for the anthology was no longer a top priority, and I took a short leave of absence ... a month and a few weeks or so. Shrugs.

I was close to chucking the opportunity (this is my first time admitting that to anyone), but inspiration has a way of revealing itself in the unlikeliness of forms. A friend of mine was going through something devastating. We talked. We cried. We ate the pain away temporarily, talked and cried some more.

London St. Charles is a Chicago native who has always had a passion for the pen, paper, and books. She wrote and published her debut novel, *The Husband We Share* in 2017, then followed with a short story, *Sugarcoated Deception*, in an anthology with New York Times and national bestselling authors and is currently working on her next novel. www.londonstcharles.com

Prom and graduation came and went, there was a plan in place to cover college expenses, and we registered the youngest at the new school we'd been courting. Check. Check. My mental palette could breathe, allowing the inner voice that grieved for my friend's emotional state to speak to me. Write her story. Give her a voice.

Fingertips to the keyboard, I loosely wrote something similar, but not too close, to her story. Every emotion she felt, I felt. The look in her eyes and facial expressions when we conversed, I was able to convey in the story. This was the first time I'd written something so personal. Now, I know what it feels like to truly be connected to a story. *Sugarcoated Deception* was the easiest body of work I'd ever penned.

The story fell into my heart, and I wrote it from there. Completed in eighteen days. The prior months of storyline struggle all seem like a blur.

The stress of life can sometimes be a deterrent, but as a writer, this can't be the defeating factor. I believe that's why I never voiced my concerns to anyone about wanting to quit. In my core, I knew everything would come to fruition. Given this major opportunity, pushing past my personal challenges became part of the process. No way did I want to miss out on this magnificent project.

The saying goes "fake it 'til you make it." Dagnabbit, I made it.

#GettingItDone



Island Love



In her story, *Captured*, Beverly Jenkins gives us, Dominic LeVeq, the ancestor to her super-hot LeVeq brothers. He comes with drama, a fight for honor, a tempting damsel, and a chase on the high seas. This romantic tale is action-packed and steamy. What makes it perfect is Dominic's destination – a secluded island hideout complete with a cast of displaced Africans and more than enough riches and intrigue.

While all love stories with tropical settings don't involve pirates and their lairs, they do show the sensual allure of warm, turquoise waters and pristine, sandy beaches against an ideal climate and lush terrain. These are perfect ingredients for a hot, island story. Island love is romantic and sexy, whether told with swashbuckling excitement or in the present day. Some of these tales penned by writers in the diaspora are

told with an authoritative voice taking ownership of their underlying themes: chance encounters, searches for life partners, murder mysteries, or romantic getaways. The West Indies reign as one of the most popular settings of love stories.

J.L. Campbell, a romance writer from Jamaica, pens stories set on her homeland. She is known for contemporary storylines, romance, and suspense – all captivating stories that use an undeniable command of the island as setting. Michelle Monkou beautifully incorporates island elements into her stories. In *Carnival Temptress*, she does this by making carnival in Trinidad an integral part of the story. Opportunities for hot encounters and hot islands seem to go hand in hand. Words like desire, passion, pleasure, sultry, and paradise are

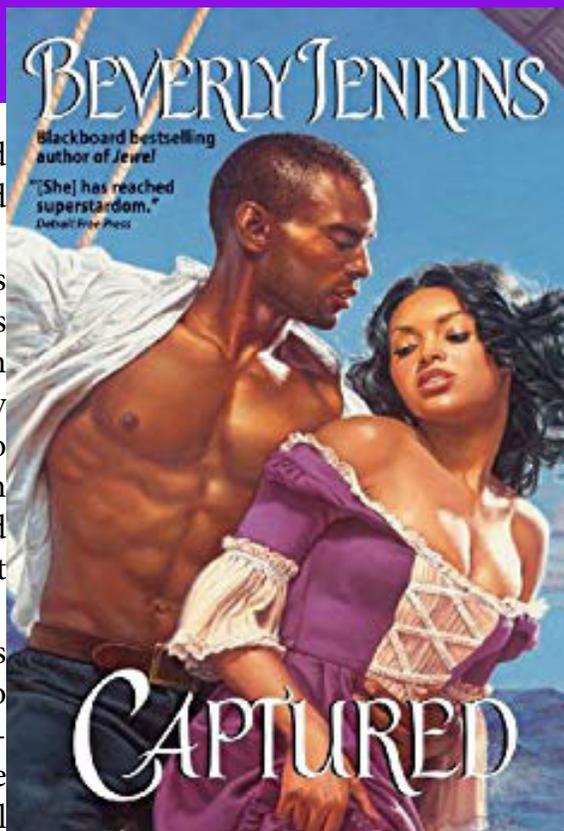
Victoria Kennedy

apt descriptions for these stories and are often applied to convey steamy chemistry between characters and whichever island they inhabit.

A misconception is that hot island stories are easy reads with not much substance. However, not all love stories are quick, sexy, and easy. Some have a slow burn, like in *Easier Said Than Done*. Nikki Woods uses present-day Chicago as the place her protagonist escapes to go to Jamaica. The many layers of the story give us in-depth information about culture, foods, environment, and duty, in addition to a history between characters that lends itself to a second chance at love.

Countless people choose Caribbean destinations for honeymoons and other celebratory occasions, to show favorable conditions ranging from fast hook-ups to the promise of enduring love. Whichever the occasion calls for can be found in the appeal of tropical islands. As in all love stories, the right combinations of characters, plot, and setting is paramount to creating an engaging tale. But there's something extra-special about the culmination of those elements on a romantic island. As in *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, there is the possibility of something unknown and magical that holds a reader's eyes and interest, even when happily ever after is a foregone conclusion.

The list of island love stories is long and varied but one thing is bound to resonate with them all: Island love becomes its own character in an already sweltering storyline, just waiting for a tall drink of a certain libation to quench one's desire.



Victoria Kennedy writes fiction. She contributed to The Dating Game anthology and wrote a short story collection titled, Where Love Goes. She is also the founder of Zora's Den, an online writers' group. Her latest book is a novel, Sometimes Love, published by Brown Girls Books. www.victoriaadamskennedy.com

Everyone has a story to tell

(it's simply a matter of how to tell it well)

Part 1



When I was fifteen, my English teacher asked the class to write a horror story. I wasn't too bent on blood, guts, or gore. So I chose to write something that would actually scare me—being forced to kill one parent to protect another.

The story, written in first person, frightened teachers and faculty alike. Concerned for my well-being, they called my mother up to school and had a conference about it, only to find out that the story was truly a work of fiction. My mother, who is a national bestselling author, read the work and said, "Son, you've got talent. You should make this into a full novel." She also said, "If you devote a year to writing it, trust me, it will change your life." Boy, was she right!

All it took was that assignment to give me a direction for a novel. I knew the short story was perfect for the beginning of my book, but what would I do to fill out the rest of those pages?

My mother had kept a journal when she was pregnant with me and continued writing in it until I was six years old. When I could write legibly enough, she turned that journal over to me, and I started writing

about my life. Of course, a six-year-old didn't have much excitement to write about except Legos, board games, and birthdays. But later, when my aunt came to Chicago to escape an abusive husband and we had to live in semi-hiding for seven years, trust me, I had plenty of "exciting" material.

So, I figured why not use all of it in my story? Use some things from my journal and incorporate my real life experiences, like what it was like to have to change everything—school, homes, friends—to protect someone we loved. My story became a blend of a personal account and fiction with a twist.

That was well and fine, but I needed something that would keep people turning the pages. As I read other books with fictitious characters, the way they were described and the challenges they faced brought them to life and made them realistic and believable. That's what I needed to do! There was one problem though—beyond those seven pages of class assignment and the journal, I didn't know where to start. Then my mother made the best suggestion in the world. She told me to write the ending. It may change, she said, but knowing where the story ends can give you some insight into

J. L. Woodson

the elements you'll need to get there. Then you can go back and flesh out the characters and the rest of the book.

Once I had a beginning and wrote my ending, I then found a method that made my writing flow faster and easier. I put together all the advice and suggestions Susan Malone, Naleighna Kai, Mary B. Morrison, and Christine Meister had given me, and I created what I call The Red Line method.

I first drew a railroad track and had a picture of a station at the beginning and one at the end. Then I used the beginning and end of my story line as the starting point and final destination of that railroad track. The “high points,” or major drama in the story, became different mid-point “stations” along the track. My first editor, Susan Mary Malone, later explained that the high points are called plot points.

Between each station there were little tracks, which were the details (minor points). Basically I had about three details leading to the first station and three going away from the first station. Those going away from the first station led up to the next station, and so on until I got to the end of the line. Some people would consider this as a form of an outline, but outlines were a little too strict for me. I needed some way of keeping track of the entire story, while also having the freedom to write what I wanted when I wanted. A lot of authors experience writer's block, and I believe that is because they're stuck on the next move or direction for the book. A lot of times that comes from the one-chapter method. Write one chapter, then the next, the next, the next, and BAM! The train comes to a halt and the story sits for days, a week, a month before the author can tackle it again.

Like my mother and some of the other authors in this book, I don't write in chronological order. I flow up and down the tracks and write what moves me. But here's the thing—having that Red Line helps you, the writer, keep track of where the piece you're writing at the moment actually fits in the story.

We have the stations, the train, and the track, but what about the passengers? Think of your main character (protagonist) as someone who gets on at the beginning of the line and looks out of the window for the entire trip, but takes time to reflect on their past, notice the scenery (setting) and the people getting on and off the train. Some people (friends, family, enemies) might even ride with the main character for a while or even make it all the way to the end of the line. We call them supporting characters. They are also looking around and watching what's going on, but they might see things a little differently than the main character (and might even have some “dirt” on the main character they'd like to share with anyone who'll listen). Speaking of dirt, it's always a good thing to add a person the reader will hate (antagonist), who has their parts of the story to tell and makes things interesting.

You might want to have all the main and supporting characters on the train by the second station (the first fifty pages). And if the characters have some narrative (where they tell the reader what's going on inside their heads), then their way of thinking and their observations are called “viewpoints.” All viewpoint characters are important enough to have some background information written about them, but be sure the information you reveal about supporting characters doesn't overpower the information written about the main characters.

[Look for Part II in the next issue of the magazine]

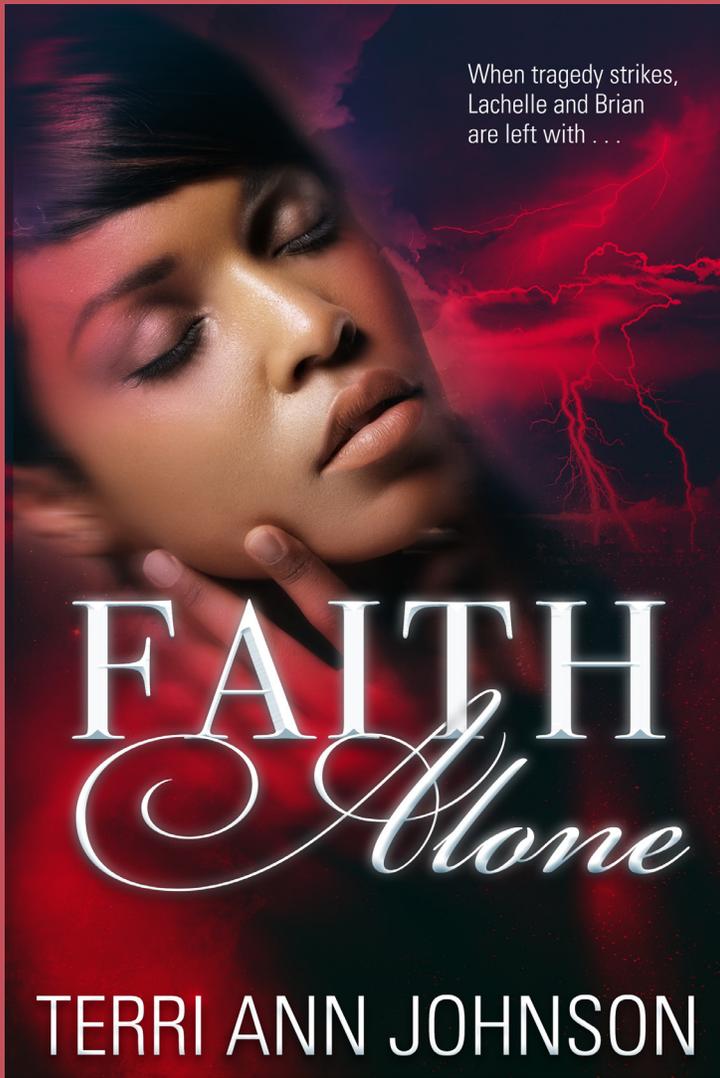
PORTIA'S RANDOM THOUGHTS

1. Lemme tell you what I won't do: Argue on social media (or in person) about some people I don't know.
2. Ever.
3. Jackie was and still is the finest Jackson brother.
4. Don't debate me.
5. I can name all 50 states in alphabetical order. What's your random nerdy super power?
6. If it's important to you, it's important. Period.
7. I had baby fever yesterday.
8. Whew!! Glad that's over
9. I think I'll wear 90's gear all weekend so I can be in character. #writerlife
10. I'm ready to write tonight. (I hope my arm is, too.)
11. Never give a liar a second opportunity to lie to you.
12. Be kind. Be grateful. Be respectful. Be quiet.



*Portia A. Cosby is the author of four novels, including *The Disgruntled Wives Club* and *It's Complicated*. The Indianapolis native lives in the metro Atlanta area and holds a spot on Terry McMillan's Writers Worth Reading list. Her new novella, *F.I.R.E. Reignited* is available now. www.portiacosby.com*

Shannan Harper's Review



When tragedy strikes,
Lachelle and Brian
are left with . . .

FAITH *Alone*

TERRI ANN JOHNSON

Most couples are excited to find out that they're expecting a little bundle. Not so for Brian and Lachelle Jackson. Twenty-three years ago, Lachelle lost a baby because of medical condition and almost died. On the day this not-so-good news is confirmed, the unthinkable happens. Brian, being a Good Samaritan, is met with an unspeakable tragedy.

Even though she has her two best friends Tracy and Vanessa, as well as an ex supporting her after such an unexpected moment in her life, Lachelle is continuously concerned about whether she or her baby will make it through this pregnancy alive.

The prose is wonderfully descriptive and reading it was like watching a movie in my head. This story will have you "all up in your feelings" as several emotional parts can bring on tears; especially near the end. But you will also feel the joy and the love of God. Two of the characters deserve a side-eye. Please don't get me started on Brian's ghetto sister, as well as the Pentecostal aunt who tries to catch the Holy Ghost at a baby shower.

Another thing that came to mind while reading this book is that while people should be punished for the crimes they commit, sometimes we have to extend grace to others—just like God does for us. The theme of this book shows that anyone, at anytime could experience a situation where they need help or forgiveness after a making a mistake. This was an amazing book for a first time author, and I am excited about the next one she creates.

WHEN OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS . . . ANSWER



Christine Pauls

As a writer, I felt stuck. I didn't want to write another word. No stories came, or at least I closed my mind to the possibilities of it all, not wanting to try. I had no motivation or confidence to continue a writing journey of any kind. I'd written three books over the course of five years and ran out of gas.

That's when, after being a part of NK Promo Partners Group, Naleighna Kai sent me a direct message and asked, "C, what are you working on?" I said, "Nothing" and that was the truth. I'm sure that gave her a bit of a pause, but she cleverly, came back to me with an assignment of writing a short story. She told me to think of something light-hearted, romantic even. So, as we talked about it, I had to question: what is my fantasy? What are my desires? And how would I want a man to treat me? We went into this together.

This woman, who I also consider a friend, took the time, at no charge, to work with me in putting together the first three chapters of what I've titled, *Love Renewed*, a story that centers on middle-aged, Raelene Thompson and Lieutenant Gregory Banks, who meet and experience a love connection, thanks to the matchmaking ploy of Raelene's military son, Andre. It's a mature story and the first time that I've taken the road into grown and sexy writing. The point is, I was being groomed to be a part of something big and when the opportunity came, I folded. Even though I already had the perfect short story.

Truthfully, I didn't believe in myself enough to push through and become a bestselling author for the first time in my literary career. I promise you, I felt at my lowest, but I only had myself to blame. At any rate, I accepted my decision and dove into writing more

and created two additional shorts which I titled, *Love For Granted* and *The Love You Save*. Stories that came from using the tools and encouragement of one woman who continues to see in me what I've failed to see in myself.

All of this, led to being asked by Naleighna Kai to beta read one of her short stories for the anthology. I graciously accepted, unaware that this sister had yet another, ulterior motive. What happened? I was blessed to become one of the beta-readers for NK's Tribe Called Success anthologies *Sugar and Spice*. I was brought back into the fold and was extremely grateful because I missed interacting with everyone that I'd grown to know, love and support. I had the honor and privilege to read and critique the stories of seventeen talented authors who are a part of this great project. It was an experience of a lifetime. I missed being one of the authors but I was still able to participate and witness a group that supports, pushes, and brings out the best in each other. This is why it's called a Tribe! There's nothing better than being with people who care about everyone's success. The Tribe helped in every aspect of the project to ensure everyone wins. No job was too big or small. Whatever needed to be done, it happened. You also saw that writing wasn't the only talent. From finance, formatting, scene development, it was amazing!

Everyone was treated on an equal platform and brought their own style and flare to the stories they wrote. This experience has also made me a better beta reader which is a skill I can use more efficiently outside of this group. I learned so many lessons seeing the process firsthand and I'd do it again, without question.



Christine Pauls a native of Wilmington, Delaware is the author of *To Begin Again*, *Belinda's Song* and *One Good Thing*, her newest release. She penned her first novel in 2012. The mother of two and grandmother of three is an accountant by day in the banking industry.

LEARNING CURVE

MarZe Scott and Anita L. Roseboro

Anita's Experience

Writing is the easy part. Rewriting is a beast! I don't know how many times someone has walked up to me and said, 'I always wanted to write a book.' So did I. Wanting to do and actually beginning are so different. I thought it would be simple, because I could throw a few hooks together, or come up with a least one killer opening line. It's when you have to repeat that process throughout an entire novel that things become difficult. No distractions allowed whatsoever during the rewrite process. Don't even try to revise sentence if you're tired or sleepy. The sentence will be in worse shape when you send it back to the editor than when you received it.

On a short story, I made the mistake of throwing the project into the editing process without having applied some of the things I'd learned in several writing classes

and workshops. I was trying to make deadline, and I did. But the rewrite process was brutal because I didn't give it the attention it deserved and thought it would work out on the back end. Sometimes the pantsers process will work, but bringing an old manuscript up today requires plotting to tighten things up.

To anyone who decides to embark on this journey of getting a book to print, my advice would simply be simply to have patience through the process. Develop a spine because you'll need it. There will be days in the editing process when your words are ripped apart, and you'll want to quit. Just know that rewriting and remembering all the rules that apply when it comes to staying within a formula can be daunting. However, holding the finished manuscript is far more rewarding. Holding my first novel two days prior to the publication of this magazine was priceless.

MarZe's Experience

Check your email.

Normally, this message in my Messenger's inbox would be cause for smiles as it would be a signal to watch updates for events or promotion opportunities, but for the last few months it's been to alert me of impending edits to one of two manuscripts that were in the works. Here are a few things I've learned riding the learning rollercoaster called Publishing.

Lesson One—Every set of eyes in the editing process sees something altogether different than another.

One manuscript had gone through three editors and five pairs of eyes (the author, the developmental editor, and three more editors) and the last series of edits could've made another newbie to the game sit in a corner and suck her thumb while rocking back and forth.

Lesson Two—Thinking faster than you can type is not beneficial to the process and can be extremely time consuming when you have to make edits.

I dropped commas, I used more than a few words to make a simple statement, and sometimes skipped words in a sentence structure. Every reader may not have seen this, but let a librarian read the story—I can hear the blazing one-star review based on those things alone.

Lesson Three—Asking questions for clarification in a timely fashion is always a good idea.

Lesson Four—pay attention to deadlines. As an author, be conscious of deadlines as missing one can be detrimental. My work was on the desk of an editor at the time the last call for submissions came in. Somehow, because that didn't put a fire under me to light a flame under the editor and ask where my story was in the process. Well, that came back to bite me, not the editor, in the ass. The project went to press thirty minutes before the editor finally returned it. This required me to do some major after submission work to get the errors corrected. Mainly, having to do an errata spreadsheet that will allow the printer/distributor to make corrections to the anthology after it's already in. I can't tell you the kind of headache that creates for everyone involved. All it would have taken was diligence on my part. That's it. I will work to solve a problem until I can't.

I love solving problems and I'm usually patient with a good puzzle, but to say that Saying that I was totally mystified by the spreadsheet I had needed to fix errors made in the submission process for eBook formatting—is an understatement.

The instructions were clear, and I've filled out spreadsheets before so it shouldn't have been complicated, right? The wrongness of that thought caused me to question my own intelligence. I didn't ask any questions because—

"I've got this."

"It can't be that freakin' hard."

"What am I missing?"

Questions I asked myself became repetitious and frustrating. It wasn't until my editor called me that I stopped running on the proverbial hamster wheel.

"Why didn't you call me?" she asked.

She couldn't see me rolling my eyes, my shoulders shrugging, and my head shaking, but I'm sure she heard it all in my voice.

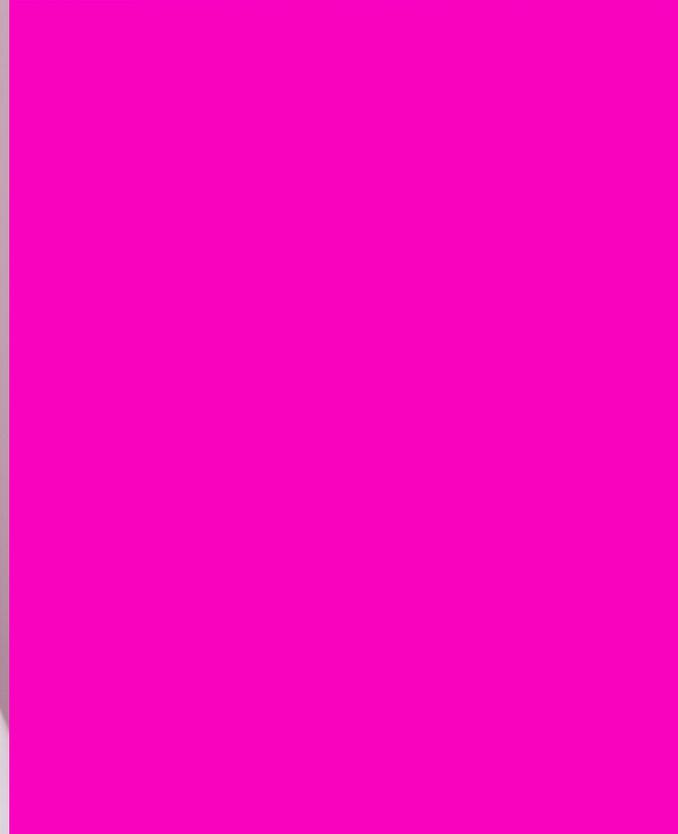
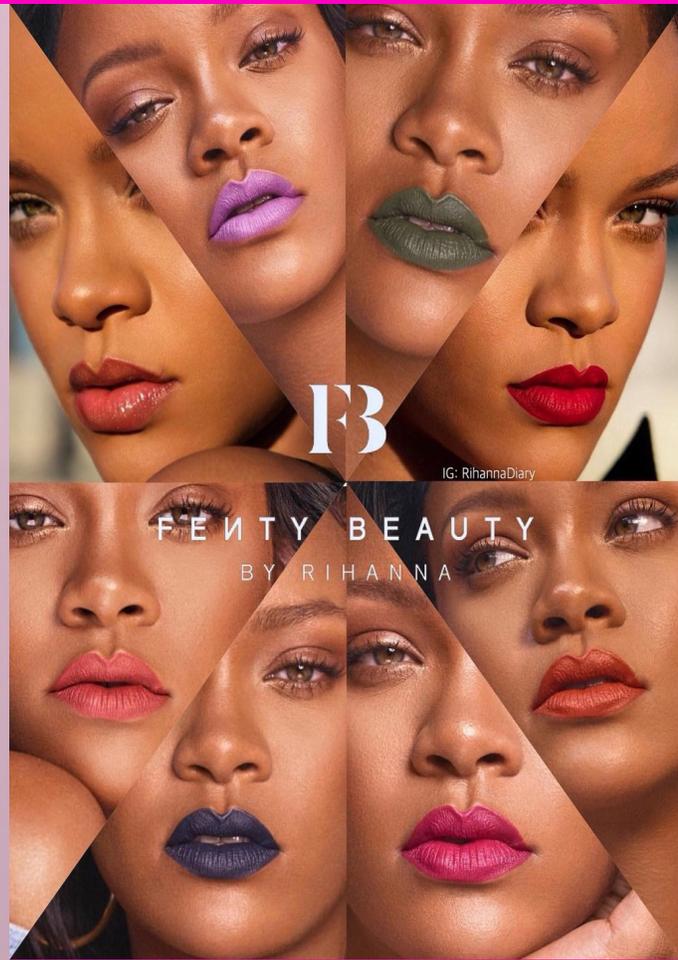
"I thought I could figure it out," I responded. "I believe I can figure anything out until I can't."

The problem was explained and solved in one conversation. I promise that hours frying my brain were spent unnecessarily. If the resources are available, it makes no sense to fumble through the process trying to figure things out and waste time, resources, and money.

All in all, this ride into the publishing process has been a fairly smooth one because I'm blessed to belong to a tribe that wants me to be as successful as I desire to be. The bumps in the editing and after publishing road didn't throw me off course, even if a few tears were shed. As a matter of fact, I know this journey has brought me a wealth of knowledge that I would've never gained had I gone in another direction.

The lessons learned will be treasured and applied as long as I fancy myself a writer and author.

Barbadian Literary Jewel





the boundary-breaking icon she is today. Not bad for a thirty-year-old?

Rihanna is a trendsetter and a force to be reckoned with. She did not have a fairytale beginning but once the world took a look and listen to this Barbadian beauty, all these years later, people are not just fans of her music but her business workmanship and philanthropy efforts.

The purpose of Fenty Beauty was to create a line that was beautiful yet able to compete with the best-of-the-best in beauty. When it comes to makeup for women of color such as myself there has always been a void when it comes to matching skin tones while giving a flawless look and the appeal with universal shades. For me, I always felt the cosmetic lines always forgot about my shade and if they remembered it was not long-lasting or looked pasty.

Rihanna wanted the Fenty line to have a lightweight feel which is important but also carry shades that are fun, flirty and sexy. One thing that was important to Rihanna was to push the message that it was “okay to take chances, and take risks, and dare to do something new or different.”

Can we say mission accomplished boys and girls?

I'll let you in on a little secret. I love makeup. I do not discriminate either, cheap or high end if it makes me look good, I want it. I'm always skeptical when a celeb with major star power releases a cosmetic line because nine times out of ten it's a generic line with a high-end price tag. Well, that's not the case with the “friend in my head” BadGalRiRi's Fenty line.

Before she was BadGalRiRi: music, fashion and beauty icon, Robyn Rihanna Fenty was a girl who was born in the Barbados parish of Saint Michael. She'd always been fascinated by her mother's lipsticks. All it took was one time and she was forever hooked and never looked back. Makeup became her weapon of choice for self-expression—a way to radiate her ever-changing mood. And it powered a fearless take on beauty that helped her become



Kisha Green is a literary consultant, promoter, blogger and social media enthusiast who loves everything about literary. This mother of four resides in New Jersey who enjoys fine champagne and sushi in between reading and writing.

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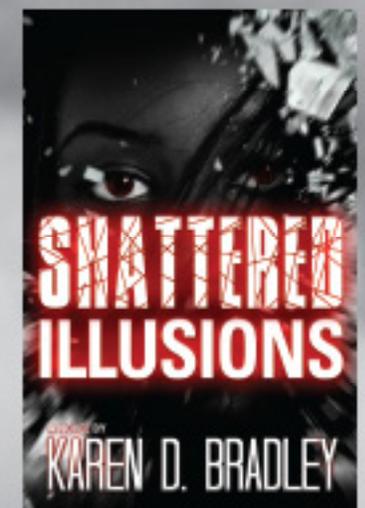
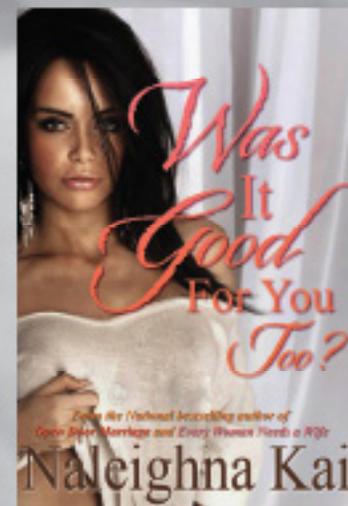
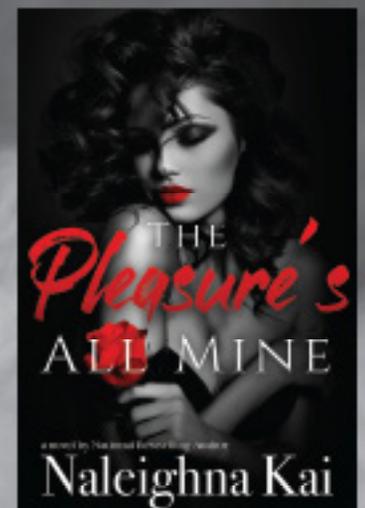
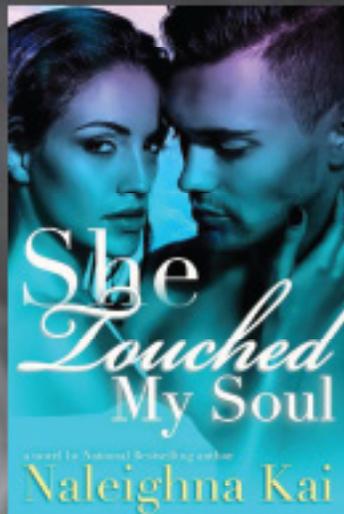
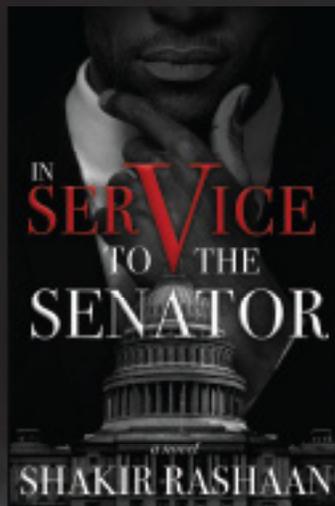
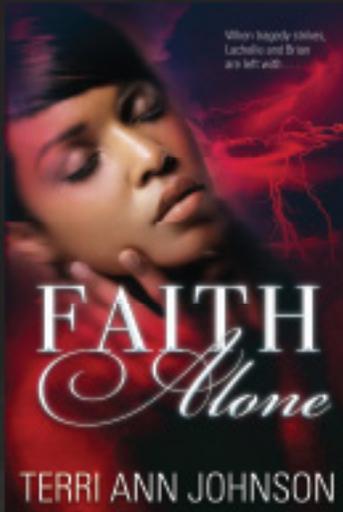


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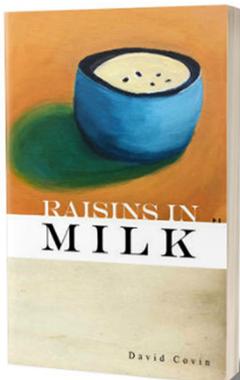
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